

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent  
"The Spirit Blows Where It Wills"  
John 3:1-17

This week I've been thinking a lot about the verse in today's Gospel where Jesus compares the wind to the work of the Holy Spirit.

"The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it,  
but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.  
So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever wondered about that verse?

Have you ever wondered about how God through His Holy Spirit chooses to work?

Have you ever had a time in your life when a certain series of events seemed to be happening for a reason, and you couldn't explain it away, as mere coincidence?

It was as if God was saying something to you, and maybe He was?

When the wind blows it blows where it chooses and you hear the sound of it and you can see wind in the trees.

That's like God's Spirit. If we're not too distracted by other things, God actually lets us see what the Holy Spirit is doing.

- The Holy Spirit draws people to faith in Jesus.
- The Holy Spirit fills us with a desire to love God and love one another.
- The Holy Spirit gives us unity as a church and sends us out in mission.

The wind of the Holy Spirit, blows, and you can hear it, and see it  
but we don't always know where it is coming from or where it is going.

Sometimes churches go through times when we wonder where God's Spirit is.

Every congregation experiences that.

Community Lutheran has gone through times like that.

But isn't it wonderful to feel the gentle breeze of the Spirit,  
blowing new wind into our sails?

And individually at one time or another

we have all gone through a time when we wonder where God's Spirit is.

Those are tough times aren't they?

We've all been there.

Challenges in our families, challenges at school, or in our jobs, or with our health.

But isn't it wonderful when we begin to feel the gently breeze of the Spirit bringing us hope  
and new life?

We can't always explain it. We don't always know why God chooses the timing He does. The wind blows where it chooses.

But we can learn to trust God's timing because God's timing is always for a reason.

Who knew a year ago that God would call a group of moms from this congregation to start a new children's ministry called Jesus and Me, J.A.M?

And that on Friday nights here at church families would be bringing 20 boys and girls to hear the good news of Jesus? The wind of God's Spirit blows where it chooses.

Or who knew a year ago, that God would send us a volunteer youth leader named Kimmarie who would be helping my daughter Kari learn how to ski this weekend and leading our high group on a retreat to Big Bear?

And who knew a year ago, our High School group would be meeting for a weekly Sunday night Bible study? The wind of God's Spirit blows where it chooses.

Every one of us is here this morning for a reason.

I don't believe in accidents or coincidences when it comes to spiritual things.

God loves you too much, to leave things to chance.

God loves the world so much, God loves you so much, that he gave us his only Son, he gave us Jesus.

And do you know what God promises to do through his Spirit?

He calls us through his Spirit. God calls us like he called Nicodemus in today's Gospel.

You see Nicodemus wasn't so sure about Jesus, and maybe this morning you also have questions.

Let me tell you about Nicodemus. You see, Nicodemus was a powerful man, a Pharisee, a wealthy man. He was possibly even a member of the Sanhedrin which would have been the "Supreme Court" of the Jews at that time.

And then there is this curious reference. Our Gospel says, "Nicodemus came to Jesus **by night.**"

Something was stirring in Nicodemus. Maybe he couldn't sleep, or maybe he woke up and knew he had to find this man named Jesus. One way or another he knew he had to speak to Jesus.

I heard a pastor one time, sharing with his congregation, about how God starts to get his attention when he's beginning to slip a little in his own spiritual life. And one of the ways that God speaks to him or gets to him, is when he begins to feel what he calls an "inner restlessness."

Have you ever felt that same kind of “inner restlessness?”  
 Maybe it was a time when you were feeling knots in your stomach for no apparent reason.

Nothing especially bad was happening in your life, but you knew that your spirit was not at peace. Sometimes, that’s the Holy Spirit, trying to speak to you, trying to encourage you to reconnect yourself to God.

In fact, this might even be a time right now in your life when God is trying to communicate with you. The Spirit might be trying to blow some spiritual refreshment into your life, this morning.

Now the reality of it, is that sometimes we listen, and other times we don’t.  
 And I think, again, that’s where Nicodemus was.

He had come to Jesus in the middle of the night. He might have been experiencing that “inner restlessness.” But I think he was somewhere in between.

I think that part of him was listening to the Spirit blowing through his life and another part of him, was closed off to Jesus’ message.

Part of him knew that Jesus had been sent from God, and he was intrigued, and wanted to find out if what Jesus was saying was true. And yet, he loved his position of power, and his comfortable life, and so he was trying with all the other religious leaders to find some weakness in Jesus, some excuse to reject him, so he could get rid of this challenge to their power.

And one thing that gives us a clue, are the first words, Nicodemus chooses to speak to Jesus. The first words out of his mouth are:

“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent from God.”

In other words, he is saying, “The other religious leaders and I have you all figured out.”  
 “We know what category or theological box to put you in. You are a teacher and a miracle worker. That’s who you are.”

At first it sounds like Nicodemus has come give Jesus a message instead of the other way around. He doesn’t sound very open. He already knows who Jesus is. Or does he?

Do you remember how Jesus responds?

He says, “No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.”

In other words, “No one can really know what God is up to in this world, unless one is born anew, born of the Spirit.” The Spirit helps us see the world as it truly is.

Sometimes we have the same problem Nicodemus did.

When we are feeling that “inner restlessness” and when we know we are spiritually out of balance, sometimes we want to listen, and sometimes we don’t.

Sometimes we are open to what God wants to say to us, and sometimes we aren't.

Like Nicodemus, there is part of us that wants to get re-connected to God,  
and part of us that wants to stay in control of our own lives.

Like Nicodemus, there is a part of us that thinks we have everything all figured out.

We are afraid that if we get too close, we're might have to change.

We might have to see the world in a whole new way.

So when Jesus tells Nicodemus, that the Spirit blows where it chooses, that's what he means:  
that Nicodemus must be willing to have his ideas about who God is challenged, and opened up.

The Spirit does the same thing to the little boxes we try to put God in.

When we try to keep God at a safe distance, when we try to keep God from getting too close  
the Spirit blows into our lives.

God speaks to us through our "restlessness" or troubled spirit.

God's Spirit gets our attention and finds a way to re-awaken our faith.

That's what God ultimately did with Nicodemus.

We don't know for sure how the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus ended that first  
night; but there are two other references to Nicodemus in the New Testament.

- John 7:50 depicts him in his role as a leader of the Jews pleading that a fair chance be given to Jesus.
- And John 19:39 depicts Nicodemus caring for the body of Jesus after his crucifixion.

We don't know the details of when and where, but at some point, this ruler, this man who was  
searching, came to know that "God so loved, Nicodemus."

And that made all the difference in his life.

May you also hear God speak **your** name this morning. That God so loves you, that he gave His  
only Son,  
that you may have life, eternal life, now and forever. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:8