

Pentecost: Getting our second wind

Gen. 2:4-7, Jn. 3:1-6; Ps. 67, Jn. 20:19-23

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Introduction: *“Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you!”* That’s what Pentecost is truly about: taking the Good News of Jesus Christ to the nations! Would you pray with me about that? Pentecost was the revival of God’s people according to the Gospel of Jesus precisely because it included the indwelling and empowering of the Holy Spirit, so that the Gospel would be carried to the ends of the earth, embracing all peoples, nations, tribes, and tongues. Does the Gospel still offer that same power to believers today? And what does it mean to get your second wind? If you’ve ever done serious running, you know what it feels like (other kinds of exercise or hard work too). Physiologists recognize it’s a real phenomenon: it’s believed to happen after you’ve been running or exercising for a while, but it takes your body’s systems some time to get stabilized. So once that happens, it means your respiration becomes regulated as well as your heart rate, your oxygen intake is strong, so your body can stop focusing on expelling excess carbon dioxide because you’re now taking in a sufficient amount of oxygen. The technical name of this is aerobic metabolism, or aerobic energy production, which translates into less pain, easier breathing, and renewed confidence. So do you think we need this on a spiritual level too? I hope you feel the need for your *second wind* as much as I do!

I. The **revival of God’s people** down through history has always been a **permanent need**, in every generation, because life tends to wear us down, eroding away our focus and foundation, grinding down our vision, sapping our energy. And **renewal** has always been about **the work of the Holy Spirit** (not just since the NT!). The wind of His Breath has blown all through history, though the fullness of His work wasn’t revealed until Pentecost.

• **Examples from the Old Testament:**

The prophets were continually calling the people to live according to God’s Word, return to the original covenant God made with them, but it was just so hard to control their old nature! So **King Hezekiah** purified the temple, got rid of the idols, even invited the northern tribes to come to the celebration in Jerusalem and return to the Lord; it resulted in a major revival of God’s people. We moderns have the same problem: life fills us with thirsts that cannot be quenched by the materialism of this world – our jobs cannot fulfill our deepest longings; the moral relativism of this world doesn’t satisfy us! We are driven by idols unless we’re continually being renewed in the Holy Spirit. So just a few generations later, **King Josiah** had to rediscover God’s Word hidden in a dusty corner of the temple, and after consulting with the prophetess Huldah, he led the people in a time of repentance and recommitment to God’s ways. The next generation would have to face the Babylonian exile, and 100 years after the return of a remnant, **Ezra and Nehemiah** were used to help set God’s Word before the people again

as the only valid standard, resulting in revival that helped them get their hearts right and their lives in order.

- **Examples from the New Testament:**

Centuries later, when **John the Baptist** came preaching with power such as Israel had not seen in 400 years, he declared it was time to repent because the Kingdom of God was drawing near, and the Spirit brought another tremendous season of repentance and revival among God's people, preparing the way for the Messiah. Then the **definitive revival came with Jesus**, the King Himself walking among us in the fullness of the Spirit, showing **all God's grace and truth in a human life**. And when humanity does its worst to Him – putting Him on trial, torturing and crucifying Him – He forgives us *on the spot*, incarnating the pardon and reconciliation of God Himself, dramatizing God's mercies in human history right there on the cross – NOT having to twist God's arm, NOT enabling God to forgive us, NOT paying God off so we could be forgiven! Forgiveness was actually TAKING PLACE right there before our eyes, divine forgiveness humanized before our very face! A quip from Tim Keller (who just died May 19th): *“The hard part about faith is persuading yourself to believe in something so wonderful.”*

Then when Jesus rises from the dead three days later, it was a totally glorious demonstration of His **authority over everything** in the universe and of His **complete credibility** regarding everything He had said and done in His earthly life! So at **Pentecost** He sends His own Spirit to seal believers' hearts with His redemption: His own breath! (Heb. *ruach*, Greek *pneuma* = wind, breath, spirit.) So why do we need that? As Tim Keller put it, *“We are more sinful and flawed than we ever dared believe, yet more loved and accepted in Jesus than we ever dared hope!”* The first part of that (sinful and flawed) corresponds to **“dead in our sins”** (Eph. 2:1); the second part (loved and accepted) corresponds to the gift of the Breath of Jesus Himself, source of continuous revival and transformation! (How *intimate* is this?!) It's parallel to when God breathed into Adam's nostrils in the beginning, except that this second breath brings a new kind of life – it's your second wind – that lasts eternally! Gen. 2 finds its completion in Acts 2, what Peter preached at Pentecost: Jesus' own life laid down on the cross is our new life! I don't have to live by the selfish dictates of my priorities and appetites any more! By the way, your own selfishness is the only selfishness you can actually control; your self-centeredness is the problem you can do something about ... but only as you put yourself under the Lordship of Christ! He's the key!

