

WINDSTORMS

JOHN 20:19-22, ACTS 2:2

Over the last several weeks we've been talking about the Holy Spirit. *Why I'm not afraid of the Holy Spirit... Why we need the Holy Spirit...* next week, I'm talking about *Why Moms need the Holy Spirit...*

And today I want to talk about a related subject, that is appropriate given this past week's weather.

The title of today's message is "**Windstorms.**" I want to discuss with you the topic of spiritual revival...

First, I want to read our text for the last few weeks, John 20:19-22. Then I'll read one verse from Acts 2...

Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."

And now in Acts 2:2, "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting."

In the upper room the risen Lord Jesus appeared to His weary, defeated, and deflated disciples. He took a deep

breath - and from within Himself He breathed on His disciples, saying to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit.”**

The Greek word translated **“Spirit”** is **“pneuma”** - from which we get our words *pneumonia* and *pneumatic*.

The Greek word **“pneuma”** means *wind or breath*.

And the breath Jesus released on His disciples was a picture of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit came from deep *within Jesus...* carrying the nature *of Jesus...* with the intention of continuing the work *of Jesus*.

In that moment the Holy Spirit came as a gentle puff of breath to indwell His followers. Deep passed unto deep. Eternal life - the life of Jesus - was imparted from the Lord to His disciples. *He breathed on them...*

But what was a gentle puff of breath on the Sunday following the resurrection became a **windstorm** seven weeks later on the day of Pentecost. Perhaps in the same upper room - the disciples gathered again - and once more received the Holy Spirit - but this time in a very different way. It was a separate manifestation.

Listen again to how Luke describes the disciples' monumental experience, Acts 2, **“Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.”** **The breath of Jesus had grown into a windstorm!**

And this was not the last spiritual windstorm in the book of Acts. They re-occurred on a frequent basis.

They can even occur today. In fact, I'm praying the wind will begin to blow in this room even as I speak...

Windstorms are powerful forces of nature and they come in different varieties - dust storms, sandstorms, thunderstorms, blizzards, hurricanes, tornadoes...

The wind swirls in and blows hard. It drives the dust, or sand, or rain, or snow, or hail. It picks up whatever object it captures and unleashes it like a torpedo.

A tornado for example, packs winds as high as 250 mph. A twister can cut a path a mile wide and 50 miles long. Once a tornado picked up a sign in Broken Bow, OK and dropped it 30 miles away near DeQueen AR.

Hurricanes are another kind of windstorm - the most massive variety. The swirl of a hurricane - or a typhoon, as they're called in the Pacific - can reach 300 miles in diameter - and can impact an entire coastline.

My wife lived in South Florida, and she tells stories of her father preparing for a hurricane... He not only boarded up the windows of the house, but he would climb up into the palm trees and pick the coconuts - lest they become storm-propelled cannonballs.

A hurricane is a collision of pressures and stresses.

In both a tornado and a hurricane it's not just the wind that causes damage - but the debris it propels.

And this is what happens in a spiritual windstorm...

The power, and dynamic, and influence of the Holy Spirit swirls into a church - a community of believers - and sweeps us off our feet. It propels us to action.

The Spirit becomes the driving force behind our witness, and service, and love. A church that was just taking up space becomes an impact on its community.

Hey, as in a windstorm a gust of the supernatural stirs up the debris. The Holy Spirit captures the dust, or rain, or sign, and empowers it - even launches it...

And if the wind is the Holy Spirit; then, we are the debris... I hope you're not offended by that analogy, but spiritually speaking there's no better symbolism.

Psalm 103:14 says of God **"For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."** On our own, we're as useful to God as the dust on top of the refrigerator.

We're the lint in the filter of the clothes dryer... *until* the Holy Spirit captures us in His influence, and empowers us with His boldness. When caught by the wind, worthless debris is turned into spiritual missiles.

A church - any body of believers - will have no real, lasting impact on its community until it is stirred up, and elevated, and launched out on the wind of God's Spirit.

And when this happens we call it **revival**.

