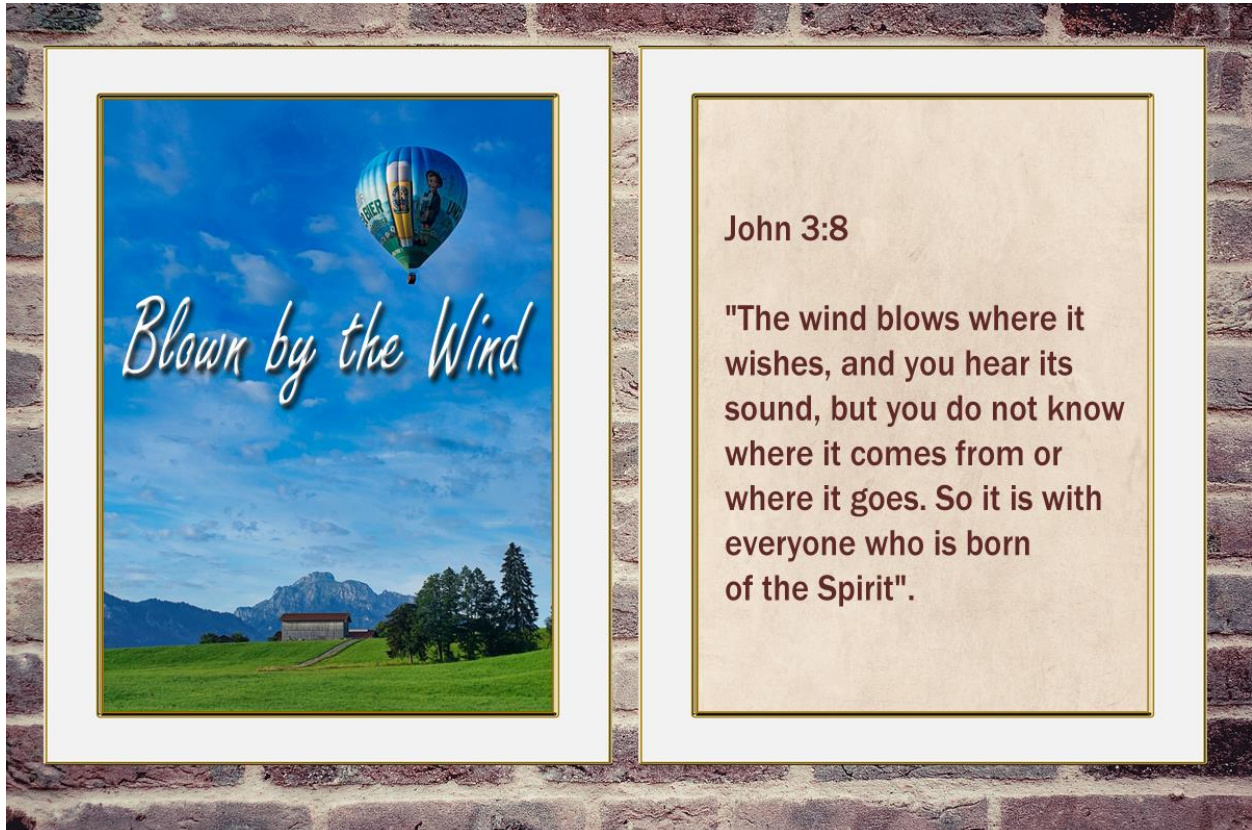


8/11/24

“BLOWN BY THE WIND”

John 3:8

"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".



Special Music: “There Is a Wind a Blowing”

David Ruis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K86g-X5JU8o>

THE STORYTELLER

“The mighty storm had pushed the small sailing ship dangerously close to the rocks near the shoreline on the outskirts of Magickazoo. There seemed to be no escape for the crew who had traveled so far to this mythical kingdom. Lightning flashed against an unseen sky, hidden by the angry clouds. Thunder roared so loud that it could not be determined if the thunder was from the storm or the waves crashing against the rocks. With their captain lying unconscious on the deck, the first mate called out to the crew, ‘Avast, ye scallywags! Put your backs into it! Raise what remains of the sails. Hard-a-port! Perhaps the spirit of the wind will choose to be kind and drive us away from certain death.’ Rain lashed at the men whose clothes had turned to rags in the fierceness of the savage storm. But working together, they pulled the ropes to lift the torn sails on the foremast and mizenmast, for the mainmast lay splintered across the deck. Twenty-three men battled the storm as they sought redemption from the chaos.