II. So how important is oxygen to you?! Try holding your breath for 60 seconds (I just barely made it sitting very still.) Did you ever hyperventilate? Get low on oxygen? Suffer from sleep apnea? People with asthma or some lung disease know how desperate we are for oxygen – we can't live without it! Asphyxiation is actually what killed Jesus, even before blood loss could (though, of course, He gave up His Spirit by His own will before He lost consciousness). I'd like to share a personal story from my young adult days that brought home to me what a sacred thing oxygen is!

The year was 1976 and I was a wandering pilgrim in my mid 20's, trying to find my way, hitch-hiking around Spain. I found myself in Segovia, and roaming around some hills outside the city, I met some young guys who had found a little cave, which one of them had already explored and he was inviting the rest to crawl in and check it out. So we thought it sounded like a good adventure and in we went -- starting down a tunnel that was just big enough to crawl through in single file for about 20 feet. Then it wound around to a small “room” where we could all sit in a circle (4 of us), but you couldn't stand up. So we sat there in the dark talking for a few minutes, when all of a sudden we all had the same panicky sensation and one of the guys cried out, *“Falta aire aqui”* – of course, there were no vents in that little enclosed den and we had used up most of the oxygen. So we all scrambled for the doorway to the tunnel, crawling back out as fast as we could to get to some fresh air. As I learned much later, there's a **mechanism in our brain** that warns us to take action whenever the oxygen level in our blood gets dangerously low, and that mechanism was triggered in every one of us at exactly the same

instant inside that cave! So all of us instinctively knew we were in danger and needed to flee – I still remember the sense of suffocation that came over me.

Years later reflecting on that experience, I wonder if we have such a **“mechanism” in our soul** that warns of dangerously low “oxygen levels” in our spirit. I suspect we do, but how do most people respond to the sense of panic or desperation that comes over them in their moments of insecurity or confusion? By burying their heads in their phone, of course: social media or some other addiction to the rescue! But the answer is not about just throwing yourself into your job or hobby, or losing yourself in drugs or social media, binge-eating or binge-shopping, or other distractions and idols, the way most people do. The answer is in “oxygenating” our lives through the Spirit of Jesus! That mechanism in our soul warns us that we’re getting too close to the edge, burnout, collapse, giving up – we’re desperate for new life, our second wind! The Holy Spirit is the answer, and the oxygen He wants for us is to breathe His Breath: confessing the name of Jesus, running to Him for rescue, sitting at His feet and letting His grace soak in!

III. It’s the **second wind of rebirth**: it’s a reboot, reset, recharging! Peter preached about it on the day of Pentecost when he reminded everyone that the prophets had spoken of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh; that’s the baptism of the Spirit, spiritual rebirth, fresh life pouring into us because our sins have been wiped out – just by calling on the Name of the Lord (Acts 2:21)!

It’s also the **second wind of refocus**: Peter also preached that day about that Crucified One as the One who was raised from the dead, the One who was exalted (Acts 2:32-33), the true LORD and Messiah over all, the only One worthy of our worship, faith and loyalty (Acts 2:36).

It’s the **second wind of repentance and restoration**: at the end of his sermon Peter preached repentance and baptism as the right response to the Gospel (Acts 2:38), receiving the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, which brings restoration and renewal, reconnection with the Source of life, which is like resurrection!

One more quote from Tim Keller: *“Anybody who has tasted the reality of God knows that anything is worth losing for this, and nothing is worth keeping if it’s going to make me lose this.”* Are you ready to catch your second wind? If you are, I invite you to **stand** during this prayer and tell the Lord about it. Right-relatedness to Him teaches and enables us to handle all the brokenness elsewhere; this is where your second wind begins!