

"I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind."

-Ecclesiastes 1:14 NIV

I can almost hear the writer of Ecclesiastes saying, "Why bother?" "What difference will it make?" I hear it all around me, from a variety of people. As we approach another election most are turning a deaf ear - we are tired of politics and broken promises. We may stay away from the polls in record numbers this November, after all it is not a "big" election year that comes next year. (We in Washington State really have no excuse - we mail our ballots in!) But, we wonder what difference will it make. Are we chasing after the wind?

One can hear those words also mentioned about the worship and the Church. What difference will it make in my life if I go to worship or if I stay home? What difference will it make? I believe. I am spiritual. I am better than some of those who are in worship. So what difference will it make? Why should I chase after wind and lose a few hours extra sleep on Sunday - unless there is an early game, a good sale, etc. I will stay in rather than chase after the wind.

And yet, we chase after the wind in so many other ways. We long for "something" and thus we seek after the wind. We chase after popular people wanting to be like them—choosing their hair styles, mannerism, etc., at least until a more popular one comes along. We chase after politicians who promise to promise to promise what we want and then disappoint. We chase after new fads, new cars, new diets, new clothes hoping that they will satisfy a need we find deep within. But like the wind we never seem to catch it, the void remains empty.

I am just thinking out loud now - but, perhaps it is time that we stopped chasing after the wind, stopped and let the wind find us. Maybe our lives have become so busy chasing after the wind that we have failed to notice where the wind is blowing. It is time to stop and begin to take notice of what is happening around us - where is the wind especially the "wind of God" blowing today. And, when we discover it let it lead us to God's place in our lives.

Dallas Willard points out in his book, Renovations of the Heart, that much of what the church fixates on today has nothing to do with the New Testament: which version of Scripture to read; what hymn books should we use; the time of worship; whether one uses prayer books or spontaneous prayers; who should use the building; what color should the sanctuary walls be painted; who made a mess on the carpet; who can and can't receive communion; and the list goes on. These issues become so important that we forget the hungry, the lonely, the widows and orphans. We forget that we are called to be a place of comfort and a place where lives are changed and challenged. A place where questions can be asked. A place where lives can be restored. A place where one can find the wind and feel it fill our sails and lead us to God's direction with the support and encouragement of others on the journey.

Putting it another way, we have a friend who has said for years that it is time we stop trying to tell God where to work in the world. We need to stop and discern where God is working and then join God there! However, the discernment of where God is working may take time - and we are too busy to take the time to discover where God is actually working in the world. Or, where God's spirit is working in our lives — worship should be a place where we are invited to discern and discover God's moving in our lives and the life of those who seek to follow.

We were fortunate a few years ago to take a windjammer cruise out of Camden, Maine. It was a wonderful three-masted schooner dependent on the wind - it had no motor - we were towed out of port by a smaller power boat. One day there was no wind. We waited. The Captain searched the skies, watching the clouds and the birds - the sails ready. Suddenly he started giving us directions (we were the crew - if we wanted to be). He turned the schooner and shouted for us to raise the sails - we worked hard following the directions of the First Mate (we were all novices) as we hoisted the sails. But, oh how wonderful it felt when the sails caught wind and we began moving forward, slowly at first and then gaining speed as the wind filled the sails.

What way is the wind blowing? Are we willing to wait, to discover and then, sail on....