

## "Breath Power"

Acts 2:1-21 & John 14:8-17, 25-27

May 23, 2010 - Pentecost

I'd like to set before you two uniquely different images this morning as we celebrate Pentecost and recognize the accomplishments of our graduating seniors.

1<sup>st</sup> - Balloons ..... And I will get back to this as soon as I recruit some of these amazing, breath filled, soon to graduate Seniors to blow up the balloons. Please blow them up and pinch them off with your fingers until I get back to you.

2<sup>nd</sup> - a great little story I ran into this week involved two people who were talking together as they stood on the sidewalk across the street from a large church which was being destroyed by fire. Firemen were frantically at work. The first man calmly looked over at the second and raised his voice enough to be heard above the noise of the firemen and all of the activity going on. He said, "This is the first time I ever saw you at church." To this the second responded: "This is the first time I ever saw the church on fire."

Now, back to the balloons. {Take a balloon from the first graduate. - comment on all of the hot air. Release the balloon so that it flies around under the power of the air being released}. You never really know where they are going to go when you release them do you? With all of the breath that has been blown into them there is a lot of power - - at least for a short time. [take a second balloon - tie it off and release it, letting it fall to the floor]. Of course with all the power that has been poured into this, one might decide just not make use of the power - perhaps you could set it down on the couch in front of the TV and just admire its beauty. [Take third balloon and release it with my hand in the way to hold it from going anywhere.] And then there are the obstacles. We know that there is always that kind of problem .... You may want this thing to soar - to go far - but sometimes there are just things that get in the way. [take 4<sup>th</sup> balloon] I wasn't quite sure how to demonstrate a final point. I know that there are many different ways that one might channel all of that power. It is possible that we could work together and come up with a way that balloon with all of it's power could be directed and the release of air controlled so that it could get to a certain destination with the air power used wisely and efficiently. [take and release a couple more balloons without comment]

When the day of Pentecost came there was a rush of a mighty wind. Tongues of fire appeared and rested on the disciples. In response they burst out from hiding onto the world. The disciples had been filled with the breath of God and released into the world. Can you even imagine what it is like too see the church on fire? With the power of the breath of God propelling them they could not just sit and say nothing - they flew into action - spreading the good news of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. 3000 were baptized that day - it happens when the church is on fire with the presence of God. Great things happen when we have been filled with the breath of God and released into the world. I find myself wondering what will happen when you are released into the world - all of you ..... But today, in particular, I wonder about you who will be

graduating next Sunday afternoon. Have you held on to the breath of God that has been blown into you? Have you been inspired and holding firm to all of the knowledge and experience that your teachers have been blowing into you? Will you tie it all off and lie on the couch? Will you encounter road blocks that prevent you from moving? Will you soar?

The things that happened on that Pentecost of which our scriptures speak in the book of Acts were not supposed to happen. The church had been doing Pentecost for a long time and what happened was not part of the program for the day. It was supposed to be just the regular annual church celebration of the harvest. Each year, 50 days after the celebration of Passover, the church gathered to present the 'first fruits' of the harvest. It became something very different as the breath of God gave power to the disciples. The church was set on fire. That regular church holiday was transformed as the disciples were released to tell of the power of God that was able to overcome death itself. As people heard about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead their lives were transformed and 3000 came to believe and were baptized that day. Their lives were changed and for that matter, the world was changed as a small group of believer in Jesus as the Christ took root and would begin to form a Christian church that would spread around the world to become the largest church in the world - a church that is still the fastest growing church in the world.

When I read this week that the Christian church was still the fastest growing in the world, frankly, I was a bit surprised. That growth has waned in our part of the world. In fact, it seems as though we are always talking about decline .... we always seem to wonder what is going to happen to the church because it seems that the younger generations aren't really very interested. The article that I read suggested that we have become very good at playing church .... we try programs of every sort, we follow purpose-driven plans, we become seeker-sensitive, missional, and we even try Natural Church Development. But somewhere in the mix we forget that we are a pentecostal church .... we are driven by the presence of the breath of God and that is what powers us. We have heard and received the good news of the power of God. But then we tie it all off, sit comfortably in our pews, and are afraid to let that power propel us into the world.

Today, I think about you who will be graduating next Sunday. I try to imagine all that you have received in your days in the Bottineau school system. They have blown into you the knowledge that they had to share. Teacher, students, parents and the whole community have exhaled all that we have in your direction and you have been filled, empowered by all of it. Certainly there is more to learn and experience beyond the boundaries of this time and place. But you have received so much that can send you out into the world. And here in this place - here at First Lutheran we too have sought to fill you with a knowledge and love of God. At one time you stood here and confirmed that you had received that knowledge and were shaped by a faith in God. And now, this church, this community, the school, family and friends lift you up ready to release you so that you might soar either out there in the world or here at home. Use all of the power that has been breathed into you and you will go far. Channel, direct that power, refreshing it along the way and you will impact your world in very positive ways.

The same holds true for all of us. We use the knowledge and all that has been breathed into us everyday - it guides and strengthens us for the challenges that life holds for us. When we use well all that we have received, it powers us in positive directions. Among all that we have

received is the gift of faith. God has been actively breathing on us so that we might be filled with the Holy Spirit. We have heard the good news. We have gathered in this place time after time so that we could have that breath of God move over us again and again so that we can continue to live life in the Name of Christ. There may be obstacles - there may be times when we feel as though too much of the power is going out from us, there may even be times when we are tempted to tie it all off and do nothing. But God comes to fill us with such a powerful life that the church will be on fire.

It is my hope and prayer that all of us - senior class, members and friends alike - will allow the power of faith - the presence of God in our lives, to empower your lives wherever God takes you.  
**AMEN**