The Baptist churches I grew up in always had an annual revival. They usually consisted of several nights in a row. The best ones seemed to be in a tent. They'd bring in a guest preacher - add a soloist or a musical group - maybe someone who could relate to the youth.

There might even be a prize for the person who brought the most people. The whole idea was to generate some excitement in the local church... *But this is not what I mean when I use the term **revival**.*

A biblical revival is more than a block of meetings on the church calendar. It's *a spiritual windstorm* - a movement of God's Spirit in the hearts of His people.

Author Vance Havner once said, "When I was a boy, preachers used to talk about 'holding a revival.' What we really need is somebody who will turn a revival loose." Real revival is more than holding a meeting.

It occurs when God turns His Spirit loose in the Church; then turns the Church loose on a needy world.

In 1904 a Welch coal miner, named Evan Roberts, had been praying fervently for revival. He was just 25 years old - a tall, skinny fellow - an unlikely flashpoint for anything of colossal proportions. He'd been studying for the ministry when he asked his pastor if he could hold some evening meetings in the church.

At first the attendance was sparse, but before long shops were closing early so employees could get to the church and reserve a seat at the meetings.

Soon the roadways to the church were clogged with out-of-town seekers coming to see what was happening. Often, the services lasted until 4:30 AM.

Sin was confessed. Sinners converted. Homes and families were restored. For the next couple of years, all across Wales, bars closed, jails emptied, churches were filled - even soccer matches were canceled to avoid conflicts with the revival. Welsh miners were so transformed by the Spirit that their horses had to be retrained to work without the prodding of cuss words.

During the revival in Wales, two children were one day heard offering their explanations of what was going on in their community... One child said to the other, *“Do you know what is happening in our town?”*

The other child replied, *“No, I don’t - except that Sunday comes every day now.”* The first child added, *“Why, Jesus has come now to live in our town.”*

Here are two great definitions for revival... Revival is when *Jesus comes to reside and rule in a community*, and when it *feels like everyday is a day of worship.*

Kevin Fast is a Lutheran pastor and a strongman competitor from Ontario, Canada. On September 18, 2009, at a Air Force base, Kevin set his 9th Guinness World Record in the category of *heavy pulling.*

He strapped himself into a harness connected to a C17 Cargo plane. An aircraft that weighs 416,299 lbs.

With his sneakers digging into the runway he leaned forward, and with all his might, he started to pull.

Kevin moved the airplane 8.8 meters, nearly 30 feet, in 1 minute and 16 seconds - setting the world record for *“the heaviest aircraft pulled by a human being.”* It was a tremendous act of near-superhuman strength.

But sadly Kevin’s feat resembles the approach many pastors and churches have taken toward God’s work.

Spreading the Gospel and planting churches is like that Cargo plane. The strength of a few extraordinary folk pull it along for short distances and brief intervals.

But there’s a much easier way to move a C17 Cargo plane than pull it - *just crank it up and take off - let it fly!*

And this is what happens in a revival. When God fires up our engines, and we get the wind of the Spirit under our wings - the Church begins to soar! Now we're no longer inching forward. *God's Spirit* enables *God's church* to fly on the wind of *God's power*.

This is what happened on the day of Pentecost.

A spiritual windstorm sent from God's throne caused the church in Jerusalem to soar spiritually. Luke paints the picture in Acts 2:2, "*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.*"

When you do a close inspection on verse 2, you find some interesting insights regarding spiritual revivals.

Let me share with you a few...

First, the Greek word translated "*suddenly*" means "*unawares or unexpectedly.*" When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples it happened spontaneously...

As serious winds begin to stir they get tracked by the meteorologists. When conditions are conducive for a tornado a *watch* is issued. When a tornado is actually spotted the meteorologists upgrade it to a *warning*.

But when the Spirit came upon the church there was no *watch or warning*... they were just *waiting* as Jesus had told them - waiting for God to fulfill His promise.

When the Spirit came upon the disciples a sound was also heard. The word translated "*sound*" is the word "*echos*" - from which we get our word *echo*.

