

“And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.”

One of my favorite movies of all time is Groundhog day starring Bill Murray. Murray plays a Self-centered and sour TV meteorologist Phil Connors, from a fictional Pittsburgh television station. Phil and his crew travel to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to cover the annual Groundhog Day festivities with Punxsutawney Phil. Having grown tired of this assignment, Phil grudgingly gives his report and attempts to return to Pittsburgh when a blizzard shuts down the roads. Phil and his team are forced to return to Punxsutawney and stay in town overnight. Phil wakes up to find that he is reliving February 2. The day plays out exactly as it did before, with no one else aware of the time loop, and only Phil aware of past events. At first he is confused, but, when the phenomenon continues on subsequent days, he decides to take advantage of the situation, with no fear of long-term consequences: he learns secrets from the town's residents, seduces women, steals money, drives recklessly, and gets thrown in jail. However, his attempts to get closer to his producer Rita, repeatedly fail. Eventually, Phil becomes despondent and tries more and more drastically to end the time loop; he gives ridiculous and offensive reports on the festival, abuses residents, and eventually kidnaps Punxsutawney Phil and, after a police chase, drives into a quarry, evidently killing both himself and the groundhog. However, Phil wakes up and finds that nothing has changed; further attempts at suicide are just as fruitless as he continues to find himself awaking at 6:00 A.M. on the morning of February 2, with the clock-radio on his bedstand playing I Got You, Babe by Sonny & Cher. When Phil explains the situation to Rita, she suggests that he should take advantage of it to improve himself. Inspired, Phil endeavors to try to learn more about Rita, building upon his knowledge of her and the town each day. He begins to use his by-now vast experience of the day to help as many people around town as possible. He uses the time to learn, among other things, to play piano, ice sculpt and speak Italian. Eventually, Phil is able to befriend almost everyone he meets during the day, using his experiences to save lives, help townspeople, and to get closer to Rita. He crafts a report on the Groundhog Day celebration so eloquent that all the other stations turn their microphones to him. After the evening dance, Rita and Phil retire together to Phil's room. He wakes the next morning and finds the time loop is broken; it is now February 3 and Rita is still with him.

Now you might be asking yourself, what in the world does the movie Groundhog day have to do with Pentecost? Good question. Let me try to explain. In our first lesson today we heard the familiar retelling of what happened on that first Pentecost after Christ's departure. We are told that after Christ's ascension, that His followers were left once again without their leader and Lord. I don't know about you, but after living through the thrill of experiencing the resurrection, Christ's departure from us again would seem unbearable. His followers retreated once again back to the upper room, to try and figure out where to go from there.

It is important to remember that the author of the book of Acts, is the same person who wrote the gospel according to St. Luke. Acts and Luke are intended to be read as one narrative. When we attempt to separate the two books, we can miss the overall point of the story. When we read this as one story, things begin to make more sense. Christ's followers have a choice to make; they

can continue to live the rest of their lives, day by day, as if there is no difference between each one. They can get up in the morning, have their coffee, jump in the shower, go to work, come home, cook dinner, watch TV, and go to bed...only to do the same thing all over again the next day, maybe with a little variety, but for the most part, the same day, O-V-E-R AND OVER again...Do you ever feel like that? Does it ever appear to you that your life is smooshed in-between the bookends of living and dying? I know I have. There are times in my own life, where I feel like Phil, that I am just going through the motions of life, looking forward to...well, who knows what. But, when we realize that the book of Acts is a continuation of the gospel, we can see how our Lord challenges us to see the difference in our own lives. The same people that had witnessed all the miracles, all the teachings, and the love of Christ, have been empowered with the same spirit that was within the Lord. This means that you and I, have dwelling in us, the same Holy Spirit that raised Christ from the dead, the same Holy Spirit that changed the water into wine, the same Holy Spirit that caused Jesus to spend time with social outcasts. Maybe your hearing this today, and your saying to yourself, I need that! I need to feel a renewal of the Holy Spirit in my life; I want to not feel like every morning when I wake up, I am just waiting for the day to end. We as Christians, are called to be living in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to be experiencing Pentecost more than once a year; but this can be hard sometimes. I know for me, I can get so caught up in the tasks I need to do; which in turn disallows me from living in the Spirit. I am not advocating however that we will never feel this way in our lives, but what I am saying, is that our lives can be different. We live in a world that is filled with hopelessness, violence, hatred, depression and cynicism. All of these different things have the same cause, SIN. I sometimes forget that we were never intended to live the way we do; and that our world, was not supposed to be this damaged. We are told in scripture that through sin, all of the world has been affected. I think of the recent tornadoes that have ripped through the country; or some of the harsh weather that has damaged so many crops of our local farmers; all of these things are a result of creation longing for its own redemption; its own salvation, its own Pentecost. God in His infinite grace and mercy, has called on us, His people who He created in His image, to be partners in doing the work of the Holy Spirit. You and I, are called by God to experience a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit to blow over us; to be present in a hurting world, knowing that we have been given this most wonderful and powerful gift, the Holy Spirit. What if God tells us, that the same miracles we read about in the bible, can happen right here in Kinderhook? I know that in our human minds this can be so difficult to believe, but, with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all of our lives, working as partners with God, we can help to bring hope to Kinderhook.

Now, just imagine how our community would react to a group of people, that no longer dwelled on the negative aspects of life, but instead were living for each-other, when the rest of the world tells us to live for ourselves. The true power of the Holy Spirit in our lives is that we can become, the healing touch of God's grace to a hurting world. We here at St. Paul's are entering into a new season. You have all taken a leap of faith in calling a recently graduated seminarian, newly ordained deacon, to be your rector. Please know, that I am truly humbled and honored by this! We have a choice to make...you and I! We can either continue to live each day here at St. Paul's as the same, day after day, or we can ask the Holy Spirit to challenge us; challenge us to

grow as individuals and as a congregation; spiritually, and in numbers; we can ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to speak of the love we have experienced, because of Christ, and all become evangelists as scripture tells us. Finally, we can ask the Holy Spirit to help us to challenge us, to stretch us, to take us out of our comfort zones. Not because it benefits us individually, but rather because it benefits our brothers and sisters in Christ, and those who do not yet have a relationship with Jesus. In looking at the parish survey, and in some of my conversations, it is clear that there are a variety of thoughts of opinions in different areas. There are differences in preference of worship styles, Some like traditional hymns and music, while others would like to see more contemporary music. There are differing views on the role of women in the church, as well as differing views on other hot-button issues in our church. What Pentecost challenges us to do, is to no longer have the attitude its my way or the highway, but to fall over ourselves for the sake of each other; to love and care for one another through the power of the Holy Spirit, and to trust that Holy Spirit will guide us and lead us to the truth. All of this should, and will give Glory to God...and if we are not doing that, than we have missed the point. But if we do follow the Holy Spirit, than and only than, do we have the ability to leave Feb. 2 in the past, and experience the newness of Feb. 3. Amen.