

Pentecost Sunday 23rd May 2021

Acts 2:1-21, [Psalm 104:26-end] John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

1 Seven weeks had gone by since Jesus' death and resurrection, and the Day of Pentecost had now arrived.¹ As the believers met together that day,² suddenly there was a sound like the roaring of a mighty windstorm in the skies above them and it filled the house where they were meeting.³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on their heads.⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in languages they didn't know,⁵ for the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵ Many godly Jews were in Jerusalem that day for the religious celebrations, having arrived from many nations.⁶ And when they heard the roaring in the sky above the house, crowds came running to see what it was all about, and were stunned to hear their own languages being spoken by the disciples.

⁷ "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "For these men are all from Galilee,⁸ and yet we hear them speaking all the native languages of the lands where we were born!⁹ Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, men from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia Minor,¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the Cyrene language areas of Libya, visitors from Rome—both Jews and Jewish converts—¹¹ Cretans, and Arabians. And we all hear these men telling in our own languages about the mighty miracles of God!"¹² They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other.¹³ But others in the crowd were mocking. "They're drunk, that's all!" they said.¹⁴ Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen, all of you, visitors and residents of Jerusalem alike!¹⁵ Some of you are saying these men are drunk! It isn't true! It's much too early for that! People don't get drunk by 9:00 A.M.!"¹⁶ No! What you see this morning was predicted centuries ago by the prophet Joel—¹⁷ 'In the last days,' God said, 'I will pour out my Holy Spirit upon all mankind, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men dream dreams.¹⁸ Yes, the Holy Spirit shall come upon all my servants, men and women alike, and they shall prophesy.¹⁹ And I will cause strange demonstrations in the heavens and on the earth—blood and fire and clouds of smoke;²⁰ the sun shall turn black and the moon blood-red before that awesome Day of the Lord arrives.²¹ But anyone who asks for mercy from the Lord shall have it and shall be saved.'

[Psalm 104: 26-end: And look! See the ships! And over there, the whale you made to play in the sea.²⁷ Every one of these depends on you to give them daily food.²⁸ You supply it, and they gather it. You open wide your hand to feed them, and they are satisfied with all your bountiful provision.²⁹ But if you turn away from them, then all is lost. And when you gather up their breath, they die and turn again to dust.

30 Then you send your Spirit, and new life is born^[a] to replenish all the living of the earth. 31 Praise God forever! How he must rejoice in all his work! 32 The earth trembles at his glance; the mountains burst into flame at his touch. 33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will praise God to my last breath! 34 May he be pleased by all these thoughts about him, for he is the source of all my joy. 35 Let all sinners perish—all who refuse to praise him. But I will praise him. Hallelujah!]

John 15:26 "But I will send you the Comforter—the Holy Spirit, the source of all truth. He will come to you from the Father and will tell you all about me. 27 And you also must tell everyone about me because you have been with me from the beginning.

John 16:4b-15 Yes, I'm telling you these things now so that when they happen you will remember I warned you. I didn't tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer.

5 "But now I am going away to the one who sent me; and none of you seems interested in the purpose of my going; none wonders why.^[a] 6 Instead you are only filled with sorrow. 7 But the fact of the matter is that it is best for you that I go away, for if I don't, the Comforter won't come. If I do, he will—for I will send him to you.

8 "And when he has come he will convince the world of its sin, and of the availability of God's goodness, and of deliverance from judgment.^[a] 9 The world's sin is unbelief in me; 10 there is righteousness available because I go to the Father and you shall see me no more; 11 there is deliverance from judgment because the prince of this world has already been judged.

12 "Oh, there is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't understand it now. 13 When the Holy Spirit, who is truth, comes, he shall guide you into all truth, for he will not be presenting his own ideas, but will be passing on to you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. 14 He shall praise me and bring me great honour by showing you my glory. 15 All the Father's glory is mine; this is what I mean when I say that he will show you my glory.

Holy Spirit, may I speak with your fire this Pentecost and in the name of Jesus,
Son of the Most High God. Amen.

Happy Pentecost or is it Whitsun? A very English word, 'Whitsun' is not commonly used these days. It derived from the white clothes those being baptised wore when they became followers of Jesus, if not on Easter Day, then at Pentecost, 50 days later.

And that's today... the birthday of the baptism of fire [as the icon *on Zoom* illustrates] which John the Baptist promised Jesus would send.

