

St. Andrew's Sermons
The Rev. John Rohrs
Day of Pentecost; June 12, 2011
Reading: Acts 2:1-11

Come, Holy Spirit

See if this sounds familiar. Andie and I made a decision recently about something in our family life. The details aren't important but we'd made a decision and we felt good about it; and then, suddenly, we got a phone call that sent us back to square one. You know what I mean? That happens all the time. Second thoughts, an illness, a change in circumstances: whatever it is it's something that comes along that upends the plans you thought you had made.

Well, I'm a planner and I hate when that happens. So I called my spiritual director to lament basically and she stopped me, and she said, "John, next Sunday is Pentecost. You have to remember this is how the Holy Spirit works." I said, "What do you mean?" And she said, "Well, look at Jesus. When he was baptized, he made a decision. He embraced his identity. The Holy Spirit came like a dove to bless him; but the very next moment that same Spirit drove him into the wilderness. That's how the Holy Spirit works – always testing us and pushing us forward."

I'm sorry to say, but I think she's right. Look at the disciples. When Jesus ascended, what they wanted was reassurance. They needed the Holy Spirit to be what Jesus promised: a comforter, an advocate to guide them on their way. And frankly they were probably hoping the Spirit would guide them to the Sea of Galilee, where they could go back to catching fish. They'd been on quite a journey, and you couldn't blame them if they needed a break. But the Spirit had other plans. On the Day of Pentecost, the day we celebrate this morning, the Spirit came upon them like wind and fire. Before they knew it, the disciples had spilled into the streets and as the crowd gathered they began to share the gospel in languages they didn't even understand.

Now we typically think about this as a moment of healing and unity, as people of every race and nation came together to hear the good news. And that's true; it's a powerful image for the founding of the church. But for the disciples themselves, it had to be scary and overwhelming. Imagine the fear and exhilaration when the Holy Spirit descended and led them into the streets. There was no going back to

their old lives. In that moment they truly became fishers of men, just as Jesus told them they would be. They were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The question today, as we recall this story, is what about us? Where is the Holy Spirit moving in our lives and our community? If you're like me, maybe it's where the path seems clear. Or maybe where you feel reluctant to change, where life is a little too comfortable. It's in those places, in those moments that the Holy Spirit comes to challenge us and push us.

And that goes for all of us. One thing I love about the story of Pentecost is that everyone is included. Not just people of different races and nations but people of every age and station of life. Peter quotes the prophet Joel, who says the Holy Spirit will come upon every person: sons and daughters will prophesy, young men will see visions, old men will dream dreams. Everyone is included; everyone is meant to leave their comfort zones from time to time and to be transformed by the Spirit – the Spirit that challenges us, inspires us, and leads us ever onward toward a new and different and deeper life. Amen.