

Series: Wind in the Sails
Title: Fresh Wind for a New Message
Text: Acts 3:11-26

There is a story about a little boy who was asked by a man what his father did. The boy said, “He watches.” “You mean that he is a night watchman?” “Oh, no,” the little boy exclaimed, “He just watches.” “Well, what does he watch?”

“I don’t know if I can tell you everything,” the boy continued, “but I can name a few things.” “Well tell me,” the now curious man replied.

“He watches TV, he watches Mom do the housework, he watches for the paperboy, he watches the weather, and I think he watches girls too,” he said with an impish grin on his face. “He watches the stock market, football games, all the sports, he watches Mom spank us, and he watches us do our homework. He watches us leave for church and PTA and shopping. He watches Mom write letters and me play with my dog. He watches Mom pay the bills. But mainly,” he said with a touch of sadness, “he just watches.”

Luke, the writer of Acts tells us that a crowd had watched something extraordinary outside the worship center that day. They saw a familiar man who was lame, come shouting and dancing in the sanctuary. All they knew was a few moments ago, he was sitting next to the door looking for a handout, and the next he was up, walking, dancing and joyously singing a new song. As they approached, the man walked over to Peter and John and clung to them with a hug of gratitude.

They gathered around watching and wondering what was going on. **God had done something new, demanding a new message.** God was attracted by this man's weakness and He wouldn't resist someone humbly, desperately, requesting help. So God used Peter and John as the channel of his love.

Peter seizes this moment to testify to what God is doing. Many today are also curiously watching, wondering what God is doing in the world today. They are wondering if God is who many say He is. They are wondering if there is more to this life than what we typically experience. Many think that the best human life is unspeakably sad. Then when heaven breaks through, a dormant longing is awoken, needing though a new message on how this life can be received.

Like Peter and John, God continues His activity in the lives of those who believe in power of Jesus' name. The Lord of heaven and earth has chosen, called, and convinced people to be wind tunnels through whom His fresh wind is focused. Extraordinary, supernatural acts did not end with Jesus. His followers are not passive watchers of what the living God is doing in the world. They are involved with what God is doing just as much as Jesus was involved with what His Father was doing. Like Peter and John **they are in on God's action. God is acting in them and through them.** They are the windows in which the light of God breaks through the darkness. I believe that is what makes Peter's message and yes our message new. **Our message becomes new when we testify to what we see God**

doing in and through us. Our message becomes new as we walk by faith. Our message becomes new as we worship and invite others to worship.

On the steps of the Temple Peter tells the “watchers” that they had been blind to God’s activity in their world. Jesus, the Savior, the Son of God, was in their midst, but they failed to recognize him. More than that, they rejected him outright. They dismissed him with a wave of the hand. Peter told them, “*You rejected the Holy and Righteous One.*”

It’s easy for us to look back and wonder how the people failed to see Jesus when he was right in front of them. They were merely watching and not perceiving. However, many people today do not see Jesus for a variety of reasons. Some are simply indifferent; others are preoccupied with activities, while others are just plain lazy. What they need is for someone to help them turn there watching into perceiving. Church, God offers us His Holy Spirit for this very purpose.

There is though a **positive side to watching**. We need to be on the **lookout for God’s activity** in our world. Mike was driving to a business appointment one day, and he was in a hurry as well as annoyed with traffic. He was stopped at a busy intersection where the light had just turned red. “All right,” Mike thought to himself, “I can beat the next light if I race ahead of the pack.” He was ready to take off the split second the light turned green. But then he noticed a young couple—

both blind—crossing the street. The woman had a baby in her arms. Both the man and the woman were using white canes to help them navigate across the busy intersection.

With horror, Mike realized that they were not walking in the crosswalk, but were veering diagonally, directly into the intersection and cross traffic. Unaware of the danger they were walking right into the path of oncoming cars.

Mike's watching turned to perceiving God at work. He saw every car in every direction come to a simultaneous stop. He never heard the screech of brakes or even the beep of a car horn. Nobody yelled, "Get out of the way!" They all gave this couple what they had, Time. Yes, time seemed to stand still for this family as they made their way safely across the busy intersection. God broke into the world. God broke into Mike's world urging him to stop, look, and see His "refreshing" presence in the world.