You will remember, only ten days ago now, Jesus telling his disciples what he would do after ascending to be with his Father. He would not leave them alone. He would send the Holy Spirit, in his place, as an advocate, a comforter, a helper.

Last Sunday, Gregg showed us a photograph of the dove, now in the foyer of All Saints', representing the Holy Spirit. and created by the children and Staff of Botley School. Much time, care and patience was needed for over 300 feathers to be added to this fire-y, happy birthday vision of Pentecost 2021.

Now we have that vision, we are mandated to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying...

'Transform, revive and heal society'. Not much to ask for then... These are the chorus words of a song written to the tune 'Abide with me' for 'Thy Kingdom Come' this year - you will hear it at the end of the service.

'Transform, revive and heal', are key Pentecost words because they summarise the effects of the Holy Spirit as advocate, comforter and helper. If you think about it, they also align with the Diocese's 'Live, Pray, Serve' movement, which we prayed through on Friday's 'Days of Prayer'. Jesus said, *'When the Holy Spirit, who is truth, comes, he shall guide you into all truth, for he will not be presenting his own ideas, but will be passing on to you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.'*

I recall a transformative story, heard at the family summer camp, called New Wine, about a man whose wife became a Christian. He was not happy. He did not believe her when she told him prayer changes things. He decided to keep a diary, for a year, to prove her wrong. He wrote lists of all his wife prayed for and any 'results'. After the year, he was so moved by the prayers his diary proved had been answered that he asked to be baptised. He moved from unbelief to doubt, from doubt to questioning, from questioning to asking Jesus to become part of his life. He had experienced the slow transformation of the fiery Holy Spirit.

More recently, I was listening to Radio 4's 'Prayer for the Day' at 6.45 am. The gentleman leading said he remembered a time when people prayed for Northern Ireland every day. He went on to connect that depth of prayerfulness slowing down, with the present, rising tide, of divisions and troubles. That was his take on the need for the revival of the work of the Holy Spirit. I tend to agree.

Prayer brings healing; healing in a broad and holistic sense. Gregg asked us to do three things over the past ten days: prayer walk around the villages, pray for 5 people and intentionally stop to pray at least once a day. Even if we haven't seen immediate results, these actions have started transforming, reviving and healing. As pray-ers, we will have

received an extra gift - our own prayer lives will have been revived, fired up, because we have genuinely brought Christ to the people and places prayed for. Believing these things have happened is another of the works of the Holy Spirit; unseen and strong, silently transforming, reviving and healing.

Three weeks ago, I was talking with Pat about 'Restorata', a 'movement in worship' group which started at Pentecost 2003. There was a Churches Together service at St. Luke's HE. One representative from each local denomination practised movements to music in response to today's reading from Acts 2. The outcome was... well, moving. It led to four years of us meeting regularly to praise and worship using our bodies as well as our souls. Many Godly things flowed from that Pentecost service one of which led me to begin training as a Lay Minister. Looking back, I see this as the work of the fiery Holy Spirit weaving an intricate pattern of transformation, revival and healing as I was going through divorce at the time.

The Spirit's work is necessarily slow; it involves waiting and offering, waiting and offering; it is a journey of humility, prayer and self-giving; often wanting to give up but finding, from somewhere deep within, the strength to carry on the good work God began in you.

offer you this Pentecost...



Let's pray...

*Lord our God, You make all things new.
Inspire our lives with Your Spirit.
Renew our prayer with Your grace.
Transform our service with Your love.
In the renewal of our life may Your kingdom flourish and Your church thrive, so
that all may come to know and love You in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Lp2mMpSa1E>

We seek Your kingdom throughout every sphere.
We long for heaven's demonstration here.
Jesus your light shine, bright for all to see.
Transform, revive and heal society

Before all things, in Him all things were made,
inspiring culture, media and trade.
May all our work serve Your economy.
Transform, revive and heal society

Peace, truth and justice, reigning everywhere.
With us be present in our public square.
Fill all who lead, with Your integrity.
Transform, revive and heal society.

Forgive us Lord, when we have not engaged.
Failing to scribe Your heart on history's page.
Make us again what we were made to be.
Transform, revive and heal society.

Faithful to govern, ever may we be.
Selfless in service, loving constantly.
In everything, may Your authority,
Transform, revive and heal Society.