

Wind and water

John 7:37-39

June 12, 2011

Holy Spirit! Spirit of the living God! Spirit of Jesus! Blow!

Blow the winds of your Spirit on me and over me and around me and through me! Blow me where you will. Blow me wherever you will, wherever your winds will push me.

Blow away the dust, all the layers of dust and chaff accumulated on my body. Blow away every thing on me and attached to me that is unnecessary and unimportant and frivolous. Blow away all the trappings of this world that weigh me down and slow me down and mean nothing.

Blow everywhere. Blow into hidden corners and back alleys and forgotten hovels. Blow doors open. Let your winds open dark and secret places to the light of day, and exchange the air, stale and lifeless, that fills them with the fresh and enlivening winds of your Spirit.

Blow strong and hard. Blow so strong and so hard in my face that I can hardly breathe because there is so much wind, so much air.

Blow and blow and blow, until I know I am alive, until we all know we are alive, alive in a world that is alive, alive in a world where things are happening, alive in a world where you are making things happen.

Holy Spirit! Spirit of the living God! Spirit of Jesus! Pour!

Pour out your streams of life-giving water on me and over me and around me and in me! Let your waters pour onto me, not a trickle, but a torrent. Let your waters pour over me and leave me soaking wet, from head to toe.

Sweep me up in the powerful current of your waters and take me where you will, and as I go let me splash and swim and dive to my heart's content, to your heart's content.

Let your waters wash over me and wash me clean. Wash off all the grime and dirt. Wash off all the dry and cracking and dead skin. Leave only what you have made, the man you have made good, the man you have made beautiful.

And let me drink. Let me drink deeply of your waters, cold and refreshing and life-giving. Fill me with the life that only your waters can give. Fill me with you.

God's Holy Spirit. Wind and water. Wind and fire and water.

The Spirit is ruah, pneuma ... spirit, breath, wind. God's Spirit is the wind that blows us wherever it will, the breath that animates all life.

The Spirit is fire. God's Spirit is seen as tongues of flame, full of energy, powerful and purifying.

The Spirit is water. God's Spirit is poured out on us and into us, cleansing and refreshing and giving life.

Wind, fire, water. All are basic, elemental, and vital for life. All are powerful and unpredictable and uncontrollable, too, even dangerous. Think of tornadoes and hurricanes and wildfires and floods. But we cannot live without any of them. We cannot live without air. We cannot live without fire. We cannot live without water.

God's Spirit is basic, elemental, vital for life. God's Spirit is powerful and unpredictable and uncontrollable, subject only to God's will and God's control. And we cannot live at all, any kind of life that matters, without the Spirit. God's Spirit is the water of life.

Tell me. Which would you choose: to have all the money you could ever need or want and no water? Or to have all the water you could ever need or want and no money? That's how valuable water is! That's how valuable the Spirit is!

The Spirit is water. Wind and fire are the more common images for Spirit, images we usually associate with Pentecost. I hadn't thought of the Spirit as water before, but John's gospel says the Spirit is what Jesus was talking about when Jesus said this:

Whoever is thirsty should come to me, and whoever believes in me should drink. As the scripture says, "Stream of life-giving water will pour out from [him] ..."

The life-giving water that pours out from Jesus is the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, God's own Spirit, given to all who believe. The Spirit is the water that flows from God, an emblem of healing and hope and life, an essential element of the new world, the new kingdom, God promises to bring into being.

The prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 14:8-9) spoke of it ...

When that day comes, fresh water will flow from Jerusalem, half of it to the Dead Sea and the other half to the Mediterranean. It will flow all year

long, in the dry season as well as the wet. Then the Lord will be king over all the earth; everyone will worship him as God and know him by the same name.

The prophet Ezekiel (from Ezekiel 47:1-12) spoke of it ...

The man led me back to the entrance of the Temple. Water was coming out from under the entrance and flowing east, the direction the Temple faced. It was flowing down from under the south part of the temple past the south side of the altar. The man then took me out of the temple area by way of the north gate and led me around to the gate that faces east. A small stream of water was flowing out at the south side of the gate. With his measuring rod the man measured 560 yards downstream to the east and told me to wade through the stream there. The water came only to my ankles. Then he measured another 560 yards, and the water came up to my knees. Another 560 yards further down, the water was up to my waist. He measured 560 yards more, and there the stream was so deep I could not wade through it. It was too deep to cross except by swimming ...

Then the man took me back to the bank of the river, and when I got there I saw that there were very many trees on each bank. He said to me, "This water flows through the land to the east and down into the Jordan Valley and to the Dead Sea. When it flows into the Dead Sea, it replaces the salt water of that sea with fresh water. Wherever the stream flows, there will be all kinds of animals and fish. The stream will make the water of the Dead Sea fresh, and wherever it flows, it will bring life ... On each bank of the stream all kinds of trees will grow to provide food. Their leaves will never wither, and they will never stop bearing fruit. They will have fresh fruit every month, because they are watered by the stream that flows from the Temple. The trees will provide food, and their leaves will be used for healing people."

And John wrote of this water in the book of Revelation (Revelation 22:1-2) ...

The angel also showed me the river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal, and coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb and flowing down the middle of the city's street. On each side of the river was the tree of life, which bears fruit twelve times a year, once each month; and its leaves are for the healing of the nations.

This is the water Jesus was talking about, the water that brings life, the water that heals people, the water that heals nations, the water that is God's Spirit poured out on all who believe.

This is the water Jesus was talking about when he said to the Samaritan woman he had met by a well:

If only you knew what God gives and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would ask him, and he would give you life-giving water ...

And this water flows from Jerusalem. It flows from the Temple. It flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It comes from Jesus. This life-giving water is the Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit who is Jesus ... Jesus with us, Jesus among us, Jesus in us.

Look around you! Do you see? Do you all the thirsty people?

This world is filled with thirsty people! People with parched lips, parched souls. People with bodies and spirits dry and cracked and dying. People desperate for something that will quench their raging thirst. People who have lived for months, for years, for a lifetime with no taste of real water, no taste of life-giving water.

Where can they get this water? Only from the Spirit.

And where can they find the Spirit? In you ...