
*Vital for Christ's Church – not an optional extra! John 14: 15-21, 26-27
(also John 16: 5-15) Pentecost 2021 23rd May 2021*

At times, during past 15 months, I've struggled, feeling tired physically & emotionally drained. **How then can I** preach on Pentecost Sunday about the power of the Spirit? **How can I** help the people I care for, to know that **the Spirit – not Ghost - is as vital today as it was 2000 years ago** in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost? **1st thing I can do is to get out of way & remind you of What Jesus said about the Holy Spirit** – what we have just heard in John 14

1. ***Another Counsellor / helper / advocate / paraclete like me says Jesus (14:26). Jesus wants His followers to know that the Spirit comes to us & stands with us*** – The Spirit is *for us*. We sometimes **feel that God is against** us, waiting to trap us when & if we get things wrong. Nothing is further from the truth. God wants us to succeed & that is why He sends us His Spirit. In The Message, Eugene Peterson translated the Greek word “*parakletos*” as “*friend*” **Why? Because most of us don't like to receive; we like to earn. Yet as long as we refuse to receive, we won't grow. God is not interested in hiring us as His servants. He'd rather adopt us as children and call us friends.**
.....The Gospel of Christ is about receiving God's grace.
2. **The Spirit of Truth** (14:17, 16:13) The Spirit comes to be our teacher & guide. For the first disciples, the Spirit would take on the role that Jesus had. The Spirit brings to mind / reminds us of the things that Jesus said. For us, the Spirit is the inspirer of Scripture & the one who sheds light on it. In this way, the Spirit helps us to make sense of the world as we experience it. The Spirit reveals all we need to know of God & of His plans & of ourselves. The Spirit shows us where we have got it wrong, & so also our need of God. (16:8-11).
3. **The Holy Spirit** (14:26) **Truth is practical. It is not just about what we believe; it is about how we live.** The Spirit is called the Holy Spirit because God calls us to **be holy**, to be different, to be lights for God and not squeezed by the world into its godless mould. The Spirit comes to bring change – to bring in to our lives the fruit of the spirit that Paul mentions in Galatians 5:22: - “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control.*” Or what he told the young minister, Timothy, “*God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of love & power & self-control.*”(2 Tim 1:7)

The Holy Spirit is not some optional extra just for charismatics, Pentecostals & a few weirdos. Jesus promised His Spirit to all who asked Him for it, and it is as essential as breath & air to our survival as His followers. The clue is in the names given to the Holy Spirit in the Bible: in the Old Testament's Hebrew, ***ruach*** –*God's breath* and in the New

Testament's Greek, *pneuma* – God's air as in our *pneumonia* or *pneumatic*. In John 14, Jesus described the Spirit as someone who comes alongside you and me to teach, comfort, encourage, heal, empower and work in our lives -vital to life in Christ. That is why Peter told the crowds, *Repent, and be baptised*, (Stop in your tracks, turn away from all that does not please God, ask for forgiveness, stand up & be counted, & take your place as one of His followers, *and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*. (Acts 2:38)

Jesus told His followers to be His witnesses & they would receive power – power of the Holy Spirit **Same is true for us – promise is to you & to your children & to all who are far off.**

Reflection: For such a time as this - Pentecost 2021 – Acts 2: 1-6, 14-21, 32-41

That Pentecost 2000 years ago, God's living presence & power in the Holy Spirit, fired up a bunch of timid, tongue-tied disciples, and enabled them, to **boldly go** out from their house – to go out into the streets of Jerusalem and far beyond to share the amazing grace of God in Jesus, the reality that He is alive; and the power of His love and call to all to turn, trust Him for their lives and follow Him. Now, as we hopefully emerge from this time of lockdown & global public health restrictions, we cannot for the meantime go street-preaching or travel across the globe but that first Pentecost raises challenging questions for each of us today:

1. What has been and now is the Lord teaching us in this time of crisis ?

There are examples in the Bible of where individuals experienced a different sort of “lockdown” – an experience that was not of their own making & that confined them in some way, but in which God was still present and in control:

Joseph suffering as a slave & as a prisoner in Egypt until God raised him up to be a statesman, who saved the lives of millions. Joseph reassured his brothers that he did not bear a grudge. “*You intended to harm me but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.*” (Genesis 50: 20)

Esther, a Jewish exile suffering life in a Persian harem, but she helped save God's people from a planned genocide, with encouragement of her uncle, “*If you remain silent, people will perish but you have come to royal position for such a time as this.*” Esther 4:14

Paul, suffering beatings, shipwreck, imprisonment in Rome, but able to write to the Church at Philippi & tell them that his “lockdown” had “*really served to advance the gospel*” and to open up new opportunities to share the message. (Phil. 1:12ff)

Paul had earlier written, that “*in all things, every situation*” (however bad) “*God works with those who love Him to bring some good.*” (Romans 8:28.) Pray that that we listen, hear and respond to all the Lord is now teaching us and showing us.

2. Telling others / sharing the good news as Jesus had commanded but How?

How was it that all of the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit & began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them with each person in that multiracial / multinational / multicultural crowd heard the wonders of God being declared each in their own language? What was happening? Are these people drunk? Peter, the

scared denier, knew an explanation was needed. So backed up by the 11, he tells what he knows. Verses from the prophet Joel sprang to mind; this was the promised outpouring of God's Spirit on them & on many of those listening a call to respond .

So, to finish, 3 specific challenges today:

a)*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (v.21)* -

..... **Do we sometimes make faith too complicated?**

b) We've also denied and lied, but **dare we, like Peter, step to the front & tell**

.....**others** what we do know now about God, His Son Jesus & the Holy Spirit?

c) & if we are going tell, share & show God's life & love with others, **dare we take the risk of stepping out in faith, reaching out in words & ways that can be heard & seen & understood, & getting alongside others where they are for Christ's sake? What changes will that mean for our worship, our mission & our priorities?**

O breath of life, come sweeping through