Here's its definition, "a sound of uncertain affinity - a loud or confused noise - a roar." I've never been in high winds that would constitute a tornado or hurricane, yet here's an account I read from someone who has...

"High speed winds devastated the landscape. The wind blew so hard the walls of the house shook. We looked outside through a window - and surprisingly everything was flying away. We couldn't even open the door because it would've been impossible to close it afterward. One unforgettable thing is the "whistle" of the wind, like a train approaching near your house."

This was what happened on the day of Pentecost when God's Spirit came upon the church. It was like a windstorm. They heard a roar of a strong gust of wind.

Luke calls it "*a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.*" The word translated "*wind*" also adds insight here. It's defined "*to breathe hard or blow.*"

One paraphrase renders verse 2, "Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force..."

A wind from heaven rocked their world.

Immediately after His resurrection Jesus drew a puff of air and *breathed gently* on His disciples - but here He blows on them *a mighty, rushing, gale-force wind*.

Both experiences were indicative of the encounter the disciples had with the Holy Spirit at that time.

At their first engagement the disciples saw the risen Lord, and their faith was rewarded by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus imparted to them His nature when the Holy Spirit took up residence *inside them*.

But at Pentecost when the Spirit came **upon them** it was for empowerment. This time Jesus blew hard on the disciples and filled their sails with a wind that would cause the Gospel ship to sail to its appointed destination despite the storms it would inevitably face.

The early church was born amidst a firestorm of persecution. Originally, the Greek word “**witness**” was “**martyr.**” Today, a *martyr* is person who dies for their faith. This usage was derived from the fact most of the first witnesses paid the ultimate price to take a stand.

Yet even in such a discouraging climate the church prevailed in its mission... because of the Holy Spirit.

Notice too, the word “**rushing**” - it means “**to carry.**”

This was a wind that captured stuff and propelled it through the sky. It launched most of what it touched.

Remember, the impact of a windstorm is produced not just by its high velocity winds, but the winds pick up debris and carry it at tremendous speeds and for far distances. And this is what God wants to do with us.

We are the debris that He wants to launch and send and use to strike targets that need His love and truth. *People get **stirred up** and **sent out** in a windstorm!* Missionaries get *raised up* and *on the road* in a revival.

And notice, the wind in Acts 2 was a “**mighty**” wind. The Amplified Version of the New Testament correctly calls it, “**the rushing of a violent tempest blast...**”

The word “**mighty**” means “**violent or forceful.**”

This is not a mild breeze that leaves you untouched. This is a tempest that rustles your hair, and chaps your face, and knocks you over. It picks up the pieces of your life, and rearranges them in a different way.

The spiritual windstorm is a strong wind that impacts you and dramatically alters your life. You're different after you've been touched by a "*mighty*" wind of God.

And like a tornado or a hurricane you don't experience a mighty wind without incurring some damage. The power of the Spirit *cleans you out* before He *sends you off...* *Conviction occurs - Repentance takes place - Brokenness sets in - Sin gets confessed - Old habits are abandoned - Evil gets renounced...*

The NT says "*we are crucified with Christ*"... There's never been a more violent act than crucifixion.

Don't think you can become a follower of Jesus - then conduct business as usual. To become a Christian is to invite a windstorm of spiritual change to blow into your life and blow out all the selfishness and pride.

This "*rushing mighty wind*" definitely had a violent impact on the early church. A few days later Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Spirit - played the hypocrite.

We're told God judged them quickly. He struck them dead. As with most storms there were casualties.

Hey, the only people who stand in a windstorm are those who bow down - *ask Ananias and Sapphira...*

It reminds me of the three preachers who were discussing the revivals that had occurred in each of their churches. The

Baptist pastor said, “Praise the Lord we had 10 new people come to know Jesus.” Not to be outdone, the Assembly of God pastor fired back, “Well, we had 10 new people filled with the Holy Spirit.”

That’s when the Presbyterian pastor said, “I’ve got even better news than that! As a result of our revival we had 10 cantankerous people leave the church.”

