

Welcome

Pentecost is a very special day in the Church's calendar - the day we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples in Jerusalem. Because the Holy Spirit brought such a change upon the disciples, Pentecost is celebrated too as the birthday of the Church – so happy birthday.

In this service, we are going to be thinking about our experience of the Holy Spirit – maybe not in tongues of fire but as the gift of God to all who believe in Christ.

Prayer

Almighty God as we meet together to celebrate this special day, we ask that you will be present in us through the Holy Spirit, just as you were present at Pentecost so long ago.

We ask that you will set us on fire for you, and that your Spirit would blow through our locked down world. May the Holy Spirit inspire our praise, touch our hearts and bring us close to you during this time of worship. Amen

Hymn Come down O love divine

Come down, O Love divine,
seek Thou this soul of mine
and visit it with Thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.

2 O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes, in its heat consuming;
and let Thy glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round,
the while my path illuming.

3 Let holy charity
mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart,
which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings
weeps with loathing.

4 And so the yearning strong,
with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes His dwelling.

Reading Acts 2 v 1 – 21

On the day of Pentecost^[a] all the Lord's followers were together in one place. ²Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting. ³Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. ⁴The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.

⁵Many religious Jews from every country in the world were living in Jerusalem. ⁶And when they heard this noise, a crowd gathered. But they were surprised, because they were hearing everything in their own languages. ⁷They were excited and amazed, and said:

Don't all these who are speaking come from Galilee? ⁸Then why do we hear them speaking our very own languages? ⁹Some of us are from Parthia, Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya near Cyrene, Rome, ¹¹Crete, and Arabia. Some of us were born Jews, and others of us have chosen to be Jews. Yet we all hear them using our own languages to tell the wonderful things God has done.

¹² Everyone was excited and confused. Some of them even kept asking each other, "What does all this mean?"

¹³ Others made fun of the Lord's followers and said, "They are drunk."

¹⁴ Peter stood with the eleven apostles and spoke in a loud and clear voice to the crowd:

Friends and everyone else living in Jerusalem, listen carefully to what I have to say!

¹⁵ You are wrong to think that these people are drunk. After all, it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶ But this is what

God had the prophet Joel say,

¹⁷ "When the last days come, I will give my Spirit to everyone.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams.

¹⁸ In those days I will give my Spirit to my servants, both men and women, and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will work miracles in the sky above and wonders on the earth below.

There will be blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will turn dark, and the moon will be as red as blood

before the great and wonderful day of the Lord appears.

²¹ Then the Lord will save everyone who asks for his help."

3 Prayers of Praise and Confession

Let all the world praise you this day, Holy Spirit of God, power of the Father come to claim our lives, grace of the Son come to perfect us.

Through you comes the energy by which the world is made, the stars are formed, the great galaxies spread throughout space, the light shines and darkness is overcome. Through you come the gift of life breathed into every human being, so that we belong to the Father and can find our peace only with him.

Through you come the visions of the young and the dreams of the old, the strong words of the prophets and the preachers, the joyous songs of the psalmists, the teaching and commands of the Lord. Through you the scriptures bear their witness. Through you comes the life of the Church, the vitality of the faith, the healing of our bodies and minds and spirits. You make your people holy. Through you comes our confidence for the future, our trust in your full purpose, our assurance of God.

Glory be to you, Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life, from all who were and are and ever shall be, world without end.

Father God, we confess that we have stifled your Spirit within us. You have sent us the Spirit of love, but we have preferred to hate those who oppose us. You have sent us the Spirit of joy, but we have taken your gifts for granted and been ungrateful. You have sent us the Spirit of peace, but we have allowed our selfishness to cause division and disharmony. You have sent us the Spirit of patience, but we have been worried and anxious when we have not seen immediate results from our efforts or evidence of your love.

You have sent us the Spirit of kindness but we have been indifferent to other people's needs. You have sent us the Spirit of goodness but through our own thoughtlessness, as well as our own deliberate fault, we have sinned. You have sent us the Spirit of faithfulness, but we have been fickle in our resolve, unreliable disciples of Jesus.

You have sent your Spirit of gentleness, but we have been insensitive to the feelings of others. You have sent your spirit of self control, but we have lived recklessly without disciplining ourselves.

Forgive us Father God. Teach us how much we need the power of your Spirit in our lives; and breathe new life into us.

For Jesus sake

AMEN

Our Father in Heaven,
hallowed be Your Name.
Your will be done on earth as in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Do not bring us to the time of trial,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are Yours
now and forever. Amen.