Miraculously, the wind changed direction as the sails climbed the mast, and the ship and its crew were pushed away from the rocks and driven into the port of Magickazoo. As the caravel crossed the port entrance, the storm subsided, and the clouds disappeared. For the legends were true. The storms never raged inside the port of the widget mongers of Magickazoo.”

The storyteller took a bow, removed his hat and passed through the crowd which continued in polite applause. The children in the front row had been mesmerized and fascinated by the story. Herman Breedlove had been a

storyteller all of his life, moving from town to town much like the gypsy travelers of times gone by. He counted himself successful if he made enough to keep his belly full, gas in his tank, and have a little left over for a cold brew every now and then. His green '67 Plymouth Belvedere was his home. Hermon had named the car after his first and only love from high school, Celeste. The tires had more bald places than treads and there was more rust than paint. One could hardly tell that it was supposed to be green. But Herman was very attached to the car. He kept a small tent in the trunk that he would set up when he arrived at county fairs or special events. As long as he was still able to tell a story, that car would remain his home. The backpack he took everywhere contained a change of clothes and a few personal items. Today, he was working the crowd at the Parable Cantaloupe Festival. The event was always held the second Saturday of August and was four days of merriment, attractions, musicians, amusement rides, midway games, cooking contests, and other competitions.

Herman often traveled with Bob Farley's Special Events even though he wasn't on Bob Farley's payroll. But he had learned long ago that it was always better to travel with others in his line of business. Occasionally Celeste would start acting up and he felt more comfortable knowing that there were people around who would help him out when that happened.

Herman continued to pass the hat as the crowd began to disperse. He would tell another story in an hour or so. His hat found its way to a young man who casually dropped a couple of bills into his ragged chapeau. "That was amazing," the young man said. "I loved your story. You made it seem so real. I

could actually feel the boat scratching against the rocks and hear the thunder roaring.”

“Why, thank you, young man. Most people want to hear a good tale, but few stick around long enough to tell me what they thought about it,” Herman replied. “What’s your name, boy? You from around here?”

“Jason. Jason Williams, sir. My dad’s a cantaloupe farmer. He has a booth with the other farmers over on the south side of the fair. As a matter of fact, I should be over there right now minding the tent, but I needed a break and decided to come hear your story.”

“I appreciate that, son.”

Jason started to walk away, but after a few steps turned back to face the old and wrinkled storyteller. “Listen, Mr. Breedlove, there’s plenty of shade over at the booth and I would love to share some cantaloupe with you. Why don’t you join me, and you can tell me all about what makes you tick.”

“I guess I could spare the time. The next show’s not for an hour and I don’t remember the last time that I had a decent slice of cantaloupe. Lead on, young man.”

Jason led the old man past vendors of every sort, some selling knick-knacks, souvenirs, or t-shirts. Others were selling handmade pots or wood carvings. There were several antique dealers and a few live animal pens. Food vendors were scattered about the tents and in the aisles. The Cantaloupe Festival was a big deal in Parable, and people came from everywhere to be a part

of the colorful celebration. It was about a ten-minute walk to the tent that Dancer Williams and Jason had set up early that morning. The white canopy extended just over the edge of the cantaloupe-filled pickup bed that Jason and his dad used for Market.

Jason noticed how Herman's fingers were long, boney, wrinkled and dry, as he picked up a melon from the back of the truck and lifted it to his nose to smell it. A smile came to the storyteller's face as if he remembered a moment from his past. A good memory. Herman shook his head and placed the cantaloupe back in the pile. He turned back to look at Jason as the younger man opened an ice chest that contained several cooled melons. Jason chose one, closed the chest, and returned to the working table where he cut it into slices, saving the seeds for planting in the spring. He handed Herman a slice, and as the older man took a bite, it was obvious that the taste brought him a great deal of forgotten joy!