Sometimes that’s what happens in a revival. Stubborn and unrepentant people who dig in their heels and refuse to change, *get convicted or move on.*

A spiritual windstorm is peaceful *and* disturbing. God brings peace to hearts, but unsettledness to our lives.

The Holy Spirit takes us over, and shakes us up, and bakes us in the fire of adversity, and makes us what He wants us to be. A windstorm is the confluence of all kinds of pressure cells and atmospheric stresses.

My point is, if your goal is maintaining the status quo, and keeping your life neatly arranged according to predetermined plans, a windstorm is an uncomfortable place to be. When stuff starts swirling around you’re no longer in control. **But if you want to touch God and know His power, you’ll want to be in the wind.**

For a time one of the world’s foremost authority on the subject of revival was a man named *J. Edwin Orr.*

In the early 1970s he was presenting a series of lectures on revival at Columbia Bible College... A student asked him, “*Dr. Orr, besides praying for revival, what can I do to help bring it about?*” Without hesitation, Orr replied, “*You can let it begin with you.*”

Revival that's community-wide, even world-wide, always begins with a mighty rushing wind of the Spirit that blows through and cleans out God's house first.

Notice again, verse 2, this *“rushing mighty wind filled the whole house.”* Here's another insight. The word translated *“filled”* means *“to cram, or permeate.”* The wind of the Spirit filled every corner of the room.

Believers became so saturated with the Holy Spirit, His influence colored all that they thought and did.

Again the Amplified Version describes in Acts 2:4 the disciples in the upper room who had been revived by the Holy Spirit, *“they were all filled - diffused throughout their souls - with the Holy Spirit...”* *Have you been **diffused throughout** by the Holy Spirit?*

When Kathy cooks a roast, she slow cooks it in a crock pot - and all day long the smell of that roast rises from that pot and invades every corner of the house.

When it's time to eat everyone already knows what's for dinner. All day their senses have been primed.

And this happens in a revival. Spiritual perception is heightened. Folks sense God's presence and power. His love and joy is so thick you can cut it with a knife.

In a revival people sometimes get saved before the pastor preaches. They walk in, and sense so strongly that God is there, they immediately want to respond.

In a actual windstorm - say a sandstorm on the edge of the desert - there's nowhere to escape the wind and sand. It seeps into the house through its cracks and crevasses. It

comes under the doors and between the window panes. The wind's influence is inescapable....

And this is the influence of the Holy Spirit in a spiritual windstorm... Revival produces such a weighty revelation of the reality of God, that people are forced to consider Jesus, and deal decisively with their sin...

In today's world it's so easy for people to drift through life - shrug their shoulders toward Christianity, and assume *a take it or leave it attitude*. The answer for this kind of ambivalence is a spiritual windstorm.

And notice in Acts 2 the word *"whole."* The influence of the Spirit *"filled the whole house where they were sitting."* The Greek word is *"holos"* - from which we get the word *"holistic"* - it means *"complete or thorough."*

For example the idea of holistic medicine is the treatment of not just the human body, but of the body and soul - the treatment includes *the whole person*.

And the influence of the Holy Spirit is always holistic!

He lives inside us *not just on Sunday, but seven days a week...* He alters *not just our eternity, but our today...* He affects us *not only spiritually, but emotionally and physically...* He touches us *not only at church, but on the job and at home...* He influences *not just what we say or think, but how we go about our daily lives...* When a spiritual windstorm blows no corner of our life remains unaffected by the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the book of Acts, the author is describing a spiritual revival... an ongoing windstorm. In Acts 2 the wind

blows hard. You even hear it whistle. By the end of the day, 2000 souls are captured in its swirl.

In Acts 4 the house physically shakes... In Acts 5 the wind whips violently. It takes out a hypocritical couple.

But even the wake up call doesn't diminish the freshness and power of this mighty wind. It creates a storm of love that permeates all the disciples do. Acts 4 sums up life in the midst of this windstorm as "great grace" and "great power." And for the remainder of Acts this wind howls and blows and sends Jesus' disciples to the four corners of the earth as His light and witness.

