

Pinwheels and Pentecost

[Acts 2: 1-13](#)

I have just come in from the garden after doing some experimenting. I made a pinwheel, and hung it up in the breeze to see what would happen. Initially, not a lot happened, because the wheel needed to be attached loosely enough so that it would still spin, but securely in place so that it wouldn't fall down or catch on something.



After a bit of trial and error, the little wings on the pinwheel scooped up the air and it spun furiously. When the wind dropped, it stopped altogether. The life and motion of the pinwheel was entirely dependent upon the wind. The wind didn't always come from the same direction either, so sometimes the pinwheel spun clockwise, and at others, anticlockwise, as the wind dictated.

In our account of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples who have gathered together to pray hear a sound "like the blowing of a violent wind". That must have been terrifying! They can only stay there, resting in the presence of that mighty wind.

Picture each person as a pinwheel, moved not because of who they were, not because they were noble, intellectual or wealthy – for these people were of humble stock from the obscure region of Galilee – but because they were simply waiting in the presence of God, ready to receive the gift which had been promised.

Would they have expected that the Holy Spirit would make them speak in all these different foreign languages? Probably not. The Spirit “enabled them” to do so. That was the exciting expression of the Spirit’s presence, signalling that the good news of Jesus Christ was there for everybody, no matter where they came from or who they were. All the listeners heard the same message: a declaration of “the wonders of God”.

For some, this was a moment of real change. They pause and reflect: “What does this mean?” They look more deeply. The Jewish community would know that flames resting without burning up were a sign of God’s presence going back to the time of the people wandering in the wilderness. What was so special about now? They open themselves up to the possibility of being carried along by this sweeping, overwhelming rush of the Holy Spirit coming to them as well.

Not everybody was convinced by this: some made fun of what they saw as a group of revellers who had got drunk as they celebrated the spring harvest with new wine. They were still fixed in their ways and could not begin to move with the presence of the Holy Spirit; far easier to make a sneering remark which explained these strange events by making these Galileans seem like drunken louts, while they were so holy and superior.

There’s no doubt that the events on that Pentecost morning were bewildering, amazing, astonishing and perplexing. The Holy Spirit bursts into the meeting room and disrupts the people’s expectations completely. This is not temple worship but an abundant, overflowing gift which reaches out to everyone . There is something utterly irresistible about his presence.

My pinwheel spins wildly as the breeze takes it. It has no way of resisting the force of the wind as it moves through its sails. As long as the sails are ready, unimpeded to receive the breeze from whichever angle it might come and at whatever strength, they will spin. There is a lot of physics at work here which I don’t fully comprehend, but the message for us is simple.

Are we waiting ready for the Holy Spirit, or do we have such a fixed idea about who he is, where he comes from and the gifts he will bring that we are rendered stiff, motionless, lifeless? When animated by the Spirit, we are transformed. Others notice. The energy is infectious; people want to know what’s going on. Some may well sneer, and that is their choice of response, even if only for now.

Nevertheless, rather than resist the Holy Spirit, how about welcoming his presence with you today?

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