

Sermon: The Fluidity of God**Scripture: Acts 2:1-13****Preacher: Rev. Will Burhans****Date: June 3, 2022**

This is a very strong and stable place that we are in, this beautiful, ornate, awe-inspiring sanctuary where we come to worship God, that we call our church, that our youth this morning are being confirmed in. The solidity of it has lasted for over 175 years and hopefully will be here 175 years from now. There's a grandness and permanence, a rock-solidness that it just exudes.

And does this book of ours, the Bible, that has taken many shapes and sizes and translations – we've just given the youth a version of this book called the Message which is what you heard read from this morning - but we think of it as unchanging this word of God for the last 2000 years, speaking deep truths that also are stable and solid as a rock, inspiring our ancestors and will be inspiring many for generations and generations to come, as permanent as any of our human writings could possibly be.

And yet both the church and the word are not in any way static realities and they point to a Divine Reality of God that is anything and everything EXCEPT static and unmoving. So on this Confirmation, Pentecost Sunday I want to lift up for a moment of the fluidity of God, the motion of heaven, that verb-like quality of the Divine that is as true as God's stability, permanence and noun-ness. Water is as good an image pointing us in the direction of God as a rock is. Air and wind is more appropriate in many ways than mountains and pillars. Swirling consuming raining down fire is as powerful and accurate an image for God as the ground beneath our feet is. In fact, maybe God really is more fluid than God is solid.

It's how God came to the disciples at Pentecost as we just heard read, fluid as fire and wind, not as a massive solid material object. I'm assuming God could have come any way that God wanted to come but chose to come moving and consuming and transforming, blowing in and blowing minds and rushing back out again, heads spinning, nothing to hold to.

And then there's Jesus. Though God in physical form, he was as fluid as they come. If his earthly life was marked by anything, it was marked by the fluidity of his movement. He was always on the go - here, there, hither and yon, into and out of the water of the River Jordan, driven through the wilderness, traveling from town to town, crossing the Sea of Galilee, walking to this person's house and through that person's fields, no place to lay his head, never allowing the grass to grow under his feet. And people seemed to always be stumbling along trying to catch up; crowds following along, disciples scrambling behind him, people hearing he was here or there and trying to have encounters so climbing trees to see him or jumping on boats or into the water or sneaking up behind him to touch his robe and yet no one, not even his closest friends, much less his enemies could quite pin him down where he was going, what he was doing, what he would say next, what riled him up and what settled him down. So "what should we do to an enemy?" and "who deserves healing?" and "what laws should we ignore?" and "what were the more important things?" and "what made for justice and righteousness?..." I mean trying to pin Jesus down was near impossible as the fluid, overflowing, nature of his personality and his Spirit baffled some, intoxicate others, infuriated many, especially the authorities... and so they decided "no, we are going to pin this man down, he is not going to gush his spirit all over our tidy laws and systems and organized lives and make a mess of things" and so they got

nails and quite literally nailed him down to a cross to keep the guy where they wanted him... AND we know how THAT turned out, don't we?

Haha! What a disaster for them and a salvation for everyone else! Talk about fluidity – resurrection appearances, ascending into heaven, and then the gushing out of his Holy Spirit, almost like the nailing him down released the flood gates and his spirit spilled out all over everything and is still spilling out today.... Jesus, THE MAN who could not be pinned down, who could not be contained in his earthly life became Jesus THE HOLY SPIRIT as fluid and out of control and out of bounds as ever. The effort to contain him just created greater liquidity... and when I say liquidity I'm not talking about converting assets into cash I'm talking about how His Spirit converted... (SLIDE ANIMATION HERE)

doubters into believers

and fearers into trusters

and haters into lovers

and resenters into forgivers

and despairers into hoppers

and hoarders into givers

and wounders into healers

and self-satisfiers into self-sacrificers

and keepers of the status quo into pursuers of justice

and jailers into liberators

and competitors into collaborators

and silencers into whistle and trumpet blowers

all caught up in the fluid movement of God and God's love in this world. (NEXT

SLIDE, BLANK) You get what I'm saying when I say God is more a fluid than a solid?

God's justice runs down like a stream, Amos says, God's healing will run like a river Ezekiel says, God's Spirit will come like a wind Luke says, God's grace will fall like the rain on the good and bad alike Jesus says, God's love will seep like blood through crucified hands and feet, the Gospel writers proclaim, God's judgement will come like a flood is what the Psalmist says... God is more fluid than solid.

And there's something just scary about that, that out of control-ness of God. And so across history we've probably too often tried to pin God back down into our buildings and books, our dogmas and doctrines and containers and boxes insisting that God be more solid for us and less liquid because a liquid flowing God is more disruptive than stabilizing, changes us more than grounds us, uproots us more than rooting us in, transforms us more than props us up, gives us not so much a place to be but a way to go, not so much a thing to believe in but a flow to follow. I like Annie Lamott's quote – "I do not at all understand the mystery of grace – only that it meets us where we are and doesn't leave us where it found us." Exactly, God's grace is not a thing but a movement. And the great Catholic theologian Hans Urs Von Balthasar speaks of heaven not as a static place of clouds and harps and choirs of angels but he says "the eternal world of heaven is a world of intense life and spontaneous activity, operating, putting forth its influence, seeking to further its aims through our lives."

And so as these youth come here today to be confirmed, to affirm their baptism and affirm their faith they are not arriving in a place, even though they officially become members of our church, they are consciously jumping into the dance, the flow, the movement that is God's grace in this world and opening their lives intentionally to be led, guided, awakened and rushed down the rapids of

heaven's coming. And as you read their testimonies of faith and they get it.

(CHANGE SLIDES TO ANIMATED QUOTES HERE!)

I mean **Kyle** says in his testimony "I'm glad there's room for God in my life" and that there's something to humans making God exist in the world that brings God into existence... God in process is a whole area of theological study. And **Zo** gets it when they say "I feel secure in nothing but I want to keep loving and in a way that changes things." Geez that's beautiful and it speaks of the fluidity of God and the movement of love. And **Sally** writes "I believe that Jesus will guide me through the journey of this life" right, the journey and **Payton** will "keep her faith close and let it lead her in her life...", yes, yes, Jesus is the guide leading us down the fluid way of life...And **Margy** speaks of "God as an endless well of love and forgiveness and passion for the world" and I say Amen, an endless well of love gushing up and overflowing its walls! And Sam Wilson writes that "love amplifies when I'm with people who share it," referencing the fluid nature of sound to express something of God's love, right on! And **Mark** says that "God calls upon us to GIVE of ourselves for the well-being of others and our planet" and that's exactly right, that as the Spirit flows down and into us it must flow right back out in our self-giving. And **Sam Carpini** and **Abby** both point to growth and learning to speak of the flowing nature of our lives in God, always our faith growing and the gaining of a ton of wisdom. And there is **John's** clarity that the Bible essentially is not a static thing but must lead into action and practice and specifically the practice of the Golden Rule – do unto others what you would have them do to you and **Georgia** who understands that it's about "aligning herself with Jesus' WAY of life" that it's a way more than a destination. I think they get it and hold onto your hats as we see where the fluid God will bring their fluid lives

through this world in flux, cause I think heaven is just awaiting to pour through such lives into an earth in need of heaven, amen? Amen! And so without further ado, let's confirm these youth as they join the flow and the dance and the journey...