Herman sat in a rusty folding chair by the table and continued to enjoy his slice of juicy, sweet cantaloupe. Jason opened a fresh roll of paper towels and handed a few to Herman. The young man then grabbed himself a slice and sat on the edge of the cooler.

"Well, Mr. Breedlove, what brings you to these parts," said Jason trying to start up a conversation.

"If you will let me call you Jason, son, then you can call me Herman."

"I'd like that, Herman."

“Now, to answer your question, Jason, a little of bit this and a little bit of that. I’ve been a storyteller all my life. I don’t really have a home as such. The closest thing to that is my car, Celeste. I travel from County Fair to various festivals and other events, set up my stump, and tell stories. I even do the occasional Renaissance Fair or trading days. I have no family to speak of, but I know a lot of people on the circuit and we all kind of look after each other.”

Herman spit out a wayward seed on the ground as the juice ran down his chin. He wiped his face with a paper towel and Jason noticed that he had only a few teeth in his mouth. But it certainly didn’t stop him from enjoying that cantaloupe.

“But that must be a hard life, Herman,” Jason said. “What kind of life is it like to have no roots, no place to call home?”

“Well, boy, Celeste is all the home I need. I can’t ever imagine putting down roots anywhere as long as Celeste keeps me going from place to place. I don’t know any other life. And I love what I do! I love storytelling and the smiles it brings to people’s faces.”

Jason could see that Herman had finished his cantaloupe, offered him another slice which he eagerly accepted, and Jason deposited the rind in a nearby fifty-five-gallon trash bucket that was overflowing with festival garbage.

“But Herman, don’t you get lonely?”

“Ah, Jason, Celeste and my memories keep me company. I got an old 8-track player a couple of years back and installed it in Celeste and I am always on the lookout for tapes at the flea markets and garage sales. I have quite a collection.”

“But how do you sleep? And what about food?”

“I have an old mattress in the back seat of Celeste, and I always seem to make enough at the fairs to pay for food on the road. Many of the vendors keep me fed while I am at the events. There’s usually more than enough food to go around and I never leave a place empty handed.”

“Gee, Hermon, I don’t know how you do it!”

“Do what?”

“Live on the road like that with no real future.”

“Jason, I love my life! I am grateful that God allows me to do what I do and takes care of me. I have more friends than I can count, and more stories than I can ever tell. What’s so hard about that?”

Herman stood up, spit out another seed, and then deposited the rind in the trash can. “Well, boy, I’d best be getting back. I have another story to tell in a few minutes. This one will be about Jason’s encounter with the cross-eyed wildebeest. Ought to be a good one. I’m anxious to see how this one comes out, myself”

Herman smiled a toothy grin and let out a laugh not unlike that of a horse. Jason picked up a couple of fresh cantaloupes from the back of the truck, put them in a sack, and then handed them to the old storyteller. Herman gave him a grateful nod, shook Jason’s hand, and headed back to his stump.

“Thank you, Herman,” Jason called out. “Thank you for your company and your stories. God bless you and stay safe!”

Herman lifted his hat in acknowledgment, waving it high in the air. Jason had truly enjoyed the visit. He hoped he would have time to catch a few more stories before Hermon moved on.

This is a hard message to preach without stepping on a few toes. But being “Blown by the Wind” is the epitome of enlightenment and the pinnacle of the Christian experience, an experience that many of us never embrace or achieve. It is all about letting go when all we want to do is cling to the boat for dear life as we get battered by the chaos of the world. The most difficult thing we are supposed to embrace as Christians is letting go of our anchors to our earthly boundaries and tying our anchor lines to Jesus Christ.

20 Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” **Matthew 8:20**

1 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases,

2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

3 He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt.

4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.

5 If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

6 So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere. **Luke 9:1-6**

"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

Do we find that these verses make us a little uneasy? Maybe even uncomfortable? They should. What kind of life is this? Surely Jesus can't expect us to live like this! What about our families? What about our property? What about our careers and our fortunes?

