

## Sermon for September 27

### Shivon Miller

If you have ever experienced Vacation Bible School in the building at Trinity you know it is always hot, usually unbearably hot. No matter what week we plan VBS, it inevitably is the hottest week of the summer. No air moves within that brick building. Add 75 hot little bodies jumping around and you can literally feel the cloud of stagnant air block your movement and struggle to get through your lungs. Every year we bring in fans, donated and borrowed and set them up around the space. One year we were gifted oscillating fans. These fans would turn all the way around, able to blow in different directions. You would just wait for the fan to work its way across the room and turn towards you with a wave of moving air.

One of the oscillating fans however was a resistant oscillator. It happened to be the one in the fellowship hall area where the kids would sit for large group. This particular fan would start to turn and then reach a certain point and get stuck. It would then begin to click...over and over again...loudly...as it tried to turn as it should but was simply unable to operate as designed, unable to change course and work its way around to a new direction.

We people are *that* fan. Stuck...called to turn in a new direction, but left loudly clicking the reasons why we cannot blow in a new way.

In our Ezekiel text today we hear that the Word of the Lord has come to Ezekiel. God says to Ezekiel “this proverb shall no more be used by you.” Now regardless of what the proverb says, we know that this proverb is one that has been repeated over and over in Israel. It has clearly held meaning for the people and provided a direction, an understanding of God. God has come and instructed them to let that proverb go, to stop repeating that direction and understanding. Instead God says “As I live this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel, Know all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die...” God issues a change – “As I live...” – because I am God still living and moving, hear a new word.

I picture the people of Israel, standing like that fan. They have been stuck in one direction, repeating the same teachings for a long time. God knows there will be clicking, that people will get stuck, unable to turn. They have concerns that the

new way will be unfair. In the past, the transgressions of the parents have not only doomed that generation but have been carried over unto their children. Those who transgressed would die with no option to turn, and even the next generation would be born into unrighteousness BUT this new word of God says that the unrighteous, the sinful, can turn from their transgressions and live.

The people of Israel begin to click loudly. Their righteousness may have felt dependent on others' unrighteousness. Isn't it true that we often think we are right with God, by comparing ourselves to others that may be "less right"? God says more to the Israelites - when the *righteous* turn away and sin, they will die. The righteous are no longer securely righteous. Suddenly there is not the us and them, the chosen righteous and the sinful unrighteous. The old teachings have been taken away and God says to all "Repent and turn from your transgressions, get yourself a new heart and new spirit."

TURN in a new way, get a new heart and new spirit. Click, click, click – can't you just hear that stuck fan?

This is why the religious leaders of Jesus' time had such a difficult time as well. The religious leaders had devoted their lives to strictly following religious law. Jesus comes with a new word of grace. Jesus comes with words of love and forgiveness for all God's people. Their righteousness is no longer dependent on their ability to live the law better than their neighbor. Jesus has freed all people from the law to live through Christ's righteousness alone. In this freedom he invites people to turn and live for the good of their neighbor.

Our second reading today gives us an image for what we are to turn towards. We are to be of the same mind, having the same love. We are to turn towards doing nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but regard others as better than ourselves. We are to stop turning towards our own interests and instead blow towards the interests of others.

Click...click...click...do we want to hear this new word? Do we want to turn?

Look at our world... This is not the way we are blowing. There is stagnant air as we each stand in our corner, repeating the same words over and over, pointing out the unrighteous, declaring our own righteousness, using language of us and them, forgetting the living, active God who comes with a new word. TURN –

Repent. Get a new heart. Be of the same mind, having the same love. Do nothing from selfish ambition. Regard others as better. Stop with your own interests. Work toward the interests of others.

CLICK, CLICK, CLICK... We are stuck, unable to turn, smothered by the stagnant air...

But let me take you back to Vacation Bible School and that fan. Still unmoving, still clicking, the fan was helpless to fix itself. Then one child after watching and waiting for that fan to turn towards her, stood up, made her way over to the fan and stood in front of it. She picked up the fan and TURNed it so that it might be able to blow in a new direction, where it was needed to move stagnancy.

Seeing our inability to turn on our own, God got up, came to dwell among us, gathered our sin and stuckness and carried it to the cross. Through Christ's death and resurrection he carried us into a new way, righteous only through Christ. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, although being in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited but relinquished it all taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Stuck in our ways, clicking loudly, God comes to us. It is God who does the work enabling us to turn, promising the living and active Spirit will blow through us to bring about a new kingdom.

It feels hot in our world right now, unbearably hot. The air is thick and it feels like we are struggling to breath. We just wait for moving air to blow our way. But I think we need to ask: Are we resistant oscillator fans? Are we willing to pray: "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. My God, I put my trust in you; show me your ways, teach me your paths, lead me in your truth. Remember me according to your steadfast love. Help me to hear a new word from you today. TURN me."

Remember just like that oscillator fan, you are designed to turn, able to change course and work your way around to a new direction, because as our Romans text reminds us "it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for God's good pleasure." Let us stop clicking and open ourselves to turning and blowing a new way.