

*The trees bend because the wind at the West Texas border.* Joe Ely

The darkening of the sky begins with a pink hue. It grows redder and redder as the day passes. One walks out and the sun is dimmed by the reddish cloud that moved in from the northwest. Stirred by the wind, the red soil of the Panhandle flies across the sky, changing the blue sky into red. Dust settles in every crevice of the house, blows up your nose and into your ears and eyes.

I can't tell you how many dust storms I lived through in Albany, but I'll never forget the power of the wind. Dust from hundreds of miles came barreling down on us. The wind blew with a force that caused the red dust to feel like sandpaper. It could take several days to settle.

Joe Ely grew up in such a windy world. He noticed that the constant, blowing wind changed and shaped the landscape. In order to remain in the ground, trees took on a permanent lean. They grew away from the prevailing wind. The trees bend because the wind.

Wind is a good analogy for powers that work in our world to shape our lives. These powers bend and twist us in many ways. They form us into who we are and what we are.

Some of these forces are evil. They work counter to God's intent for us as human beings. They shape us into things that hurt and dehumanize others. These are the winds of racism, white supremacy, revenge, religious supremacy, nationalism, greed and fear. They want to seep into our lives like the red dust seeps through cracks and under doors.

They are evil because they cause the things that Paul lists in Colossians 3 as being "things of the earth." These things are anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive language from our mouths. People bent and twisted by these things use violence, ridicule and hatred. We see the results in El Paso, Dayton and many other places, but it also plays out in our everyday lives in how we treat others.

However, there is another wind blowing through our world – the Wind of God. In both the Hebrew and Greek of the Bible, the word for Spirit is wind. The Wind of God would also form and shape us, but not into twisted and bent things. The Wind of God would form and shape us into a people who reflect God. The Wind of God would blow us toward God, not away from God.

Paul calls these the "things from above" in Colossians 3. The "things from above" are very different from the "things of the earth." Paul lists them in Colossians 3:12-14. He says seek, "*compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness and bearing one another's burdens.*" He sets aside the final one so that we understand it is most important – *love*. Above all choose love. This is what it looks like when the Wind of God is forming and shaping us.

We bend because the wind...

Pastor Parnell

(Thoughts provoked by reading Brian McLaren's devotional book, *We Make The Road By Walking*.)