

Riding the Wind -- Thoughts for the Season of Pentecost

You lift me up on the wind, you make me ride on it, and you toss me about in the roar of the storm. -- Job 30.22

9.26 AM HEADING NORTH -- TOWARDS VAUGHN WIND SSW, 17MPH GUSTS TO 22:

I can feel the wind behind me...

Its force at this point could be judged to be somewhere between benign and beneficent. If anything, the wind at this point helps me along my way. The engine of my old Triumph is running hard and rough this morning. And as I navigate through a couple of S curves and begin to climb to the benchland above the river valley, I appreciate the boost that it gives me.

There is a good feeling that comes with the wind at your back.

There is a good feeling that comes with the Spirit at your back.

For you can feel it and know that it can help you along your way -- even in those moments where you feel old and tired and your life (like your motorcycle engine) is running hard and rough. I think of some days (many days, really) where I am not certain I can make it for I have to work hard to navigate the curves and make the hard climb up. But the wind behind me helps push me on my way.

10.36 AM HEADING WEST -- BETWEEN POWER AND FAIRFIELD WIND W, 20 MPH GUSTS TO 36:

I can feel the wind against me...

At this point along the way, it is neither benign nor beneficent. No, it roars right at me -- pushing against me rather than with me. From fourth gear, I downshift to third. The wind keeps blowing and blowing, hard. Then it punches me with one gust. Then another. Then another still. The journey I am on isn't so much a ride as it is a struggle -- a struggle against the wind.

The wind makes me struggle.

The Spirit makes me struggle too.

I recollect all the times I have been on this stretch of highway, in a spiritual as well as literal sense. My life -- no, to be honest, my will: my stubborn, sinful will has propelled me in this direction, into the wind and against the Spirit. So many times, I keep struggling and struggling. And the Spirit keeps pushing back and pushing back. Sometimes it has to pummel me before I realize my struggle is vain and the only option available is surrender.

11.02 AM HEADING WEST-SOUTHWEST -- TOWARDS AUGUSTA WIND VARIABLE WSW, 35 MPH GUSTS TO 45:

I can feel the wind alongside me...

It is a phenomenon that I can't really describe. For words are inadequate to capture the experience. Along this stretch of highway, which dips and climbs and twists and turns, the wind is everywhere. I feel it behind me, against me, beside me, before me. The only thing I know is that I don't know which way the wind will blow.

The wind is here and there and everywhere.

So too is the Spirit here and there and everywhere.

At least that has been my experience in journeying along this way. I could try and describe it. But any words I might cobble together would be ten thousand times less adequate than a description of how the wind blows on the way to Augusta. It is here. It is there. It is everywhere. And, just when you think you have it figured out -- just when you think you know which way the Spirit is blowing, it spins around and comes from a different, surprising, unexpected direction.

11.53 AM HEADING EAST -- TOWARDS HOME WIND SSW, 30 MPH STEADY:

I can feel the wind pushing me...

Sometimes, its press is gentle and barely even noticeable. Until, of course, it goes away and you realize it is gone. Other times, its push is strong and mercifully gracious -- especially in the home stretch of this day's ride. My old Triumph is tired and it limps along. The engine sputters. And then it sputters again and hesitates, enough to make me think I won't make it. Just when I need it, though, the wind comes and pushes me towards home.

Without the wind pushing me, I never could make it.

Without the Spirit pushing me, I never could make it either.

I think about this as the distance between where I am and where I want to be gets slowly and steadily shorter. My old motorcycle is a perfect metaphor for myself. For like it, I sputter and sputter and hesitate. Often the best I can do is just limp along this pilgrim way. Other times, I am not sure that I can make it. And if making it were all up to me, I know I never would. But the Spirit helps me in my weakness.

I feel as the Spirit pushes me -- it pushes me towards home.

And in that feeling, there is grace.

Tim Lanham, Pastor