

“Burns and Blows: The Spirit Moves”

June 8, 2025 — Selby United Church – Scripture Acts 2:1-21

By Tricia Cammaart

The Holy Spirit. As you just heard in our children’s story, the Holy Spirit is part of the trinity, God our Father our Creator, Jesus his son and the Holy Spirit.

We often view the Holy Spirit as a gentle nudge guiding us along our life path. It’s God’s living presence with us, guiding us, empowering us, comforting us and transforming us to live more like Jesus. You may experience a nudge to do the right thing. Maybe sometimes you feel prompted to apologize, prompted to tell the truth, maybe stand up for someone even when it’s hard. That quiet push is the Spirit guiding you.

If you ever feel overwhelmed or anxious and suddenly you feel calm or reassured - that’s the Holy Spirit bringing you peace. You may find yourself having a conversation with someone and offer encouragement without planning it or even know where the words came from, but it is exactly what they needed to hear. The Holy Spirit speaks through us in those moments.

You could be trying to solve a problem or create something meaningful and a fresh idea or solution comes to mind. The Holy Spirit gives you wisdom and creativity.

Maybe you have messed up and feel gently corrected, not crushed or filled with shameful emotion but motivated to change, that’s the spirit helping you grow.

As I was writing this sermon, I started to pay attention to the people around me and see the Holy Spirit at work. One night at Cornerstone, a little girl want to pray for her mom, and so we asked “oh is she okay, is she sick or hurt”, because that is usually why we pray for someone, she said “no I just want to pray for her, just because” I looked over at Mallory and we both put our hands on our hearts and made this oh my heart gesture. That was the Holy Spirit.

At the playgroup on Tuesday mornings, the moms and caregivers have this overwhelming desire to be here. They say its the best playgroup around. When you ask them why, they cannot really describe why they need to be here, I think that is the Holy Spirit at work.

There was a post on FB in the what’s going on in Napanee Group: a woman said “ to the guy in the truck in front of me this morning at the Stinsons Time Hortons, THANK YOU SO MUCH! You didn’t know I was crying in my truck, it’s definitely been a tough morning for me and you buying my tea made it a little better, so again thank you so much, it meant a lot!” Perhaps the gentlemen in the truck had a little nudge from the Holy Spirit.

This is the Holy Spirit many of us know and love — the Spirit of peace and joy, who comforts us in our grief and strengthens us when we fall. This is the Spirit we sense

Like a shield
Or like a sword

May the sound
Of God’s name
Spill from your lips
As you have never
Heard it before

May your knowing
Be undone
May mystery
Cofound your
Understanding

May the divine
Ran down
In strange syllables
Yet with
An ancient familiarity
A knowing borne
In the blood,
The ear,
The tongue,
Bringing clarity
That comes
Not in stone
Or in steel
But in fire,
In flame.

May there come
One searing word-
Enough to bare you
To the bone,
Enough to set
Your heart ablaze,
Enough to make you
Whole again

Praise be to God, Amen

- speak with love and truth,
- act with humility and courage,
- serve with joy and compassion,
- and live with a power that points to something — Someone — greater than ourselves.

We know we are living a Spirit-filled life when Christ becomes more and more evident in us.

It’s not about a moment. It’s about a movement — of the Holy Spirit shaping us into the likeness of Jesus, day by day.

So our motivation shouldn’t be status, emotion, or even gifting — but a longing to be close to Christ and to become like Him, from the inside out.

The Blessing That Undoes Us

By Jan Richardson

On the day
You are earing
Your certainty
Like a cloak
And your sureness
Goes before you

walking with us every day. But does the Spirit always come in nudges? How else would we experience the Holy Spirit?

Jesus taught the disciples many lessons - they were told to serve others, to do the work of a servant. They were taught to love, even their enemies. They were taught to be kind to the poor, to heal and nourish the sick, respect women and respect those of other cultures and backgrounds and to let the children come. They were taught to follow Jesus' lead and to do the right thing, similar to how we live our lives every day. Living by these little nudges to put us in the right direction.

After the resurrection, the disciples were instructed by Jesus to go to Jerusalem and wait to be baptized by the Holy Spirit. The disciples had no idea what they were waiting for. But they gathered together and they prayed constantly, praying to God to answer their prayers.

And what did the disciples receive? "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues] as the Spirit enabled them."

Using words like "blowing of a violent wind", "tongues of fire"- that does not sound like a gentle nudge.

Jesus had promised them the Holy Spirit would come, so they were expecting *something*. But the way it happened was extraordinary and probably far beyond what the disciples had imagined. They might have been *waiting* for the Spirit, but the power, boldness, and visible signs that came with it must have been awe-inspiring and shocking. It changed everything for them—they went from timid, and slow, hiding in fear disciples to bold preachers and fearless leaders speaking with conviction and authority.

The Holy Spirit descended like a violent rushing wind, then all the people gathered started speaking in tongues, speaking their own languages but everyone understood what was being said. Now "some sneered and said, "They're drunk on new wine"

And then "Peter, stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and proclaimed to them!"

"It will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out my spirit on all people: then your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. I will even pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women and they will prophecy. I will display wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood and fire and a cloud of smoke. "

And this burning blowing Holy Spirit did not just affect Peter but all of Jesus' disciples. The fearless leaders proclaim the gospel in front of both large crowds

and menacing authorities. After Pentecost, Jesus' disciples even go to jail gladly where they sing hymns that shake their prison's walls.

In our scripture today, it reminds us that the Spirit will also sometimes act in ways that can be far less comforting as little nudges and far more unsettling.

The Holy Spirit also burns and blows.

The Holy Spirit can also push and shove! And we may think if this is the Spirit that God wants to pour out on us, maybe we can run and hide when God pours out the wind and fire!

Pentecost is a reminder that there is another side to the Holy Spirit. It can blow us around and set us on fire, change our lives and turn our lives upside down. Just like the disciples, just like Mary, Jesus' mother. Jesus' birth was the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, and we know how her life was blown around and set on fire!

Sometimes we feel little breezes and nudges of the Holy Spirit, but some days the Holy Spirit burns and blows. The Holy Spirit can burn within us with passion and warmth, and the Holy Spirit can blow through our lives to move, guide, and empower us!

You may think that something like this burning and blowing of the Holy Spirit only happened to the disciples, but you see stories of revival all of the time!

There is a story called "The Toronto Blessing" Wikipedia says that "beginning in 1994 at the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church, congregants reported unusual manifestations such as uncontrollable laughter, weeping, and a deep sense of God's love. This movement spread globally, influencing countless churches and believers." This is an example of how the Holy Spirit's wind can bring unexpected burning of joy and renewal.

The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit for a purpose, and that purpose was to proclaim the Word of God.

And so we must ask ourselves, what is our motivation to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

Is it so we can look spiritual? Is it to have power or purpose? Or is it something deeper?

Perhaps, at its core, it is the desire to live a life that is *truly led by God* — to walk in step with His Spirit, not just for our sake, but so that Christ is increasingly formed in us. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we begin to reflect Jesus more clearly — in our words, our actions, our attitudes, and our choices.

The Spirit doesn't fill us just to give us a spiritual experience. He fills us to transform us, so that we: