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~ John 14:8-17 ~

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Synod of Alberta and the Territories

Blow Holy Spirit! (Rev. Trish Schmermund)

*Blow Holy Spirit! Blow through us!
Send us to places far and near,
to the depths of our hearts
untangling the web of our confusion.*

*Blow Holy Spirit! Blow through us!
Peel away the layers of ego
or shame that has built its house around us
and rebuild the foundations of love and trust
that we used to know so well!*

*Blow Holy Spirit! Blow through us!
Spike the waters of baptism
with a free-pour of grace unhindered,
break the bread of Christ, release
a fragrance fresh with call and vision.*

*For a new day is today
it has to be when Christ comes in!
The old is sloughed away*

*and the new comes
without our being prepared.*

Grace and peace to you from Jesus who loves us.

Welcome to Pentecost Sunday!

Today the churches are decked out in red – a sure sign of something special and today it is for the fire and energy of the Holy Spirit – a force that dwells within us!

Did you realize that? That the Holy Spirit is within us? It's sort of hard to describe or imagine, but this was what Jesus was talking about in John's Gospel today. As you might know, this part of John's Gospel contains passages of deep encouragement and love from Jesus for his followers; his days were coming to an end and there was still much to teach and much love to share. And work, there was still the work of passing on to them the responsibility of ministry that would continue after Jesus ascended. There was no time anymore for roaming the countryside or challenging religious or political leaders. Jesus' followers were soaking in all they could, even though they didn't quite get it yet. They would be the ones to continue Jesus' ministry by the power of the Holy Spirit!

In one parish I served, instead of a sermon on Pentecost Sunday, we invited anyone to share stories of faith. It was an opportunity to hear how people sensed God's presence in their lives. How did they understand God at work in themselves? Every year I was moved by story after story of families, struggles, joys and sadness where people sensed God's holy presence to be just that! Present! It was inspiring! I remember one young father who was a new Christian, having been baptized with his son only a couple years prior. He thought it would be easy to get up and speak – after all he was comfortable with public speaking and sharing his thoughts, but when he got up to talk about God in his life, he kept getting choked up. "I don't know why I'm getting so choked up!" he expressed, surprised that his controlled delivery was being shaken. "It's the Holy Spirit!" I called out!

Indeed, it was the Spirit at work in him, love and grace colliding with his self-understanding, sparking a new fire!

And this is what I find so amazing about the Holy Spirit – it's persistence and abundance. There's never a shortage, it's never rationed or doled out in carefully managed pieces, it's never saved for a rainy day. It just is and it is in us, just as Jesus knew the Father was in him. Rev Dr Karoline Lewis says this is a critical point to understand in John's gospel saying, *the relationship that Jesus has with the father is the very one the believer has with Jesus and the father*. The point is "oneness" like John's description of the vine and the branches. Oneness as we gather together in worship and work. Oneness in song and prayer and justice. Oneness in joy, communing, praying. Oneness as God's family.

I wonder what would happen if today we leaned into this abiding Holy Spirit? If we pulled out the stops and trusted that our very bodies are temples. If we saw in every breeze and stream and star and sunrise and garden – God’s ample provision sustaining us?

You see, we are ever tempted to make a go of things ourselves. We work hard, learn and grow, we build homes and families and investments, we shop and spend and plan for the future as best we can. But we struggle too – with anxiety, we see the ever-deepening divide between those who have and have not. We see homelessness all around us, and feel helpless when the news speaks to another missing person or someone lost to substance use. We’re perplexed over how to solve the environmental problems we’re learning about. We have a lot of fear about the future, magnified everyday by newsfeeds and social media. Goodness, we don’t even know what or whom to believe anymore!

We all know our churches are struggling. We feel as if there is never enough time or energy or volunteers or offerings. Buildings are selling like hotcakes if they are not already in disrepair. We bemoan the absence of young people. We’ve left behind spiritual practices that have nurtured us.

So, if we’re honest, we’re not making a really good go of things. And this multiplies the stress and anxiety we feel. It’s almost as if we’re waiting for someone else to come and fix things for us. Who would that be? Who else could we possibly be waiting for? We end up sounding like Philip, saying, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Just make it easy Jesus! Do something so we can believe!

And Jesus does, with this incredible gift of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate that was promised and is here. Jesus has already given us the knowledge, the resources and the ability to change the world in which we live simply, because we have been gifted with God’s presence within. Let me encourage you to hold to this truth – that you are beloved, you have enough, you will find joy in unwinding the sheets of self-indulgence, you are meant to be part of a beloved family! Embracing this, giving our whole lives to Christ, enables our families and communities, leadership and children to be transformed. Remember that God is all about and around us – not in a way to smooth everything over – but as a presence that can never be shaken or taken away.

Blow Holy Spirit! Blow through us!

Temper our senses to the rhythm of your breath

breathe into our dry cracked churches

Let your people live! Let us live again!

Blow Holy Spirit! Blow through us!

Be the wind of change we need

but seldom want for fear

*that we will be asked to
do more or do different or do less.*

*For we yearn to trace the lines
of our lives onto the map of your body
setting our course to the ways
established by generous sacrifice
a course as unfamiliar as it is beautiful.*

*Blow Holy Spirit! Blow through us!
Remind us of the balm of love
that soothes our fear and trepidation
as we doubt your presence
and purpose in our lives.*

*Blow Holy Spirit! Blow through us!
Gather your people from their own ego or despair
lift us out of the baptismal waters
so that life may begin again
and again and again.*

*Blow Holy Spirit! Blow through us!
When we are lost or
think you have forgotten us
let us taste and see, touch and live
the glory of our resurrected lives.*

Thanks be to God! Amen!