

Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

The word of the lord
Thanks be to God

We interrupt this service...

I needed a break. I had for a long long time. I needed a break. Life had been complicated and messy for a while and I was exhausted. I needed to get away. I knew this. For years I knew this. So I finally decided to do something about it. I made plans and booked a flight to someplace I had never been before and went to Austin, Texas for a few days at the end of April. I went alone. I stayed in a place that is owned by a friend of a friend in Dripping Springs, about 40 minutes West of Austin. I desperately needed this interruption from life. I got to Austin, rented my car and headed for an adventure that would restore my soul and remind me that God is always present and always near and the Spirit is always at work.

While I was in Austin, I went back and forth on what I was going to do while there. Finally, I realized that I could do whatever I wanted. I had no other person to be concerned with. No agenda. Just time to be alone. To read and write and do whatever I decided to do from moment to moment.

I spent time walking around and taking pictures of the many murals in Austin. One day, I met up with one of my mentors and friends who I had not seen since Liam, my son, was about 3 years old. He is now 15. She and I talked about life and faith and calling and church. It was wonderful. Other than that, I did whatever I wanted to do without being tied to a schedule. It was freeing to say the least. One night, on a whim, I decided I wanted to drive into Austin to see the bats I had heard about. I looked online and decided to book a \$13 boat tour to see the bats emerge from the Congress Avenue Bridge that crosses Lady Bird Lake.

Now, I never had an affinity for bats. I was always a little afraid of bats. I found bats to be creepy and a little gross. In fact, the only bat I ever liked was Batman, and even then only one lived up to the hype. Christian Bale can do no wrong in my eyes. Yet, something kept nudging me to go see them. And I have to tell you, those bats were the highlight of my trip. If you ever get a chance to see the bats in Austin, let me advise you that the \$13 boat tour is the way to go.

As the day began to wind down, those of us who booked the tour piled into pontoon boats. The guide on my boat was full of knowledge on the skyline of Austin and had a wealth of information on bats. I was glad I was able to obtain this knowledge from him. It made me appreciate the bats in a way I would not have had I not taken this tour.

As the sun began to set, people in kayaks and paddleboards made their way to the bridge along with all the boat tours. People gathered on the riverbank at a viewing area. Others lined up along the sides of the bridge.

There had to be several hundred people who stopped what they were doing in order to watch these bats. All of them, letting these bats interrupt their evening for a little while.

As the boat went under the bridge, we were told to be quiet so we could hear the bats. You could not see the bats as they were wedged between slats under the bridge, but man, could you hear them. A loud, high pitched screech filled the air as they began to wake and prepare for their evening.

750,000 Mexican Free Tailed Bats reside under the bridge. All female. All pregnant. All going to give birth later this summer to one baby each making the bat population under the bridge 1.5 million. The female bats stick together, knowing there is safety in numbers. They send out scout bats at night to make sure the coast is clear and no predators are waiting. When the scout bats see all is well, they begin to alert the others and they come out in droves. Tiny bats emerging from the bridge one after the other in a swirl of black and the sound of screeching. The people standing and watching are in awe. It was beautiful. It was breathtaking. It was a reminder of the amazing power of God's creation. And for this minister who sat there, watching, listening, allowing myself to be immersed in the experience, I felt it to be a Holy Spirit moment, one that reminded me of Pentecost.

We often associate the Holy Spirit with sweet quiet doves. The early celtic christians saw the Holy Spirit as an obnoxious loud wild goose. That night in Austin, Texas, I decided the Holy Spirit was a Mexican Freetail Bat...A female Mexican Freetail Bat, since the words for the Holy Spirit are feminine in both the Hebrew and Aramaic. There were no tongues of fire. Only the sights and sounds of God's majestic creation at work. The emergence of the bats happens in the evening. they interrupt people's plans, causing them to stop for a moment. The Holy Spirit does this. Sometimes the spirit comes in quiet, dove-like ways, and sometimes in loud goose-like ways, and other times in powerful bat-like ways. The Holy Spirit has the ability to come along and stir us all, renewing and reconnecting us with God and one another, and you never know when or where it will come, but she will come and interrupt whatever we are doing when we least expect it.

In the text from John, which Frecky read for us, the disciples are gathered together on that first Easter morning. They are afraid. They are unsure. And suddenly Jesus appears, interrupting whatever they are doing, and greets them with words of peace. "Peace be with you," he says. He shows them the wounds in his hands and sides and again he says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you." Then he breathes on them. Can you imagine? Pneuma, is the Greek word that means breath,

wind, and spirit. Jesus breathes on the disciples and they receive the divine, the life giving breath...God's breath to fill them so they can continue to do the work they have been preparing for with Jesus.

