

Glimpses of the Spirit

Ezekiel 37:1-14 , Acts 2:1-21, John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15, : Psalm 104:24-34 6-04-06

Have you ever been sitting somewhere when you saw something go by in a flash out of the corner of your eye? It could have been a mouse, a cat, a hummingbird, a butterfly or any number of things. But, when you turned to see just what it was it was gone. Somehow you sensed that, even if you could not see or identify whatever it was, there was something there.

In all of our scripture readings and hymns for this morning, this Pentecost Sunday, there is something of which people catch at least a glimpse. Or, there is something promised that will be there that will carry people forward in life with renewed strength and devotion to God. That something in all cases is the Spirit of God, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit.

On this special Sunday, which comes along fifty days following Easter, we recognize the eternal presence of the Spirit in the lives and religions of people in the world. The Spirit is not a newcomer on the scene following the death of Jesus. It was present with God from the beginning of time when the Spirit blew across the waters of creation.

When the Doctrine of the Trinity was developed, the Spirit became one of the three beings inherent in it. For me, the Trinity has always represented the presence of God--that presence that dwells above us, among us and within us. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit-- three manifestations of the presence of God. Of all three, the Spirit seems to be the most intangible.

But to Ezekiel, the Spirit was very real bringing life back to the nation Israel when it came along and brought all of those dry bones to life. Ezekiel's vision shows us that no matter how desolate life may become for us, there is always hope, there is always a second chance at life. The dry bones in the deserts of our lives may live again when the spirit of God comes along and re-energizes them. This vision is thought by some to be an indirect anticipation of the Doctrine of the Resurrection.

In the gospel of John, Jesus promised to send an Advocate to the disciples after his death. This would be a presence that would bring them back to life, charge them up and encourage them at the very least, to move forward in life again. He knew that they would be confused and scattered and frightened. He knew that they would need the Spirit of truth to help them testify on his behalf. The Spirit would reinforce Christ's message and grant it life far beyond his time and place.

Whether the disciples absorbed this information Jesus gave them directly or not, we do not know. I am sure they heard him just as we so often hear one another, sometimes without fully processing the information. But there could be no doubt about the presence of the Holy Spirit when they were gathered in that upper room so long ago and it blasted through that place reminding them of their mission and calling. What a re-awakening.

It is a fascinating story, full of action and aptly placed in the book of Acts. But whether we accept the story of Pentecost as being actual fact or not, we know that something happened that caused a ragtag band of followers to draw up all the strength they had remaining after the death of their friend and leader and to make of him and his teachings an enduring religion. If we stop to think of the history of our faith and the history of the institutional church, we must, from time to time, be astounded at the fact that they ever survived at all. There is something that propelled our faith out of the small region in which it developed to grow and flourish in almost every corner of our present day world. That something was and is the Holy Spirit. As it did others long ago,

it touches and inspires us and helps us see clearly what it is we need to do to live lives in rather poor imitations of Christ to continue his work and his bidding.

The Spirit is always present for us whether we recognize its existence or not. When we do it can change our lives in positive ways. It can reassure us that no matter what may befall us in our journey through this world, that everything will come out right. The knowledge of the presence of the Spirit can cause us to look at all of life from a renewed and broader perspective and put some of its puzzle pieces into their proper places enabling us to give them the proper emphasis.

The Spirit calls to us from ancient days and it calls to us from tomorrow. We can hear its call, catch a glimpse of it as it moves by us. It is always with us, as it was promised to be.

You call from tomorrow,

You break ancient schemes,

From the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams,

Our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.

With bold new decisions your people arise.

Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness, calling and free,

Spirit, spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea. Amen