

Pentecost Sunday/Confirmation C
Peace, Seattle
May 15, 2016
Romans 8:12-17
Acts 2:1-21

Grace, mercy, and peace from God our creator, from Jesus our Savior, and from the Holy Spirit, who calls us into community for the life of the world.

GOING WITH THE SPIRIT

There we were at Camp Lutherwood under overcast skies, putting on life vests, getting our safety orientation from Kaleb, pairing up, and then climbing into canoes—some of us, it turns out, for the very first time.

Our goal was to circumnavigate the west end of the lake by going to the bridge and back, and staying within 100 feet of the shore as a margin of safety. And with that in mind, we began.

And it was fun, right? Learning to maneuver, figuring out how to paddle with our partner so that the canoe would move in the general direction we wanted it to move.

And we weren't doing bad either, though some of the routes we traced on the water looked more like **LOOPS and **SQUIGGLES** than anything resembling a straight line.**

And then a headwind came up. And getting to our halfway point – the Beach at the far end of the lake—proved more challenging still!

So those of us in front clustered together, waiting for others to catch up.

Now Kaleb, the Lutherwood staff person mandated by camp rules to come along with us on the journey, had planned to paddle in a kayak. But after getting everyone else in the water he discovered that the one remaining kayak was unusable. **So he grabbed a canoe.**

And if you've ever tried canoeing solo, you know how difficult that can be.

With all the weight in the rear of the boat, the front-end lifts up, and when the wind comes up, it turns the canoe like a weathervane, and there's nothing you can do to stop it.

So while six of us waited for our two novices to catch up, I scanned the lake, wondering where Kaleb had gone off to.

Turns out that after the wind picked up, he'd had to give up paddling entirely and head to shore. Once there he was forced to walk along the shore through the brush, towing his canoe by its rope.

Sure enough, after we beached our boats at the halfway point, we finally spied him, and were reunited at last.

Today's texts are all about the Spirit.

And the Bible's word for SPIRIT also means WIND and BREATH.

In today's story from ACTS, that Wind and Breath and Spirit of God comes so swiftly, so suddenly, and so powerfully on God's people, that they're driven out from the familiar into unknown territory.

Peter, astounded by what he sees and hears, seizes the moment to say, what they were experiencing is exactly what God had in mind all along:

*“In the last days God’s spirit will be poured out on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.”*

On that first Pentecost God’s Holy Wind propelled God’s fledgling people on an odyssey that had them touching and reaching and exploring all sorts of unknown and newfound shores—places they never would have gone had the Spirit not led them there—pushed them there.

You get the distinct impression in ACTS that resisting the Spirit of God is as useless as trying to paddle a canoe solo, against the wind.

And sure enough, many times throughout ACTS, God’s people find themselves having to let go of their agendas and prejudices and assumptions about what God supposedly wanted from them, in order to truly see where the Spirit wanted them to go.

The point, of course, is that it’s much easier on this journey of life when we get aligned with the Spirit of God and feel that energy, that divine wind, **PUSHING us along.**

For the second half of our canoe trip around Samish, we switched up some pairs and put an experienced paddler in each boat. With the wind now at our backs, it was a whole lot easier and more enjoyable heading back.

Alyssa, Juju, Kathryn, Joanne, Ginny—this journey of faith we’re on is not always a straight line or clearly marked route. And wading in the water, like paddling in a canoe, isn’t always easy.

There are plenty of voices ready to tell you that it’s not worth even getting in the boat; that following Jesus is pure fantasy, or doesn’t really matter, or just isn’t worth it.

Voices like these can tempt you to forget who loved you into this world; tempt you to forget to whom you belong.

But you know better. You know the truth that being part of a community people doing their best to live their faith—people who come at this Table again and again—makes you stronger, not weaker; and makes you more not less whole.

From before you were born God started loving you. In the waters of baptism, Christ left his mark on you. And today, together, you affirm—and we affirm with you—that the Spirit has so much more in store for you! So much more!

God isn’t finished with you yet. And we can’t wait to see what the Spirit is going to do with you—where the Spirit will lead you—next.

NICOLE...

LADIES!

Now we want to hear your voices! We invite each of you, in turn, to come up and share in your own words, something about the faith you are claiming as your own...

Alyssa, Juju (Kathy Williams), Kathryn, Joanne, Ginny

Let's thank God for the gifts we see in our Confirmands. (applause)

When we talked about favorite hymns on our retreat at Lutherwood, you came up with quite a list, and many of your choices are part of this service.

What stands out to me is how these hymns affirm what you also say in your writing:

That your identity as a Christian is not simply a label but a calling.

Now it's time to sing one of those hymns, the one based on Mary's song—the Magnificat—the one in which Mary says YES to all that God has done and all that God has yet to do.

The Canticle of the Turning. Please rise as you're able. #723