



*8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* (John 3:8)

### *The Eighth Sunday after Trinity.*

#### *The Collect.*

**G**OD, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth; We humbly beseech thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

What a wonderful Artist of Words and Nature is the Author of Life and Truth. I love the gentle and artful manner in which God is able to convey profound truth. I can visualize the Lord imparting this beautiful lesson to a wondering and confused Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a master of the law and member of the ruling Sanhedrin. But there was something mystifying and magnetic in the Person of Christ that Nicodemus needed to explore. Even if he would come at night to avoid prying eyes, he nonetheless felt some hidden force compelling him to come to Christ. Nicodemus was familiar with the intricate jots and tittles of the law, the inordinate stress on judgment to the abandonment of Mercy and Grace. But all of his learning at the bar seemed to take a far diminutive place in his mind as he listened to the compelling words of beauty and truth uttered by One who was presumed to be a 'country' teacher.

Unlike many other of the Pharisees, Nicodemus did not pause to wonder "how this man knew these things," but his focus was upon learning, even from an unlettered one, truths that had escaped his notice in all of his dilligent study of the law. Though Nicodemus was forced to stretch his mind that fateful night, there is no record in the scriptures of any doubt crossing the mind of this good man after that dark night encounter. He no longer came at night, but in broad open daylight, at the most perilous time, with Joseph of Arimethea to claim the body of Christ for final honors. We all may have lived in confidence and certainty of the correctness of our course until on one dark night of our souls when we came to face the Master and heard His wonderful and amazing Gospel which caused all of our previous understanding to wilt into oblivion.

*8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* Dear Reader, what do you know of the wind? Jesus simply states the truth of the wind in very simple, elementary terms; yet His description of the wind bears such

power and weight in our hearts that it CHANGES our view of the wind simply because Jesus spoke the words. That is the power of Christ to change hearts of those whose natures are simple and like unto those of the little child. When asked by a constituent the most just means of determining an issue at law, Thomas Jefferson replied: "*Go to the farmer and not the judge. The judge is too much concerned with the minutia of the law to see common sense options clearly; but the farmer, having labored in seed time and harvest, knows the wisdom of nature and of God, The farmer will render a more equitable decision than the judge.*" (paraphrased) I believe the wisdom of his words are drawn out in our time.

In describing the beauty inherent in this one verse, Erasmus says, "*This air by which we are vegetated, and whose power and utility we only feel, is very subtle, and is called a spirit, or wind; and this spirit is not restrained at the pleasure of men, but is carried by its own force, by which it is known to diffuse itself through all things, having a wonderful power over all corporeal things: sometimes giving life, sometimes death. Now calm and silent, then more violet, sometimes blowing from the East, sometimes from the West, and sometimes from other different quarters of the world. And discovers itself by the effect: you hear its voice, when you see nobody, neither can it be grasped by hands; you feel it present, but you see it not coming, neither can you tell where it goes at its departure. The new birth is like it. The minds of men by the Spirit of God are carried away, and transformed by secret breathings. The ineffable power and effect of it is felt, but what is done is not discerned by eyes. And so they that are born again, are not now actuated by a human and carnal spirit, but by the Spirit of God who quickens, and governs all things.*" (see also Romans 8:22 - *For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*)

God controls the wind and is the One who can bring it into change. *He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.* (Psalms 78:26) When the soul calls for rain after a season of draught of joy, the leeward part is cooled and dampened by the sea's gift of high lifted waters. When the desert sands of misery and sickness burn hot, the winds from the western snow-capped mountains will bring a cooling balm. *And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.* (Matt 8:26)

When the debris and litter of an ill-gotten conscience are strewn across our souls, the wind will bear the dirt and dredges away and leave our hopes and souls purified and refreshed through that inconceivable mercy of God. *And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds: but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them. Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God is terrible majesty.* (Job 37:21-22) (Please observe the beautiful word pictures presented by God in Job. When the lens of the Sun, moon, and stars are blurred by clouds, God sends the wind to clear and wash them by removing the clouds. This is beauty beyond description!)

Beware, for just as there is a cleansing, purifying, and wholesome wind, there remains, contrariwise, an ill-wind that brings nobody good. Satan has a counterfeit in darkness for every benefit of God in virtue. *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* (Eph 4:14)

We desperately need the winds of God, but we must also be watchful for the vengeful counterfeit. Seaman always desire the gentle following winds of fortune to blossom their sails, but the doldrums of dead wind, or the stormy and devastating blasts of the tempest, will either retard their progress or end in shipwreck. It is in the stormy blasts of contrary winds that we need an anchor, and that anchor, if posited in the Word of God, will hold fast in every storm of life.

Bishop Garth Neel, our Missionary Bishop for Latin America, introduced us to this beautiful old hymn about the Winds of God several years ago. It speaks truth to our hearts:

I feel the winds of God today; today my sail I lift,  
Though heavy, oft with drenching spray, and torn with many a rift;  
If hope but light the water's crest, and Christ my bark will use,  
I'll seek the seas at His behest, and brave another cruise.

It is the wind of God that dries my vain regretful tears,  
Until with braver thoughts shall rise the purer, brighter years;  
If cast on shores of selfish ease or pleasure I should be;  
Lord, let me feel Thy freshening breeze, and I'll put back to sea.

If ever I forget Thy love and how that love was shown,  
Lift high the blood red flag above; it bears Thy Name alone.  
Great Pilot of my onward way, Thou wilt not let me drift;  
I feel the winds of God today, today my sail I lift.

May you, good Reader, have a following and gentle wind in your course across the seas of life, and may you know that such a wind is sent by God for your comfort. Do you feel the wind?