Sometimes, I am so busy with "other" things, that I miss God's activity in our world. I miss perceiving "Good News" happening all around me. I need to **turn my watching into perceiving**. I need to change my self-preoccupation to Godly perception. This changing of mind and heart is what the Bible calls repentance. Repentance turns away from one behavior and attitude toward another. What about you? Too busy to perceive "Good News"? If so, God invites you to change."

In addition to this message calling us to be watching for “Good News,” our message becomes new as we “**walk by faith.**” Peter said, “*By faith in the name of Jesus...this man was made strong...It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through Him that has given this complete healing to him.*” (Acts 3:16)

Several weeks before, Peter and John had been hiding behind locked doors, fearing for their very lives. Peter had even denied that he knew Jesus. But all that was changed and forgotten once he and the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit. With the Spirit in their lives, the events and the promises of Jesus took on new meaning. They realized that Jesus is faithful to his promises. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit, “... *would bring glory to (Him) by taking from what is (His) and making it known to (them.)*” Jesus said, “*Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.*” (Jn 16:14, 15; 24) By faith Peter and John received a new power for a new walk and a new message.

Faith in the glorious name of Jesus unleashes the power and passion of the Fresh Wind of the Spirit for a needy and paralyzed world. I am afraid that some Christ-followers never have their sails filled with Fresh Wind, others have never moved away from the dock into the deep water because they have never raised their sails of faith in prayer. Still others have their sails flapping in the wind because they need to adjust their position so to catch the wind of the Spirit.

With their sails of faith raised, the disciples understood the things that Jesus taught them. They discovered parallels between the prophecies of Isaiah and the things that happened to Jesus. They fully understood that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were the fulfillment of God's plan. His coming was no accident, but an act of God. **Great things happen when we walk by faith in the name of Jesus.**

Faith is the secret for unlocking all the powers of the heavenly kingdom. It means calling upon the authority and power of the Master Jesus. It is accepting for oneself who Christ Jesus was, what he had done at the cross, and accepting the fact that He is alive. It means trusting his ways completely surrendering one's will to do His will. Faith responds to Christ's love revealed at the cross and the resurrection.

Sometimes when we hear teachings they don't take hold of our lives. Other times we know what we should do, but we lack the will to do them. We are as handicapped as the man lying outside the temple. We even have the phrase 'lame excuses.' There are times when we need to take those first few steps of faith—to be not just watchers, but also walkers.

Our message becomes new in our worship and by inviting others to worship. The people at the temple were amazed to see a man who could not walk jumping around for joy. Then they turned to Peter and John as if they were some

kind of miracle workers, prime time celebrities. But Peter would have none of it. He said to them, “*Why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or purity we have made him walk?*” Peter was very clear about it. He and John were not the source of healing; it was the power of the Risen Lord working through them. And rather than gawking at the miracle, the crowd ought to be giving thanks to the Master. Walking by faith drives us to worship.

Once there was a man named Minnesota. He was a likeable fellow. But at the moment he was down on his luck. He had just been released from prison. For three armed robberies he was sentenced to ten years, but was freed after five for good behavior. In the process he lost his family.

Then he arrived at a place that served down and out ex-cons, with just the clothes on his back and a few dollars in his pocket. He had nothing else: no job, no friends, no family that would claim him, and no real hope. What he did have, however, was determination. He possessed a determined faith to change his life around. He enrolled at a local technical college. His grades were high enough for him to make the Dean’s list. When he received a note from one of his professors praising his work, he carried that letter with him always.

He took on his new responsibilities at the half-way house with great enthusiasm. When people pushed open the door, he would invite them in for coffee, and counseled them. He convinced them that he truly cared. He offered

warmth and attention to those who hadn't felt such love for a long time. His compassionate heart gave them hope: he was a ray of sunshine in a dark and gloomy environment.

He also began to attend Worship. Soon, he became friends with the pastor. The two of them talked and prayed together, each cherishing the friendship and strengthening the faith of the other. Minnesota watched God's activity in his life and in his world. He walked by faith in the Lord, going wherever God lead in service to others. He also became a worshipper. His life was a new message.

Peter wanted everyone to know that God is the source of every good work. To miss that is to be both blind and lame. But Peter offers a way out of one's self-imposed disabilities. "*Repent and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.*" Repent, that is accepting God as our God. We are the creatures who owe him a debt of nothing more than our love and worship.

Watching for God's hand in the world is good, but it's not enough. Walking in the way is good, but it's not enough either. Christ calls us to watching, walking and worshipping. That's our new message.