

---

## *The Spirit Goes Where the Wind Blows*

**A sermon by the Rev. Salmoon Bashir**  
**The Feast of St. Philip**

The Spirit of the Lord came upon Philip. The Spirit of the Lord produces Love. The Spirit goes where the wind blows.

The Spirit cannot be controlled or confined, and it works in ways that are often beyond human understanding, touching lives and guiding people according to God's will wherever it chooses.

When I was a child, I acted like a child. I grew up flying and running after kites. In Pakistan we used to have an annual kite flying festival where people from across the world came and celebrated the commencement of the spring season. The prices to rent the skyscraper rooftops would skyrocket because people loved to fly kites from those tall buildings as it was a competition. However, for younger kids like me, this was a perfect opportunity to chase after and catch fallen kites. The area I was living in, all the rooftops of the streets were flat and connected to one another. I would start running after kites from my rooftop and I could end up at the end of the street. Sometimes, the wind would take those kites even to the other side of the town and while chasing after them was quite challenging it was also exciting and an opportunity to meet people when I ran on their rooftops or in the street. Some would yell at you, some cursed because their roofs were not sturdy enough to run on them, and others would just smile and say best wishes for catching those kites. I used to catch so many kites, sometimes forty or fifty, in different colors, sizes and shapes, and I would hide them under my bed so that no one could find them.

Flying and running after kites was not just fun but also somehow liberating, going with the wind, to see where it would take you. Flying a kite requires a strong wind and an ability to sense the direction of its flow. Once the kite is no longer tethered to the string, it drifts freely in the air, moving with the wind. No longer guided by the player, its flight is entirely controlled by the direction of the wind.

Like our own St. Philip the Deacon and Evangelist when the Angel of God asked him to follow the Spirit to proclaim the good news to a person, a stranger who was considered an outsider of the common circle. Looking at the text, it's important to notice that Philip did not choose on his own, to approach the Eunuch. It was the angel of the lord; it was the spirit of the Lord that led him to the Eunuch. The wind of the Spirit guided him, but Philip still had the choice of whether to follow it. In the same way, God grants each of us the freedom to do what is just and right, freedom to choose whether we follow God's Spirit or not.

Philip's heart was open, and he had courage, humility and willingness to follow the voice of the Spirit. To remove and cut the string of exclusivity, Philip followed the wind of the Spirit toward inclusivity. He did not question whether this gentile was worthy of the Good News. Philip knew that this person was chosen by God and therefore, he humbly followed the direction of the wind, guided not by his ignorance or exclusivity but by the Spirit.

Philip who was a minister of Word and Service, one of the deacons appointed by the Church, was set apart by the Holy Spirit, by the Spirit of the Lord. He was ordained by the church to equip the diakonia of all people to serve the needs of the world and also bring those concerns of the world to the Church. He was following the voice of the Spirit to share the Good News of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, we see the Ethiopian eunuch, who is also guided by the Spirit. Despite being a high-ranking official in the queen's court, he demonstrates remarkable humility. He comes to Jerusalem to worship, and

even as he leaves the city, he continues to read the scriptures. This was likely not his first time studying the prophet Isaiah, but he humbly recognizes his need for help to fully understand its meaning. The Spirit of the Lord cuts the string and removes his veil of ignorance, so he flows with the wind of the Spirit, with a spirit of humility. What's truly remarkable is the eunuch's openness and trust. He encounters a stranger on the road—Philip—yet without hesitation, he invites him into his chariot to teach him. The eunuch, guided by the Spirit, places his trust in the spirit of the Lord and seeks his guidance from Philip.

And friends, accepting God's invitation and following the Holy Spirit, leads to and produces Love. If the spirit of the Lord is there, it produces humility, and trust, and most importantly, love. The Holy Spirit's presence in a believer is recognized as the source of genuine, transformative love, free to flow like a first gust of wind and first ripple of water.

I imagine the work of the Spirit like the first gust of wind or the initial ripple of water after a stone is dropped into it. Just as the wind begins with a gentle breeze that expands to fill the entire space, OR a stone causes ripples of water that move outward from the center, so too - does the Holy Spirit's work spread far beyond what we can see or comprehend, reaching into God's world.

We see this in the story of St. Philip, who, guided by the Spirit, met the Ethiopian eunuch. This encounter was the initial ripple, filled with the Spirit, marking the start of a spiritual wave that reached far beyond that moment. It spread from Samaria to Gaza, from Azotus to Caesarea, and that Ethiopian eunuch himself took the Good News to Africa. He took that first ripple of water, first gust of wind and became one of the saints of Ethiopia, known as Simeon Bachos, according to some traditions.

I can imagine that first gust of wind, that first ripple of water in downtown Atlanta in 1846 that started St. Philip's Episcopal Church with five communicants, with the wind of the Spirit guiding St. Philip's parish again in 1933 to move to its present location, the "little gray church" built atop the hill. And now in 2024 this magnificent House of God with its loving community, following the Spirit, courageously serving this city and the world! A house of prayer for all people. The initial waves of wind and ripples of water continue to spread the Good News of Jesus to this day. The Spirit continues to stretch out towards the ends of the earth and the innermost parts of our lives that God so deeply loves.

On this Sunday of St. Philip, the Deacon and Evangelist, the Spirit of the Lord invites us to sever the ties of ignorance and exclusivity preventing us from following the Spirit of the Lord. My prayer today is for all of us to break free from these chains, to follow the Spirit, and to soar through the skies like a kite without strings. May we embody the examples of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch moving with the wind of the spirit, to produce trust, love and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. Amen.*