

Sermon 23.05.28

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PENTECOST

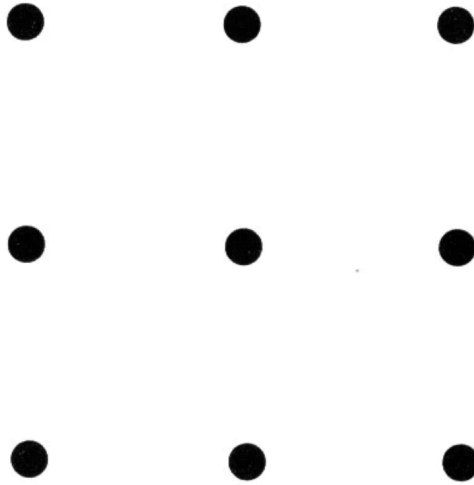
John 20: 19-23

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As Abba God has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

Acts 2: 1-7 (page 885 in pew bible)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?'



Challenge: see if you can connect all the dots using only four straight lines, without removing pen from paper, and without retracing a line.

SERMON:

9 DOT challenge - who can do it? HINT: THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Our scriptures today have those involved increasingly seeing farther and farther outside the box - and it keeps expanding.

In a commentary on John's passage, theologian Angela Parker writes¹:

In this story, after reiterating the second "peace to you all," Jesus breathes on the disciples - in Greek, (*enephusesen* = *en-foo-seh-sen*) - breathes on them, breathes into them, and tells them to "Receive (the) Holy Spirit." The use of *enephusesen* is the only time the word appears in the Greek New Testament. Greek readers of the Hebrew Bible would recognize the word also being used in Genesis 2:7 where "... the Lord God ... breathed into the humans nostrils the breath of life; and the human became a living being."

In that earliest of stories of the Hebrew Bible, God breathes life into that first human.

In our gospel reading today, Jesus breathes that same breath into his fear-filled followers.

As a community hiding in fear, Parker suggests the disciples are "socially dead" and awaiting the breath of Jesus that mirrors the Genesis narrative. This breath brings them back to life.

¹ [Commentary on John 20:19-23 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)

The disciples lived in fear because of their identity as Jesus followers after his crucifixion. Jesus' breath transforms fear into bold living and leads them out of social death into community.

And then 50 days after that encounter with Jesus - where they had new life breathed into them, we read:

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John 20 to Acts 2 -

50 days later and those they feared, fellow Jews, are being welcomed into the fellowship. Not by the disciples, but by the Spirit, blowing fiercely - blowing through the disciples and heard in the languages of all present.

50 days later and those who were feared were changed. If we kept reading the story in Acts, after Peter sets them straight about who Jesus was and their part in his death, we're told they listened - and asked 'now what do we do?'

Peter's response: Change your life. Turn to God.

Our scriptures don't quite say it this way, but I wonder if they'd agree:

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Sometimes answers aren't found in the confines of what we know.

VOC has helped us think outside the box - where have we, in our everyday lives, experienced resurrection?

Can we re-imagine our faith? Our understanding of scripture, our understanding of God, our understanding of what we're called to be?

It's been 3 weeks since we learned about the congregational life cycle with Tom Beers. I sat with him over a cup of coffee this week to follow up, see where we might take this knowledge our ourselves -

We're at a time of asking questions, wondering what's coming next -
What a time to celebrate Pentecost!

We're at a time of

CREATING SPACE FOR GOD TO MOVE IN NEW WAYS

What are we, University Mennonite, here for?

How would you answer the question?

I have a few ideas...and I believe the Spirit is calling us to something.

Our task is both to look at the ways the Spirit is moving through us, and to seek new ways... with the working of the Spirit. To look outside the box.

Spirit - wind - breath - all the same word in both Hebrew and Greek

We don't see the wind, we see what's moved by the wind (same with spirit)

Tom encouraged us to notice what we're doing well and to celebrate the ways the Spirit is working in and through us.

In that account in the book of Acts,

Peter and the early leaders - they had no idea of what was coming. They stepped outside the box again and again, step by step. First they opened their locked doors to the Jews they feared. But the Spirit didn't stop there.

There was discomfort; there was anxiety of how to make it work; there was downright persecution, death and the disciples scattering - and through it all, the spirit continued to move, to make a new way, to expand that box again and again and again.

Those in the early church didn't have a clear picture of where they were going. They expected Jesus' return to be soon. And, well, here we are 2000 years later.

Eventually though, as those early followers continued to step outward an even more astounding thing happened - the Gentiles received this same Spirit.

An outcome none of those early disciples saw coming.

How about here, now?

We don't see the wind, we see what's moved by the wind.

We don't see the Spirit...we see what's changed, what's transformed by the Spirit.

What are some ways we are making a difference in this world?

- Supporting our Afghan friends in creating new lives here in State College
- Keep Ten Thousand Villages vibrant as a way to support neighbors near and far
- Continuing to create meaningful worship services throughout the pandemic and beyond
- Planting trees
- Installing solar panels as a way to reduce our use of fossil fuels

Those are ways, tangible ways, we see the Spirit moving. How about internally? How is the Spirit moving in ways that aren't quite so visible? What is the Spirit inviting you to - how do you live into the call to be made anew?

We don't see the wind, we see what's moved by the wind.

We don't see the Spirit...we see what's changed, what's transformed by the Spirit.

May we continue to look outside the box for ways to follow the Spirit of Christ.

RESOURCES

Podcast: [Sermon Brainwave #905](#) for 5/28/23

For more on the 9 dots exercise: [Commusings: Expansion by Sharon SalzbergOneCommunehttps://www.onecommune.com › blog › commusings-...](#)

Parker, Angela. [Commentary on John 20:19-23 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)