

# A Rush of Wind

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*Text: John 14:8-17,25-27*

Today I have a few things I'm going to say, mostly to our confirmands, Tyler, Isabel, and Lindsey, but there's probably something for all of us here too, so you all can listen in.

This day, Pentecost, is all about the Spirit. And maybe you can remember when you were younger, back when you were in second grade, and Hurricane Sandy ripped through this part of the world. Do you remember that? First came the rain, and then came the wind that howled like a freight train all night long, and when you woke up in the morning and looked outside, the world was different, and the ground was littered with tree branches, and even whole trees. And everybody had to live a little differently for a week or more, because we had no electricity, and we couldn't get anywhere. The wind was a powerful force that reshaped the whole world we lived in overnight.

The disciples of Jesus felt the Spirit come over them, and when they tried to describe it to others later, when they grasped for a few words to capture the awesome power of that experience, they said it was like "a rush of violent wind." These were fishermen. They knew their winds. They knew the difference between a gentle breeze that would fill your sails and take you where you wanted to go, and a howling gale that drives your little boat across the water wherever it wants to take you, and all you can do is hang on for dear life. The Spirit that hit them at Pentecost was like *that* kind of wind, the kind that will pick you up, turn you over and over, and plop you down somewhere new, with a new purpose and a new direction, like Dorothy in the "Wizard of Oz," coming out of her tornado-tossed house to follow the yellow brick road.

As exhilarating and disorienting as this experience was, it was also the fulfillment of a promise Jesus had made them, a promise we heard in today's gospel lesson. Jesus said that he would ask the Father to send them the Spirit to be with them forever. He called this Spirit an Advocate, someone to take our side, to stand with us and empower us, and he said this Spirit would abide with us and in us, teaching us, reminding us of Jesus' words.

I want to underscore one part of what Jesus said, because I think it's important. Lindsey, Tyler, Isabel, listen to Jesus when he says this: "the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact will do greater works than these" (14:12). Do you not feel the power of those words? Do you not feel Jesus' faith in you? If you trust in me, Jesus says, you will be able to do what I do. This is coming from the man who spoke to a Samaritan woman, whose religion and ethnicity and gender and difficult life story made her off-limits to a Jewish rabbi like himself, and yet by the end of their conversation, she was praising God and hopeful about her future for the first time ever. *You* can do that, *you will* do that too, Jesus says, if you trust in me. Jesus fed thousands of people with a little boy's breakfast. You too, he says, you can do miracles like this. Jesus gave a blind man his sight back—now you try, he says. Isabel, Tyler, Lindsey, understand what Jesus is saying to you here: you will work miracles beyond anything

Jesus himself ever did, through trusting in him, miracles that will feed and heal and comfort, miracles that will make this world a more perfect expression of God's own dream of creation. Can you believe it? Can you claim it? What will you do with it? What will the rest of us, who believe in Jesus, do with the lifegiving power that he says we all have?

Part of what makes today so exciting for the rest of us is that we know your faith and your gifts will make the church a fuller expression of what God intends it to be. I've heard you express what you've received from this community, but I also know how much you have to share with us, because I've seen it and heard it in your faithful questions, your caring for younger children, your musical gifts, and your willingness to explore what following Jesus might look like. We are deeply grateful for all of you today, and we give thanks for what the Spirit has already begun to do in you and through you. But if we take what Jesus says seriously, it only gets better. You are God's children now – an astounding, wonderful thing to say all by itself – what you will become is still to be revealed.

The Spirit is alive and at work in our confirmation class, in our church, in our world. God is on the move, shaping and giving new life to the world. Thanks be to God, who sends forth the Spirit to renew the face of the earth! Amen.