

St. Andrew's Church - May 30, 2010
Sermon "Gentle Winds" - The Rev. Doug Kendall

Lord God May the words of my mouth,
and the thoughts and meditations of all of our hearts,
be acceptable to you, our God and our very breath within us.

There are many different kinds of sermons.

Some are teaching sermons.

They are about teaching a specific lesson from the bible.

Some are academic sermons.

They tend to use a lot of phrases like,

"In the original Greek this word meant..." or

"In the original Hebrew this word is found in the past participle form
and therefore it clearly implies that..."

Some sermons are more topical,

And seek to glean some wisdom from the bible

On a contemporary issue in our lives.

Some sermons are structured in the form of an introduction,
three points and a conclusion.

There are story sermons and parable sermons
and all different kinds of sermons.

I remember one of my seminary professors once referring to a

"Moses in the wilderness sermon"

None of us knew what that was so he explained...

It is a sermon that begins at a given point,

Then it wanders aimlessly through the bible

for what seems like 40 years,

and then, like Moses who never got to the promised land,
the sermon never really reaches its destination,
never really makes its point.

I am sure we have all heard a sermon or two like that,

And I suspect I may have preached one or two.

Last week on Camping Sunday the sermon was almost a testimonial,

Or as close as we might get in a Presbyterian church,

And I did not really do much with the fact that it was Pentecost Sunday,

the Sunday when we celebrate the birth of the church,

and God's gift of the Holy Spirit.

So this Sunday we are going to go back to Pentecost,

And the sermon, like the Spirit may blow where it wills for a while,

But hopefully will come to blow in and through us,

And remind us of God's presence with us,

As close to us as our very breath.

In the beginning, the very beginning,

before there were people,

before there were animals,

before there were trees and plants and fish.

Before there was dirt and ground,

and before there were amoebas floating in stagnant pools...

there was chaos, there was water, and there was wind.

Mighty winds hovering over the waters ,

blowing in and through the chaos,

mighty wind that would not stop.

And there was God.

Out of the chaos, out of the nothingness and the darkness,
out of the formless and desolate void that was our world,
there came life.
And the first life to emerge was light.
Light in the darkness, light in the nothingness, light in the chaos,
light that gave form to the formless void.
With light came warmth, and land and trees and plants and animals,
and fish and birds...
and finally people.
Formed out of the dirt on which they walked, people emerged.

But the people were not alive;
they were nothing more than the dirt that they walked on.
Then came the wind again.
This time a gentle caressing nurturing wind.
And the creator breathed the wind into his creatures,
and they became alive, they were inspired,
they were filled with the Spirit, the breath, the wind.
The wind had become their breath,
and they breathed the creator's Spirit
in and out,
in and out,
in and out,
and they were alive for the first time ever;
and there was life, true life.

But the people soon forgot about the wind,
they forgot about the Spirit,
they began to take even their very breath for granted.

But the wind did not forget about them.
The wind continued to move the trees that surrounded the people,
the wind continued to stir up the deep waters,
the wind continued to caress them on warm summer nights,
the wind continued to give them breath and life, day in and day out.
The people went about their tasks, their daily routines,
believing that all they did was so important,
and rarely thinking twice about the breath that was within them.
Occasionally the wind would remind one of them
of what was important in life,
and that one person would try to tell others.
That one was called a prophet.
The Prophet would talk about dry bones, and visions and life.
The Prophet would try to tell the others
that they needed to listen to the wind...
But usually the others would ignore the prophet,
or they would listen and be interested for a while,
and then go back to their old ways,
or they would get mad at the one called prophet,
and take away his breath.
And soon they would forget about the wind again.

But the wind did not forget about them.
The wind continued to move the trees that surrounded the people,
the wind continued to stir up the deep waters,
the wind continued to caress them on warm summer nights,

the wind continued to give the people breath and life,
day in and day out.

Then one day there came a special man.
He knew about the beginning.
He knew about the wind that had hovered over the chaos at the beginning.
He knew about the first light that had shone on the earth bringing life.
He knew very well about that first light that was,
even before the world was... because he was that light.
This special man was like the ones called prophets, but even more.
This special man knew the wind intimately,
when it blew around him, he heard the wind's words.
When it told him what to say, he spoke,
when it told him what to do, he did,
...when it told him his time was up, he bowed his head.
He talked to the wind, and the wind talked to him.
He told others about the wind, the breath, and the Spirit.
Some listened, others did not.
Some followed, others did not.
Some loved him, others did not.

The others took away his breath,
like they had taken away the other prophet's breath before him.
But this man was special, this man was different.
This man's breath belonged to everyone
and could neither be taken away by a few,
nor could it be contained by any power in this or any other world.

For fifty days after his breath was taken,
his friends waited to see what would happen to his breath.
For fifty days they talked to each other,
they talked to the wind,
they hid from the others of whom they were afraid.

Even in those fifty days of waiting, the wind did not forget about them.

The wind continued to move the trees that surrounded the people,
the wind continued to stir up the deep waters,
the wind continued to caress them on warm summer nights,
the wind continued to give them breath and life, day in and day out.

Then the breath came back like never before.
The breath came riding on the wind,
and surrounded with power that had been since before creation.
and the breath and the wind and the power filled them,
and they knew what life was,
and they knew what they had to do,
and they were no longer afraid of the unknown,
and the chaos that surrounded them
and they were no longer afraid of the people
who thought they had power in this world.

With the breath came new life and purpose.
With whatever it took, and by whatever means,
those who had received the breath told others about it.
They told everyone they could about the mighty wind

and the breath and the life.
Many listened to them.
Many realized the breath that was already within them,
and many received a second wind.
And yet, many others did not.
And some who were so enthusiastic at the beginning,
lost their enthusiasm.
And some soon forgot about the breath and the wind.

But the wind has never forgotten about them.
The wind continues to move the trees that surrounded the people,
the wind continues to stir up the deep waters,
the wind continues to caress the people on warm summer nights,
the wind continues to give breath and life, day in and day out.

There are other people who forget about the wind sometimes.
They knew about it once,
but somehow life seems to busy to talk with the wind,
somehow the things that people do seem so important,
and being still and listening to what the wind has to say,
seems frivolous, and a waste of time..
Somehow people find it too easy to forget
about the very breath that they breathe,
in and out,
in and out,
in and out,
day in and day out.

Every once in a while they talk about the wind,
the breath the Spirit.
They remember how important it is to their lives.

The wind will never forget.
The wind, God's Spirit, will never forget about us.
Listen to the wind as it continues to move the trees that surround us,
watch the wind as it stirs up the deep waters around us and within us,
feel the wind as it caress us on warm summer nights,
and give thanks for the wind, God's Holy Spirit
as it continues to give us breath and life, day in and day out.
On this Summer Sunday, breathe God's breath, and live.

And now to God the creator who hovered over the deep,
Jesus Christ his only son who taught us about life,
and to the Holy Spirit, our breath of life,
be all honour and glory, this day and every day. AMEN