

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

Acts 2:1-21

Pentecost Sunday, 31st May 2020

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

What do you expect to happen when you come to Church or meet to pray with other Christians? When Jesus ascended to heaven, he told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father – the Holy Spirit who would bring them power from on high. I wonder what the disciples expected to happen when they gathered on that first Pentecost day? As followers of Jesus their lives had already changed considerably but I wonder what expectations they had about the Holy Spirit and the profound transformation that their lives were about to undergo.

What expectations do we have when we meet together and pray for the Holy Spirit to fill us afresh? Do we expect to go away changed? Indeed, are we willing to allow God to change us? Or, if we are honest do we expect or even hope that everything will still be the same once the service ends?

On that first Pentecost day we read how the Holy Spirit filled those first disciples with boldness, empowering them to speak in other languages sharing with many others the good news of the gospel. Jesus' last words to them were the great commission – go and make disciples of all nations – and now, as they receive the Holy Spirit they

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are empowered to go and fulfil what Jesus had commanded. But it occurs to me that Jesus command to “make disciples of all nations” included first making disciples of themselves and as we read through the account in Acts chapter 2 and the next parts of the story we start to understand the impact of the filling of the Holy Spirit had in their lives. Yes, it involved boldness to speak God’s word, but Peter talked about more. Quoting the prophet Joel, he talks about disciples being involved in prophecy, having visions and dreams. And as we continue through the book of Acts – the story of what happened next after the day of Pentecost - we see the believers called to a life of sacrifice – a life of following the call and command of God, whatever the cost. I always think that if the life of discipleship and evangelism was easy we wouldn’t need the empowering of the Holy Spirit to do it!

And so, on this Pentecost day, we have the invitation to receive a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. To receive His empowering, to receive his enabling, to receive His transformation. But as with the disciples, as we are filled with the Spirit, the commission of Jesus rings in our ears – to go and make disciples of all nations – to go where God calls us. In the words of Isaiah 61 we are called to follow Jesus example in proclaiming good news to the poor, binding up the broken hearted, comforting those who mourn. This is not a call for the faint hearted, but it is equally not one we do in our own strength.

But there is another aspect of the filling of the Holy Spirit that I want to end with and Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 3:17 help to explain this “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”. As God’s Spirit comes and fills us afresh He brings freedom throughout our lives. He brings us hope, a reassurance of God’s love for us, as we pray we can ask the Spirit to bring us freedom from anxiety, freedom from despair, freedom from anything which is holding us back or keeping us down today. And living in this freedom we can experience the abundant life that Jesus promises for all those who know and love Him.

So, I would encourage you today, whether for the first of the hundredth time to invite the Holy Spirit to fill you afresh. To transform you. To bring you freedom. And more than anything I pray that as the Spirit descends you will be drawn closer to God’s heart and know his love once more.

Revd Vicki Bryson

Rector: The Revd Vicki Bryson



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