Reading Ephesians 1 v 11 – 23

God always does what he plans, and that's why he appointed Christ to choose us. ¹² He did this so that we Jews would bring honor to him and be the first ones to have hope because of him. ¹³ Christ also brought you the truth, which is the good news about how you can be saved. You put your faith in Christ and were given the promised Holy Spirit to show that you belong to God. ¹⁴ The Spirit also makes us sure that we will be given what God has stored up for his people. Then we will be set free, and God will be honored and praised.

Paul's Prayer

¹⁵ I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all of God's people. ¹⁶ So I never stop being grateful for you, as I mention you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I ask the glorious Father and God of our Lord Jesus Christ to give you his Spirit. The Spirit will make you wise and let you understand what it means to know God. ¹⁸ My prayer is that light will flood your hearts and that you

will understand the hope that was given to you when God chose you. Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all of God's people.

¹⁹ I want you to know about the great and mighty power that God has for us followers. It is the same wonderful power he used ²⁰ when he raised Christ from death and let him sit at his right side^[c] in heaven. ²¹ There Christ rules over all forces, authorities, powers, and rulers. He rules over all beings in this world and will rule in the future world as well. ²² God has put all things under the power of Christ, and for the good of the church he has made him the head of everything. ²³ The church is Christ's body and is filled with Christ who completely fills everything.^[d]

Hymn There's a wind a blowing

There's a wind a-blowing
All across the land;
Fragrant breeze of heaven
Blowing once again.
Don't know where it comes from,
Don't know where it goes,
But let it blow over me.
Oh, sweet wind,
Come and blow over me.

There's a rain a-pouring,
Showers from above;
Mercy drops are coming,
Mercy drops of love.
Turn your face to heaven,
Let the water pour,
Well, let it pour over me.
Oh, sweet rain,
Come and pour over me.

There's a fire burning,
 Falling from the sky;
 Awesome tongues of fire,
 Consuming you and I.
 Can you feel it burning,
 Burn the sacrifice?
 Well, let it burn over me.
 Oh, sweet fire,
 Come and burn over me.

Sermon

Today is Pentecost Sunday – the day we celebrate the amazing experience of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts Ch 2. The fire, the wind, the speaking in many languages grabs our attention and fires our imagination but the dramatic events of Acts Ch 2 don't give us the full picture.

John's Gospel Ch 20 records a different experience of the Holy Spirit. John tells how Jesus appeared to the disciples - he blessed them with his peace, he commissioned them to continue his work and then said 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. They were overjoyed that Jesus had come to them, they were full of excitement that he had risen, but the gift of the Holy Spirit came in quietness and peace. No tongues of fire, no wind, no excitement, no emotion.

And St Paul who had first-hand experience of people who had received the Spirit at Pentecost - St Paul points to the Spirit coming in a quieter, less dramatic way than that manifested at Pentecost.

In his letter to the Ephesians we see a broader, less dramatic, but no less powerful experience of the Holy Spirit.

Paul reminds us that - The Holy Spirit is the promise for all Christians.

v13 You too when you had heard the message of the truth, the good news of your salvation and had believed it, became

incorporate in Christ and received the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.

There were in Paul's day - Christians who wanted to keep the Good News to themselves. Christians who thought you had to keep the faith in a certain way to be part of the kingdom.

They had been Jews, they had been circumcised, they kept the Jewish law and they didn't see why these new Christians should get off lightly. They wanted to keep the gospel within a Jewish framework.

Some Christians still think that way - not that you must be circumcised or keep the Jewish law - but that you must believe this or that - you must accept this tenet of faith or that - you must have had this experience of the holy Spirit or be able to speak in tongues or sign on the dotted line to the thirty nine articles of faith or else you are not a Christian.

For generations the body of Christ has been torn apart by such Christians - wars have been fought over exactly what it is to be part of the Church.

St Paul says it is quite straightforward - You too when you had heard the message of the truth, the good news of your salvation and had believed it, became incorporate in Christ and received the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.

The simple fact is that if you have heard the good news of Jesus Christ and you have received it and you believe it - you are part of the body of Christ and you have the Holy Spirit.

There are no if's no but's, no conditional clause.

You don't have to have a specific kind of experience, to have been moved by the

Spirit in a certain way. God's promise of the Holy Spirit is to all who believe. You have the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the promise for all Christians.

And Paul reminds us that The Holy Spirit brings gifts to the body of Christ.

v17 - Wisdom, vision, knowledge. v18 hope, v 19 power.

Elsewhere in Epheisians (Ch4) and elsewhere in his letters Paul makes it more clear how these gifts are ministered to the Church. but here we are talking in generalities. The Spirit brings wisdom, vision, knowledge, hope and power.

Now think about what that means

If the Spirit is given to all believers, and it is, and if the Spirit brings these gifts, then these gifts are present within our fellowships but we need to recognise them.

