

GOING WITH THE WIND

(John 3:1-17)

- Intro: Five years ago this week.
- My ministry at the St. Louis County Jail came to an end.
 - #After 28 years.
 - At my farewell party.
 - #Some of the jail staff sang for me.
 - *They were good.
 - *Couple almost of Susan Boyle quality.
 - +Who knew?
 - #Song they sang.
 - **Oklahoma*.
 - +“Where the wind comes sweepin’ down the plains.”

I didn’t recognize the significance of the Oklahoma wind.

- Until I moved to Tulsa.
 - #My first evening in our new home.
 - *I was trying to sweep the leaves out of the garage.
 - +I wasn’t making much headway.
 - +Wind was blowing the leaves back in.
 - =As fast as I could sweep them out.
- Average annual rainfall in Tulsa.
 - #3” more than in St. Louis.
 - #But there are more:
 - *Grass fires.
 - *Burn bans.
 - +In Oklahoma.
 - +Than I can ever remember in St. Louis.
 - *I can only presume.
 - +It’s because of the wind.
 - =Dries everything out.

In Oklahoma.

- We ought to have a built-in appreciation for the power of the Holy Spirit.
 - #In Hebrew.
 - #In Greek.
 - *Word for “spirit.”
 - +Also means:
 - =Breath.
 - =Wind.

- Jesus says to Nicodemus:
 - #“Wind blows where it chooses.”
 - #“Spirit blows where it chooses.”
 - *John 3:8.
- Question for:
 - #Nicodemus.
 - #Us.
 - *Are we going with the wind?
 - *Are we going against the wind?

I. Jesus Invited Nicodemus To Change Directions.

A. Nicodemus Had Been Going Against The Wind.

1. Nicodemus was:
 - a. Pharisee.
 - Religious/political group.
 - #Emphasized their oral tradition.
 - *For interpreting the Law of Moses.
 - b. Leader of the Jews.
 - 70-member Sanhedrin.
 - #Religious council that condemned Jesus to death.
 - Although Nicodemus will later defend Jesus before the Sanhedrin.
 - #John 7:50-52.
 - c. Rabbi.
 - Teacher of Israel.
2. Nicodemus came to Jesus at night.
 - a. Nick at Night.
 - b. Probably not wanting his fellow:
 - Pharisees.
 - Members of the Sanhedrin.
 - Rabbis.
 - #To find him out.
 - c. Because of the signs that Jesus had done.
 - Signs=miracles.
 - #In John’s Gospel.

B. Jesus Invited Him To Be “Born From Above.”

1. In our day and age.
 - a. We assume that there is the possibility of upward mobility.
 - Just because your father was a farmer.
 - #Doesn’t mean you can’t become:
 - *Engineer.
 - *CPA.

- Just because your mother was a housewife.
 - #Doesn't mean you can't become:
 - *Engineer.
 - *CPA.
 - *Pastor.
- b. If you have:
 - Talent.
 - Desire.
 - #You can choose a different career path.
 - *From your parents.
- 2. But in Biblical times there was little or no mobility.
 - a. If your father was a farmer.
 - Chances are you would become a farmer.
 - b. If your father was a carpenter.
 - Chances are you would become a carpenter.
 - c. If your father was a fisherman.
 - Chances are you would become a fisherman.
- 3. So for Nicodemus to change direction.
 - a. He had to be reborn.
 - That which is born of the flesh is flesh.
 - That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
 - #John 3:6.
 - b. For Nicodemus to become Spirit-borne.
 - He had to become Spirit born.
 - c. By being born from above.
 - Nicodemus could chart a new direction.
 - #From being in the dark.
 - *To seeing the light of life.
 - +Kingdom of God.
 - =John 3:3.
 - =John 3:5.
 - Only uses of the phrase in John.
 - John prefers the expression:
 - #"Eternal life."
 - Vice versa in the Synoptics.
 - #Matthew.
 - #Mark.
 - #Luke.
 - #From going against the wind.
 - *To going with the wind.

II. Are We Going With The Wind (Spirit) Or Against The Wind (Spirit)?

A. Do We Know The Difference?

1. I think we do.
2. If you:
 - a. Ride a bike.
 - b. Sail a boat.
 - c. Drive:
 - Bus.
 - Truck.
 - Car.
 - d. Walk around your neighborhood.
 - You can tell when the wind is against you.
 - #It's hard work.
 - #Your hair gets messed up.
 - *If you still have hair to get messed up.
3. Spiritually.
 - a. Don't we know?
 - When the wind is against us.
 - When we're going in the wrong direction.
 - When the Spirit is trying to turn us around.
 - b. Don't we know?
 - I think we do.

