



President Walton's May 2019 Message

Fresh Winds of Change



The year was 1962, and a young Bob Dylan penned the iconic song, “Blowin’ in the Wind.” Many considered it a protest song, some an anthem of the civil rights movement, but Dylan claimed it was a spiritual. He told journalist Marc Rowland in 1978, “Blowin’ in the Wind’ has always been a spiritual. I took it off a song called ‘No More Auction Block’ - that’s a spiritual and ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ follows the same feeling.” The critic Michael Gray suggested that the lyric is an example of Dylan’s incorporation of Biblical rhetoric into his own style. A particular rhetorical form deployed time and again in the New Testament and based on a text from the Old

Testament book of Ezekiel (12:1-2) is: ***“The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Oh mortal, you dwell among the rebellious breed. They have eyes to see but see not; ears to hear, but hear not.”*** In “Blowin’ in the Wind”, Dylan transforms this into “Yes’n’ how many ears must one man have ...?” and “Yes’ n’ how many times must a man turn his head / Pretending he just doesn’t see?”

While I know that the Apostle Paul told us to speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16) I have to admit that I never considered Bob Dylan a writer of spiritual songs. Yet, it seems that even Bob Dylan understood that the real answer is blowin’ in the wind!

In 1981 Christian recording artist Keith Green released the song, Rushing Wind. You may not be as familiar with it, but he writes: “Rushing wind blow through this temple, Blowing out the dust within, Come and breathe Your breath upon me, I’ve been born again.” Jesus sent us His promised Spirit to empower us to live in this world as His disciples. He truly desires that we let His light shine to the world around us. Jesus said, “You didn’t choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you to bear fruit, fruit that will last...” Green goes on in this song to include these lyrics: “Separate me from this world Lord. Sanctify my life for You. Daily change me to Your image, Help me bear good fruit.”

The image of wind is a powerful one, and is certainly a reminder of the Spirit who comes to free us from our sin to live for Jesus in the world. Who can forget the picture of the wind blowing breath back into the Valley of Dry Bones in Ezekiel 37, raising up a vast army. The Bible (ESV) speaks of wind well over 150 times. No where do we have a more wonderful picture of wind than the one we find in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. Luke writes in Acts 2:2, ***“And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty***

“rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.” When the Spirit came upon the disciples it was clearly evident. Not only could people tell by their speech, but also by their countenance. This same Holy Spirit raised up the army for the prophet, and continues to fill each of us daily as we open our hearts to His work among us. It is the Spirit working through us that let’s Jesus be seen in 2019 and beyond!



What is the Wind of the Spirit blowing around the Florida-Georgia District? I can tell you that there is excitement as some of our congregations prepare to celebrate or just finished celebrating Confirmation. There is joy as we see Jesus working through His Spirit, blowing the winds of change for our friends in Jasper, Georgia, getting ready to dedicate their new first facility. Many of our congregations will celebrate Mothers on May 12, and what an impact mom’s can make on the spiritual formation of their children. The Wind of the Spirit continues to blow as about 600 of our youth plan to participate this summer in the National Youth Gathering in Minneapolis. I’m not sure who has the bigger joy—the students or the teachers—as another school year begins to wind down. We know that many of our families will celebrate graduations from colleges and high schools. These are all opportunities to share our faith in Jesus, to let Him be seen in our life.

As I travel around the District I not only hear, but often see God creating excitement in each of the five regions as laity and clergy work together by the power of His Spirit to find ways to share the love of Jesus within their community. There is a fresh Wind of change all around us, and you can hear the cry to connect people to Jesus. Some have said that the love of Jesus is more caught than taught. In other words, it is not seen in what we say as much as it becomes evident in the things we do and how we live our faith on a day to day basis.

Jesus said to His concerned disciples, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”* (John 14:15-17). The Wind of the Spirit continues to blow into our sinful lives with new life on a daily basis. Each day the old person of sin is drowned through the waters of baptism and the new person in Jesus comes forth. It is in response to this that we celebrate our faith as believers as we love one another and people see our faith in action. This love, first for Jesus and then for others, is what motivates us to connect people to Jesus.

We are a people of grace, meaning we have been saved by grace through faith. Nothing we can do will draw us closer to Jesus than what He already did for us by dying on the Cross and rising to new life. His new life is our assurance of new life also. Because He lives we know that all of His promises are trustworthy and true. What we do, what we don’t do, must not be motivated by guilt, shame, or fear. Jesus has freed us from all of that. Instead, we respond in joy, by the power of His Spirit, to do those things that would honor Jesus, or to not do those things that would somehow breach this relationship. In fact, it is this relationship that really allows us and encourages us to build relationships with others.

Jesus said, *“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:8). We may not always understand the working of God’s Spirit and why some

respond to His Word and Sacraments, while other reject it. We may not understand why some are healed while others not, at least in a temporal way. We may not understand why some churches seem to grow while others seem to shrink. What we know is that Jesus promised His Spirit to His people to empower us with His love, and we can be confident of this. So rather than being confused or discouraged, we do what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:14, and “*press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus,*” always guided by the fresh wind of the Spirit.

I think Bob Dylan was right. For all that ails this world, the real answer is blowing in the Wind—the Wind of His Spirit. Jesus desires to bring fresh winds of change to His Church to reach more people with the truth of His Gospel. Let the Spirit open the eyes of your heart to see the call of Jesus on your life. Let this mighty Wind blow through your life as you hear these powerful words “*forgiven and made whole by the blood of Jesus!*” Then, together, we can look to an exciting future as the winds of change blow through the Florida-Georgia District as His Spirit fills us, keeping us strong in His Word and Sacrament, blowing us forward on course for the sake of Jesus. Rushing wind blow through these temples, blowing out the dust within; Come and breathe Your breath upon us, make us whole again! Let Jesus be seen in 2019 in each of our lives so that many people are connected to Jesus!

In His Spirit’s power,
Greg



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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- [70th Anniversary Challenge](#)
- [National Youth Gathering](#)
- [LCMS Synod Convention](#)
- [Volunteer Opportunities at the Synod Convention](#)
- Pastors Conference - Sept. 23-25
- Educators Conference - Sept 25 - 27