

# Sermon Note: Mysterious Ways

## Pentecost Sunday

### Introduction

What if the Spirit doesn't just speak—but *moves*?

Last week, we launched a new series with the idea that **God Is in the Radio**—that divine presence might be pulsing through the static of everyday life, even in songs that never mention God's name. This week, that theme deepens. It's Pentecost, and instead of arriving quietly, the Spirit bursts into view like a rush of wind, tongues of fire, and voices that cannot be ignored.

To mark this movement, we're listening to two songs: *Mysterious Ways* by U2 and *She's a River* by Simple Minds. Neither could be called a "worship song," but both carry an unexpected depth. One evokes the unpredictability of grace—the kind that shows up unannounced and changes everything. The other imagines Spirit as current, flow, and force—something cosmic and personal, always turning, always near. Together with scripture, they invite us to wonder: Could the Spirit be calling us to something more than hearing—an invitation to greater depth, to sense the movement of grace in melody, mystery, and motion?

### Illustration Videos

This week, we're engaging with two songs, each offering a different glimpse into the Spirit's movement—one through divine unpredictability, the other through elemental flow.

1. "Mysterious Ways" by U2

🎵 Watch the lyric video (fan-created): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnU7MKGz0tc>

**Note:** This is not the official music video, but it features lyrics over a shifting collage of U2-related images. For the official version, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxcDTUMLQJI>.

2. "She's a River" by Simple Minds

🎵 Watch the lyric video (fan-created): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYy4C14JZNw>

**Note:** This version includes the extended track (5:33) rather than the shorter radio edit (3:56) used in the official music video. For the official version, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SiGnAi845o>.

Though not professionally produced, these lyric videos offer something vital: the words themselves. For this week's message, the lyrics matter—not just as poetry, but as spiritual language. They ask us to listen with more than our ears: to tune in to grace in motion, to Spirit as surprise, breath, and rhythm.

## Video Discussion Questions

1. What words or phrases stood out to you in either song? What do they stir in you—emotionally or spiritually?
2. “She’s a River” imagines the Spirit as a turning current. What does that image suggest about how the Spirit moves through your life—or the world?
3. “Mysterious Ways” says, “She moves in mysterious ways.” Can you recall a time when you experienced divine movement that didn’t make sense at first?
4. Both songs focus on motion and energy. How does this compare to your own experience or understanding of the Holy Spirit?
5. One song invites a walk in the moonlight; the other speaks of resurrection and twilight. How do these lyrical settings shape your imagination of the Spirit?
6. Do either of these songs feel like a prayer to you? Why or why not?
7. In Acts 2, the Spirit causes people to speak and understand across every divide. What do these songs say about connection, communication, or communion?
8. Romans 8 says the Spirit intercedes “with sighs too deep for words.” How do these songs express things that go beyond words?
9. What does it mean for the Spirit to be both unpredictable and deeply personal? How do you see that tension in either song?
10. What lyric from either song might you carry with you this week as a kind of spiritual echo?

## Acts 2:1-21 (NRSVue)

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. <sup>7</sup>Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?” <sup>8</sup>And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” <sup>12</sup>All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” <sup>13</sup>But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.”

<sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Fellow Jews and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. <sup>15</sup>Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. <sup>16</sup>No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup>“In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

and your young men shall see visions,  
 and your old men shall dream dreams.  
<sup>18</sup>Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
 in those days I will pour out my Spirit,  
 and they shall prophesy.  
<sup>19</sup>And I will show portents in the heaven above  
 and signs on the earth below,  
 blood, and fire, and smoky mist.  
<sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned to darkness  
 and the moon to blood,  
 before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.  
<sup>21</sup>Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

### **Romans 8:22-27 (NRSVue)**

<sup>22</sup>We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor,  
<sup>23</sup>and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly  
 while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we were saved. Now hope that  
 is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see,  
 we wait for it with patience.

<sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that  
 very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And God, who searches hearts, knows what  
 is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

### **Scripture Study Questions**

1. Pentecost is described as an overwhelming, multi-sensory moment—wind, fire, voice. Why do you think the Spirit's arrival takes this form? What does it suggest about God's relationship to human experience?
2. Acts 2 tells of people understanding one another across languages. Do you see that as a literal miracle, a symbolic truth, or both? How might this speak to what the Spirit is doing in our world today?
3. Peter quotes the prophet Joel, saying the Spirit is poured out "on all flesh." What does it mean for this promise to include sons and daughters, young and old, slaves and free? What barriers is the Spirit breaking down?
4. Romans 8 speaks of a creation that groans and a Spirit that intercedes with "sighs too deep for words." What do you think it means for the Spirit to pray within us, especially when we don't know what to say or when we're too overcome to say anything at all?
5. Both passages describe waiting and movement—groaning and rushing wind, yearning and fire. How do you hold space for both in your spiritual life: the waiting and the arriving?
6. If Pentecost is about divine presence becoming available in new ways, what does that say about the Church's calling today? How might we live into that availability, especially to those outside traditional religious spaces?
7. Both the songs and the scriptures describe movement—rivers turning, spirits poured out, voices carried by wind. Where in your life do you sense the Spirit might be urging motion, change, or release?

## Weekly Action

As you move through daily routines—walking, driving, listening, waiting—pause when something stirs you. It might be a phrase in a song, a gust of wind, a moment of tension, or a surprising sense of calm. Instead of brushing past it, take a breath and ask: Could this be the Spirit turning something in me? Each day, name one moment of motion—physical, emotional, or spiritual—and ask: *Is the Spirit inviting me to listen, to move, or to let go?* Write down this moment and your response to this question, share it with a friend, or simply hold it in prayer. The goal is not certainty, but attention. Pentecost began when people paid attention to what they didn't expect.

## Prayer

Spirit of life, you arrive with wind and flame, disrupting silence, igniting hope, calling your people to rise and speak. You move through melody and mystery, in rhythm and whisper, in voices we recognize and in ones we've never heard before. Unsettle what needs to shift. Strengthen what needs to last. Speak through us in ways we don't yet understand. Let your grace ripple through our lives like a river turning, always moving, always near. Open us—our hearts, our communities, our imaginations—to the new thing you are doing, and let us meet it with courage, wonder, and love. In the name of Christ, and in the presence of your Spirit, we pray. Amen.