**Winds of Change**

**By Rev. Sheryl Stewart**

Proverbs 31: 10-31 Ecclesiastes 1: 16- 2:1, 12-19 Mark 9: 30-37

Psalm 1

**Summary: Don’t chase the wind, be the wind.**

 We rarely have youth sermons these days, but one of my Junior sermons is a good start for my theme. Many of you know that a lot of my stories are based on an ancient Native American called Chief Pink Feather. He lived so long ago that he was on hand for the birth of the Moon, but that is another story.

 I begin my tale with another verse from Ecclesiastes (4: 6, 13). **Better one hand full and peace of mind, than both fists full and toil that is chasing the wind . . . . Better a young man poor and wise than a king old and foolish who will listen to advice no longer.**

 When Pink Feather was a young man, Windchaser was chief. This man was the fastest runner the people had ever known, a runner so fast that no one could pass him except the wind! Although he ran far ahead of everyone in any race, he’d push on harder as if he could catch and pass the very air he moved through.

 Windchaser worked harder than he needed to at everything, a habit most people admired. One result of this was that most imitated his example, and the circle – his tribe – became rich and powerful. Filled with pride, Windchaser felt the title of chief to be too puny and started calling himself “king.” Everyone worked even harder then, as if always chasing something just out of reach.

 That was a path of great profit, but the trouble with chasing the wind is that you never overtake it and win. Not winning bothered King Windchaser; so, he ran faster and faster, and no one had any peace.

“Mighty King,” Pink Feather dared to say during a council meeting, “is it good to try to catch the wind? There is much to be said for going slower and having time for peace and prayer.”

 “No,” growled the king, “You’re just lazy!”

 “I just don’t grab everything with both hands,” replied Pink Feather. “Not only can I lift my free hand in prayer, it is there to help my brothers and sisters. With both hands full, I can never touch anything other than my own desire.”

 “No,” snarled the angry king, “this is the year when I will outrun the wind.”

 At the dawn of the New Year, all the tribes gathered for a great race. The winner would count coup for himself and his tribe over all the other tribes. This was the way in those ancient days before they invented war, hurting or stealing from each other to get ahead.

 I’ll outrun you this time,” Windchaser shouted at the wind. The starting arrow was fired, and, Windchaser began so fast that he caught it midair and ran ahead of everyone with it in his fist as all his circle cheered wildly. His feet flew faster and faster, until they left the ground entirely and ran on top of the air, chasing the wind.

 Just ahead of him, leaves were lifting in a gentle breeze, as if in a prayer dance. *“This is lucky,”* Windchaser thought, *“the wind is distracted lifting the leaves heavenward. I can get ahead right now!”*

 Windchaser crashed through the spiraling leaves, past the circling wind. “Windchaser, wait!” the startled breeze cried as he passed by.

 “I’m ahead of you now,” Windchaser cried out; then, his lungs empty, he opened his mouth to take a deep breath. He had passed the wind, there was no air to breathe, and he died.

 The race was called off. No one wanted to claim the title when the effort for glory had cost the king so dearly. When the mourners gathered, the wind itself was the saddest of all. “I loved racing alongside, around, and ahead of Windchaser,” the very air said, “but he never stood still long enough to know I’d have been by his side in every quiet moment as well.”

 “I’ll remember that, “young Pink Feather replied.
I’ll run hard, but I’ll leave a hand free and stop now and then to breathe and pray.” It would be good if everyone remembered that as well.

 My sermon was at first planned to center on Proverbs 31, when Solomon praises a virtuous wife. Like most Christian theologians, I’ve taken this to be an inspired metaphor pointing to the relationship of the Church, the bride of Christ, to our Savior. Then, I looked at the alternative lectionary on Solomon’s thoughts in Ecclesiastes. His despair seems a sharp contrast as the king realizes that all he has made will pass on to others after his death. Who knows if those who come after him will administer wisely or foolishly? The wise and foolish meet the same end.

 So, he chases pleasure – and it is vanity, chasing the wind as surely as acquiring fame or wealth. Whatever legacy he makes, whatever wealth or fame or sensations he piles up for himself, all is vanity I cannot argue with that. However, the key words are “for himself.”

 Yes, vanity is what I do for myself, and the root of the word, doing something in vain, is to work for no result. That is, by the way, why cursing is “taking God’s Name in vain.” Curses ask God to do something He will not do. God does not damn, God saves. Of course, swearing is in vain.

 But what if my efforts are not for myself? What pleased God when Solomon prayed for wisdom was that he was not asking to be wise for himself. Solomon wanted wisdom to govern and lead God’s people as God would. Why is the value of the virtuous wife more than rubies? Because the heart of her husband can trust in her. She labors for her husband and her household, not for herself.

 The Bride of Christ does not labor for itself, to build grand cathedrals or to seat millions in worship. The legacy of the Bride of Christ is not noble laws or powerful governments. We labor for the one we love; so, it is not vanity. We labor for Jesus; so, our lives are not in vain.

 That is why, in the Gospel, Jesus says the first is last and the master is the servant. And therefore, He set a child before them, but not because of the quality of the child’s trusting faith. In this case, Jesus said, “Whoever receives a child like this in my name receives me and not just me, but Him who sent me.” In short, it isn’t all about me or even the received child, it is all about God.

 God, grant that we can live like this, for you and not ourselves. Grant that we do not chase the wind; instead, may we be your winds, winds of change!