The scripture from the book of Acts takes place after the disciples witnessed Christ ascending to Heaven. They are filled with joy. It is the time of the festival of Pentecost. Pentecost occurs 50 days after the festival of Passover. The Feast of Weeks was originally an agricultural festival celebrated seven weeks after the beginning of the grain harvest. Later, this festival was celebrated fifty days after Passover, (Pentecost meaning 50th), and began to be less about agriculture and more about Israel's sacred history, relating Pentecost to the celebration of the Law being given to Moses. So here they were, celebrating Pentecost, Jews from every nation were gathered in Jerusalem.

The disciples are there. They were gathered. We don't know if it was just the 12 or if there were more of Jesus' followers there as well, but we know they are gathered when suddenly, there was a rush of violent wind and tongues of fire...life interrupted by the Holy Spirit when it was least expected. Suddenly the disciples find themselves speaking in various languages so that each and every person gathered for this celebration of Pentecost could hear the stories of Jesus being told in his or her own language. Every person was suddenly able to understand what was being told to them about Christ.

Fred Craddock and Eugene Boring explain this as an undoing of the tower of Babel. In the Tower of Babel story, the people try to stay together and speak the same language and go against what God has instructed the people to do, which is to go forth and fill the earth. God becomes angry and scatters the people, giving them various languages to speak. Through this act, this interruption of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, God is reconciling Godself to the people through the sharing of The Good News of Christ, so that suddenly all people, regardless of race, age, social status, gender, language, or culture could be united under the love of Christ. This Holy spirit does not come for only a few, but comes for all people, and gives all of us who profess our faith gifts to share the love of God through Christ with those they encounter.

The disciples, needing to catch their breath in a time of turmoil in John. The disciples celebrate Jesus' return to God in Acts. Whatever they were doing at those moments, the Spirit showed up and interrupted their plans for the day. The Spirit, which can give strength and peace, can also cause movements to begin through a gust of wind. And this is what we celebrate today. We celebrate that the spirit greets us and moves us and

stirs something within us, giving us the courage to let people know that God is God and the love of Christ is for everyone in every place at every time. It is an awakening of our souls as the spirit dances inside of us.

In March of 2020, a pandemic came along and separated us from one another. It was a time when we literally and figuratively had difficulty breathing. Many of us stayed in our homes. When we went out we wore masks which made breathing a little harder. For those who became sick with Covid 19, some suffered from having it turn into pneumonia. Many lost their lives, taking their last breath. Some, who became sick, like myself, found themselves in need of using an inhaler for the first time. During the shut down, The loneliness made it feel as if it were hard to breathe. The isolation created depression and fear among many. It was so hard to breathe. It was hard to live like that. It was as if someone had sucked the air out of us. For around 18 months we were unable to gather together as a church.

The pandemic is over. We have been so happy to be back in this sanctuary and have people in the pews for a while now. Not just in gathering for worship, but gathering for other events and activities as well. This past March, many gathered for a time of art and faith. Members of this church donated items to be woven into a tapestry. Stories of those items were shared, each a meaningful reminder of who we WERE as Ladue Chapel, who we ARE as Ladue Chapel, and in some ways who WILL BE as Ladue Chapel. We are people who come from all over. We are people who were scattered for 18 months and even as we came back together, we did so cautiously and carefully in order to ensure that members of every age and stage were welcome and felt safe being here. We were scattered, and now, look at this piece of art. We are all here...woven together...our stories woven together..

In this tapestry are linen napkins used for many many meals. There are baptismal gowns, bell choir vests and pins. There are pieces of t-shirts from walks and runs, cancer research, autism walks, shirts from Habitat for Humanity and more. There are neckties: little clownfish necktie, a necktie with a panda bear, one with a tiger. There are pieces of wedding gowns and veils. There are Tae Kwon Do belts and pieces of music. Ribbons representing our children's choir and this year's confirmation class. All woven together. Items from your homes and closets. There are items from members who are deceased, items from members of all ages, including small children and babies recently baptized. After being scattered, we are all together in this piece of art...and today...today, the day we see this, it is a day of reconciliation. A day where the Holy Spirit stops and interrupts us, interrupts this service, once more and challenges us to go out into the world and grow the church and bring the people together through sharing the

Good News. The Holy Spirit breathes on us new life, filling our church with oxygen and hope. It is a new day for the church universal. It is a new day for Ladue Chapel. It is a new day where we celebrate the Holy Spirit, the Ruach HadKodesh, the pneuma. We celebrate the Holy Spirit alive and well in each of us and allow it to interrupt our service for a moment so we may feel it move in this place and time, gifting us, empowering us, sending us, to be agents of love and hope in a world that so desperately needs love and hope. Can you feel the Holy Spirit? Do you see it? Do you sense it? See if you can...(silence for a moment).

Do you feel it? It's here. It is present. It is real. It is pulling us and calling us and leading us. Gifting us a variety of "languages," different gifts and skills, for us to use in order to share in Christ's mission and ministry. Allow the interruption to happen. Make space for the Holy Spirit in your life. Make room for the Spirit in worship. Let it in and see what amazing things God can do. Amen.