Actually, the Bible is filled with verses like this. From Cain being told to leave the area around the Garden, to Abraham being called to find a new place to live, to Joseph bringing his family to Egypt, to Moses leading the people to the promised land, to the prophets Isaiah, Elija, Elisha, and Jeremiah, to wisemen in search of the Christ Child, to John the Baptist living in the wilderness eating locus and honey, to Jesus telling explaining that to be a true follower of Christ, we need to leave everything behind, take up our cross, and follow him.

21 Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

22 But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Matthew 8:21-22

Sounds pretty callous of Jesus, doesn't it? But how about this one?

37 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

Matthew 10:37-39

For this world is not our home; we are looking forward to our everlasting home in heaven.

Hebrews 13:14

But... but... but... No buts. No options. No other choices. This is not multiple choice. Nor is it an essay question. Jesus is very blunt about this. Jesus Christ and our service to our Lord needs to be our very first priority in everything that we do. And that is hard. There is no way to sugarcoat this. There is no way to make it more palatable. Herein lies the meat of Christianity. And each and every one of us fail in this endeavor throughout our lives, as hard as we try to make Jesus our priority.

When we choose to step into a relationship with Jesus Christ, he becomes our all-in-all, the director of our lives, the definer of our purpose, the executor of our estates, and the reason that we get up in the morning. But the truth is that most of us aren't willing to make this kind of commitment. We want the joy, the

peace, the love, the grace, the mercy, the home in heaven, but we aren't willing to give everything over to Jesus here on earth. We want to keep one foot firmly planted in our past and present. Turning over our families, our friends, our fortune to Jesus just isn't in our cards. We love our children. But do we love Jesus more? We love our spouses. But do we love Jesus more? We love our parents. But do we love Jesus more? Jesus Christ states that if we don't love him more than the most important people in our lives, we aren't worthy of being called his. And while grace is paramount in our Christian beliefs, it is not an excuse to avoid doing what he asks.

“But Preacher, doesn't the Bible tell us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ?” And I would tell you that is absolutely correct. But we have to take it in context to the entire passage.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

36 As it is written:

**“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35-39

The question in this context is not whether or not God loves us unconditionally. There is no question that he does. He died on that ugly cross for us. No, the question is, do we love God unconditionally? Are we willing to face death all day long? Do we consider ourselves sheep to be slaughtered for our faith, if necessary?

In the early church, this became a question that had to be answered daily and there were many Christians who turned away from the faith for the sake of their families and their own lives giving in to the demands of Caesar and Rome. Those who didn't renounce their faith were brutally tortured, often along with their families, before they were ultimately put to death in an attempt to get them to reject their faith. The reality of choosing to proclaim faith in Christ was a brutal and agonizing decision. And for those who fell away, it took decades for those who stood fast in the faith to forgive them and welcome them back into the fold. There were many who chose an unforgiving path as they remembered all the sacrifices that they had made, while those who chose to renounce their faith saved themselves and their families.

I know this is a hard truth, but we have to honestly ask ourselves where we stand on this matter. We are fortunate that we aren't faced with these choices where we are, but if it were to come to that, where would we stand? Jesus

expects us to be honest with not only him, but ourselves as well. Do we daily choose Jesus above all else?

That is our focus this week. Is Jesus our all in all? Would we truthfully do anything that he asks of us? Even admitting that we aren't there yet is a step in the right direction towards letting go of our earthly bindings, of dying to self and surrendering our lives. We can't address a problem if we can't admit there is a problem.

There is freedom in letting the Holy Spirit guide our every step, and it takes a great deal of fortitude for us to allow the Holy Spirit to do just that. We need to let go of our earthly ties and give everything over to our savior. If we don't, it doesn't mean that he doesn't love us, it just means that we don't love him as much as we profess. Can we live lives like that of storyteller Herman Breedlove or the early disciples if we are called upon to do that. Would we hesitate? Can we truly say that we are 'born of the spirit?'

"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".

God bless you all!

AMEN

Copyright © 2024 Rev. Walt Wellborn

Scripture references provided under copyright by:

**THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION©, NIV© Copyright © 1973,
1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. © Used by permission. All rights reserved
worldwide.**