B. Being Born From Above Means Going With The Wind.

1. Abram went with the wind.
 - a. Leaving:
 - His country.
 - His family.
 - His father's house.
 - b. To a new place.
 - Where God promised him:
 - #Land.
 - #Fame.
 - #Make of him a great nation.
 - Where God promised:
 - #To bless him.
 - #To bless all the families of the earth through him.
 - Genesis 12:1-3.
 - c. He went with the wind.

2. As we "Rekindle the Fire."
 - a. Our process of congregational renewal.
 - b. We want to go with the wind.
 - To be open to the new directions.
 - #God may be showing us.
 - To reflect on how we have been blessed.
 - #So that we can discern how to be a blessing to others.
 - c. We want to go with the wind.
3. Jesus went with the wind.
 - a. Wind that blew him:
 - From his baptism.
 - #Into the wilderness.
 - *To be tempted by the devil.
 - +But without sinning.
 - From the Wilderness of Temptation.
 - #To the Mount of Transfiguration.
 - From the Mount of Transfiguration.
 - #To the Mount called Golgotha.
 - From the cross.
 - #To the grave.
 - From the grave.
 - #To resurrection.
 - b. At our contemporary service we sometimes sing:
 - Lord, I Lift Your Name On High.*
 - #You came from heaven to earth to show the way,
 - From the earth to the cross my debt to pay;
 - From the cross to the grave,
 - From the grave to the sky;
 - Lord, I lift your name on high.
 - c. Jesus went with the wind.
4. Going with the wind means going in the direction of unconditional love.
 - a. My granddaughter Sophia.
 - Will be 11-months old this week.
 - Last week I told you she wasn't walking yet.
 - #On Monday.
 - *My son:
 - +Stood her up.
 - +Let go of her.
 - *She took two steps.
 - +Staggered into my arms.
 - *I:
 - +Caught her.
 - +Turned her around.
 - +Let her go.

*She took two steps.
+Staggered into his arms.
*She did that 2-3 times.
#Then she got silly.
*She fell into my arms.
+Without moving her feet.
*She started falling:
+Sideways.
+Backwards.
=Trusting that one of us.
-Going to catch her.
-Somewhere along the way.
#Sophia pinched her dad.
*I don't know if it was:
+On the arm.
+On the cheek.
#It wasn't intentional.
*Her finger nails had gotten rather long.
+She was just trying to grab hold.
#Josh:
*Got aggravated with her.
*Picked her up.
*Popped her down in his lap.
*Took out a finger nail clipper.
*Began to trim her nails.
#Sophia:
*Got this startled look on her face.
*Didn't dare:
+Fuss.
+Squirm.
#Even though she probably didn't understand a word,
*I said:
+"Sophia,"
+"Even when you're daddy's aggravated with you,"
+"He still loves you."
#To which my son said:
*In an aggravated tone.
+"I'm not aggravated."

- Isn't that the way?
 - #Wind blows.
 - #Spirit blows.
 - *Even when we're learning something new.
 - +However imperfectly.
 - *Even when we're being silly.
 - *Even when we hurt the ones we love.
 - *Even when we're aggravated with one another.
 - *Even when God is aggravated with us.
 - +Wind of love.
 - +Spirit of love.
 - =Lifted up Jesus.
 - Onto the cross.
 - From the grave.
 - Into the glories of heaven.
 - =Still blows.

b. I came across a story this week.

- Benjamin.
 - #Six year-old.
 - #Protested his bedtime.
- His father.
 - #Refused to budge.
 - #It was time for bed.
- Benjamin said:
 - # "Daddy, I hate you."
- His daddy said:
 - # "I'm sorry you feel that way, Ben."
 - # "But I still love you."
- Benjamin said:
 - # "Daddy, don't say that."
- His dad said:
 - # "But it's true, Ben."
 - # "I do love you."
- Benjamin said:
 - # "Stop saying that, Daddy."
 - # "Stop saying that right now!"
- His dad said:
 - # "Benjamin, listen to me!"
 - # "I love you, whether you like it or not!"
- That is unconditional love (αγάπη love/Godly love).
 - # If Benjamin's dad had said:
 - * "Ben, I'll love you *if* you go to bed without a fuss."
 - + That would not have been unconditional love.

#If Ben had tried to negotiate:
*"Okay, I'll go to bed."
*"But tomorrow I'm not eating my vegetables."
+He would have been putting:
=Limits.
=Conditions.
-On his father's love.
#But Ben's dad:
*Refused to negotiate.
*Refused to make his love conditional.

Concl: In the waters of Holy Baptism.
In the bread and wine of the Holy Supper.
-God says to us:
#"I love you."
#"Whether you like it or not."

That is unconditional love.
That's the way it is:
-When we're going with the wind.