So we have to ask ourselves where is spiritual wisdom in our churches - where are the people with vision, where is the knowledge and the hope and the power. These gifts are present but too often they are crowded out.

Spiritual wisdom is stifled by earthly reality. God's vision is silenced by competing world viewpoints.

Christ's knowledge is subordinated to the values and mores of our society.

Biblical hope is crushed by the troubles of this world – not least this current crisis and the Spirit's power - well the Spirit's power is defeated by our lack of trust in the resources God has given us.

The fact is we don't recognise that we have the Holy Spirit, because we are afraid to trust in the power of God.

Before I offered for the ministry I had the privilege to live and work in Liverpool. I worked as a Youth worker and Chaplain's Assistant in Toxteth - an area of Liverpool that was well known locally even before the riots.

I was attached to a church whose membership consisted of 50 or so elderly people. All but a handful of them were retired. They were people trapped in a hostile community - those with money or prospects had moved out long ago.

But in that fellowship there was powerful experience of the Holy Spirit - not in tongues of fire and wind but in a recognition of what God wanted for them. They saw the need for the gospel to be shared in a practical way with their community and decided to fund a youth worker and in order to give him a venue to work - they started preparing plans to build a new set of premises in the garden of their church. The building alone cost over £100,000 nearly 40 years ago – or just shy of half a million in today's money.

Good sense - wisdom - would have said that 50 pensioners cannot do this - but the Spirit showed how.

A glance down the road, at the run down houses and the derelict flats even opposite the Church would say that this is a waste of time - but the Spirit gave a vision of a renewed community.

Hope could have been crushed in them but the Spirit led them forward and showed the power of God at work in that place.

The Holy Spirit brings gifts and those gifts are present in each of fellowships – however well hidden .

And finally Paul reminds us that the Holy Spirit brings these things in abundance.

v 19 How vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him.

How vast the resources of his power open to us who trust in him.

The trouble is we don't really trust him, do we? We witness to a God who created the universe, the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon and stars. We witness to a God who raised Jesus from the dead and yet we are not sure that he could be at work in our lives today.

We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, so why do we doubt the power of the Holy Spirit at work today. Why do we doubt that God's Spirit can bring us all the gifts he brought to his people long ago. Has God stopped giving these gifts to the Church - No of course not - we have stopped recognising and receiving them.

Today we celebrate the amazing manifestation of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts Ch 2. It would have been amazing to be there, but just because you haven't experienced tongues of fire, or a rushing wind, just because you can't speak unknown foreign languages, don't assume you have not received the Holy Spirit - it is God's promise to you. The Holy Spirit has come to you, is at work here today. You just have to open yourself to the Spirit's working within you and widen your vision to grasp the power of God in your life.

It is my hope and prayer that we will recognise the Spirit at work, that day by day, week by week we may be more open to the Spirit's leading. And so know for ourselves the wisdom, the vision, the knowledge, the hope, the power that is promised to EVERY believer - even to you and I

AMEN

Family News

Please remember in your prayers our NHS folk - Chris, Linda, Marcia, Marina, Melanie, Pete, Rachel, Yvonne

Sadly Gail has lost her nan. We remember particularly Gail, Pete, Annabel and James.

On a rotational basis, we remember our elderly folk :

Betty Snape

Netty Maxwell

Enid Nowell (who has had a fall)

Happier news

Brian – getting better

Last week I should have mentioned Angela and Graham's 49th Wedding Anniversary and

Margaret Mackereth, Fiona Hodson and Trinity Pendlebury have all had or are having birthdays

Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray to God,
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus, through illness or isolation or anxiety, that they may find relief and recovery:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,
and shaping national policies,
that they may make wise decisions:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,
that through their skill and insights many will be restored to health:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For the vulnerable and the fearful,
for the gravely ill and the dying,
that they may know your comfort and
peace:

Lord, hear us,

Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom
we pray,

to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,

accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Hymn Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost

Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost,

taught by You, we covet most,

of Your gifts at Pentecost,

holy, heavenly love.

2 Faith that mountains could remove,
tongues of earth or heaven above,
knowledge, all things, empty prove
without heavenly love.

3 Though I as a martyr bleed,
give my goods the poor to feed,
all is vain if love I need;
therefore give me love.

4 Love is kind, and suffers long;
love is meek, and thinks no wrong;
love, than death itself more strong:
therefore give us love.

5 Prophecy will fade away,
melting in the light of day;
love will ever with us stay:
therefore give us love.

6 Faith, and hope, and love we see
joining hand in hand, agree;
but the greatest of the three,
and the best, is love.

Benediction

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

And the blessing of God Almighty

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

will be with us all, evermore