I want to be caught up in a spiritual windstorm!

In my research for this message I discovered that hurricanes originate in a geographical area known as *The Doldrums*. It's a narrow belt of ocean with low pressure - little, if no, wind - and generally calm seas.

The doldrums lie near the equator - between the trade winds... In the Atlantic Ocean the doldrums are north of the equator, thus there're no hurricanes in the South Atlantic... In the Pacific, the doldrums are on both sides of the equator, thus typhoons can hit in either Northern or Southern Hemispheres. *Ironically, all windstorms originate in the middle of the doldrums.*

And let me say the same is true spiritually.

Fresh breezes of the Holy Spirit - new gusts of supernatural strength - heavenly hurricanes of revival - also start in what we would call the *doldrums* of life...

One day, a Christian, or group of Christians, decides they've wasted too much time in the spiritual doldrums.

They get honest before God. They admit their life is lacking - that they're just going through *the motions of devotion* - and they're living below what God intended!

Their Christianity is powerless.

Their witness is listless.

Their service for Jesus has grown tedious.

Their spirituality has become monotonous.

Their morality seems meaningless.

One day this person or persons wakes up floating in the doldrums. They admit their discontent, and become desperate enough to pray to God to send the wind!...

Here's what you and I need to realize, if we're in the doldrums this morning - *if our life has hit a lull* it only means we're in perfect position to catch a gust of wind!

The Holy Spirit starts His work, at *the point of our neediness*. God starts His movements in the doldrums.

Harley Sheffield gained notoriety through a peculiar mishap. In 1996 he was part of the 15,000 mile relay that brought the Olympic flame from Greece to Atlanta.

Harley's section of the relay passed over a bridge in Tacoma, Washington. He was carrying the flame in a special bracket mounted on his bicycle - when his back tire blew out, and Harley lost control of the bike.

The flame went out. *The celebrated Olympic flame was extinguished*. Bystanders looked on in horror. The public gasped. The precious flame had gone out.

But the Olympic organizers didn't panic. They knew exactly *where to go* and *what to do*. They reached into the van that accompanied the torch, and pulled out a new torch - lighted by the mother flame that was traveling in the van. *And here's the lesson for us...*

If the fire and zeal has died out in your Christian life, all hope is not lost. The mother flame - the Holy Spirit Himself - always travels with us. And He is ready to relight our flame when we humbly call on Him to do so!

Vance Havner once wrote, "The greatest need for America is an old-fashioned, heaven-born, God-sent revival. Throughout the history of the church, when clouds have hung the lowest, when sin has seemed blackest and faith has been weakest, there have always been a faithful few who have... besought the Lord to revive His work... And God has always answered such supplication, filling each heart with His love, kindling each soul with fire from above..."

I love that quote because it highlights the two keys for spiritual revival: **our desperation** and **God's willingness**... *God is willing, but are we desperate?*

I doubt if you knew this, and I couldn't have planned this if I'd tried, but today starts a special observance sponsored by the National Weather Service.

*Get this, May 7-13 - that means today begins **Hurricane Preparedness Week**.* Talk about an act of God's providence to be speaking on this subject today.

And I think God wants us to prepare for a spiritual windstorm. There's nothing we can do to deserve such an

outpouring of the Spirit. *All we can do is ask.* But we should care about God and people enough to ask!

I don't know about you, but I long to see people from our community walk through those church doors, and be so overwhelmed by the grace, and power, and love, and joy, and peace, and presence of God that they'll desire to be saved before we even start the service.

That God's presence will be heavy as we gather...

That a spiritual awareness might start here that stops the gangs in our community, and dries up the drug traffic, and change the schools, and blesses families...

Today, I'm asking God for a windstorm, and I'm anticipating the first gusts this AM... *and I'd like you to join me in asking for the same.* We'll have the worship team come out and lead us in a song... then we'll pause and give some of you an opportunity to pray...

Let's ask the Lord Jesus for a true, heaven-sent, Holy Spirit revival. *And let's pray that it begins in us!*