

Morning Worship Sunday 23 May 2021.

Commemoration of The Day of Pentecost.

Preparation

O Lord, open our lips

All and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us,

All and clothe us with power from on high. Alleluia.

Blessed are you, creator God,
to you be praise and glory for ever.

As your Spirit moved over the face of the waters
bringing light and life to your creation,
pour out your Spirit on us today
that we may walk as children of light
and by your grace reveal your presence.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All Blessed be God for ever.

Hymn NEH 137 Come down, O Love divine

1. 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 out-pass the power
Of human telling
For none can guess its grace
Till he become the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit
Makes His dwelling

The Word of God

A Song of God's Greatness. Psalm 104

- 1 Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, how excellent is your greatness!
- 2 You are clothed with majesty and honour,
wrapped in light as in a garment.
- 3 The sun knows the time for its setting.
You make darkness that it may be night.
- 4 O Lord, how manifold are your works!
**In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.**
- 5 When you send forth your spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the earth.
- 6 May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works;
- 7 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will make music to my God while I have my being.
- 8 Bless the Lord. O my soul.
Alleluia

Psalm 104.1,2,21b,22a,26,32,33,35,37b,c

**Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Short meditation on verse 5 of the song

First Reading Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;

and they shall prophesy.
¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Second Reading John 15: 26-27, 16:4b-15

²⁶“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{4b}I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, “Where are you going?” ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹²I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Sermon: By the Rev'd Priscilla Slusar

Today's reading from the Acts of the Apostles gives us a dramatic account of the early disciples receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. There's the noise of a mighty wind, tongues of fire and the disciples becoming bold and courageous as they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

I remember attending a clergy training session once when we were each given a blank piece of paper and were asked to write down one sentence about the significance of the Holy Spirit. We then had to pass the paper on for the next person to add something different – a bit like a game of Consequences. This carried on until we had 6 or 7 statements on the paper.

What would you have written?

It was amazing to see the variety of things that were written. Here are a few of them:

- The Holy Spirit is given to us by the grace of God
- The Holy Spirit shows us the closeness of God
- The coming of the Holy Spirit commissions us to serve God and spread the gospel
- The Holy Spirit brings us a sense of community and fellowship
- The Holy Spirit is portrayed as a wind – or flames – or a dove.
- The Holy Spirit is often referred to as female/she. To be politically correct God is not gender specific so we shouldn't use "he" or "she".
- The role of the Holy Spirit varies – as the Comforter, or Advocate, or as the Spirit of Truth, displaying wisdom and bringing judgement.

So many ideas and interpretations.

The theologian Jane Williams, wife of Rowan Williams the former Archbishop of Canterbury, says that “the Holy Spirit has been in danger in recent years of becoming the sippy one of the Trinity.” The Holy Spirit doesn’t do uncomfortable things like going off to be crucified. The Holy Spirit gives spectacular gifts that add excitement to otherwise dreary lives. The Holy Spirit may be described as “the comforter”, which sounds soft and lovely.

But the Holy Spirit is by no means sippy!

The Holy Spirit gives Peter and the other disciples the courage to speak out and spread the gospel to others. Peter talks of the Spirit coming at a time of judgement, when people will need to decide whether to hear the word of God and be saved or to reject salvation. Inspired by the Spirit, Peter preaches the gospel with courage but we know that this leads ultimately to his death. So the Spirit challenged the people of Jerusalem on that first day and challenges us now.

The Holy Spirit brings us new life through the good news of the gospel. It is no accident that the arrival of the Holy Spirit came at the time of an important Jewish festival. The Feast of Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks as it was called, was the end of the celebration of the spring harvest, when people gave thanks for God’s goodness and bounty. It was also a time when Jewish people renewed their covenant with God, emphasising the importance of their relationship with God. It was a time of endings (end of harvest) and beginnings (renewal of the relationship with God). At this feast of Pentecost the Holy Spirit brings new life for the church and new life for individuals within the church.

One of the wonders of the gift of the Holy Spirit is that this gift of God’s grace touches everyone present. All the disciples (men and women) feel the power of the Holy Spirit and then they pass on this

message to everyone in the streets, regardless of their background or ethnicity. This outpouring of God's love touches everyone.

Of course, not everyone responded in a positive way! Some people were not prepared to listen, some mocked, some referred to drunkenness as a way of avoiding the truth. It's the same nowadays.

This morning's reading from Acts ends with Peter's speech, giving a quotation from the prophet Joel. This prophecy seems to be about death and destruction but in this new age of the Spirit it becomes a declaration of life and hope. "Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The Holy Spirit brings confidence, courage and hope – not a sappy image at all!

The Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of Jesus' promise that God is always with us, for all time. As Christians we want to feel that presence of God with us. We want to be aware of God's love; we want to feel a sense of awe and wonder. Have you experienced that presence of the Holy Spirit? If you have, is it something you talk about? Should we, like Peter, be challenged to share that message of salvation with others?

A few years ago there was an article in the Church Times by the Bishop of Worcester, Dr John Inge. He argued that many people have experienced a deep awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit but do not tend to talk about it. He quoted a national survey when people were asked "Have you ever been aware of, or influenced by, a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?" The results indicated that more than half of the adult population of Britain said that they had had an experience of this kind.

Here are some examples:

In the countryside - “I became so overcome with the glory of the natural world that I fell on my knees in prayer, thanking God for the glories of his kingdom and for allowing me to share them.”

In a street in a town - “I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs ... we were all part of the human race. I had a feeling of immense joy that I was a member of the race in which God himself had become incarnate.”

These are not the kinds of comments that we usually make to each other when we sit down to have a chat over a cup of coffee! But these experiences bring God close to us in our lives. They are transformative experiences, changing our everyday existence into something special, giving us a touch of the divine. The Holy Spirit draws us together in a sense of unity – unity with each other and unity with God. It is this presence that we celebrate today in the feast of Pentecost; and it is this presence that gives us the courage to witness to the truth of Jesus in our daily lives. Amen

Responsory

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

All and kindle in us the fire of your love.

All who are led by the Spirit of God

are children of God and fellow-heirs with Christ.

All Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people.

Renew the face of your creation, Lord,

pouring on us the gifts of your Spirit,

All and kindle in us the fire of your love.

For the creation waits with eager longing

for the glorious liberty of the children of God.

All Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your people

and kindle in us the fire of your love.

cf Romans 8

Affirmation of Faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father?

All I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ?

All I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe and trust in the Holy Spirit?

All I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers

Intercessions are offered. Written by Barbara Preece

Spirit of Unity

We pray for the church throughout the world in all its many manifestations. Enable all those who identify themselves as Christian: though they speak many languages, use different liturgies, belong to numerous denominations and cultures, to hear and understand the truth about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that we may truly unite around his greatest meaning which is love.

Spirit of Unity,
We give you thanks.

Spirit of Truth,
May your flames of fire consume the arrogance, lust for power, indifference, greed and complacency of our leaders great and small. Rather kindle within them understanding, compassion and generosity. May your flames shine a light on the consequences for the poor and vulnerable of treating our world as a warehouse or a playground for the wealthy. Allow the wind of change that you bring to blow away all that hampers the coming of justice and a fair distribution of the fruits of your creation.

Spirit of Truth,
We give you thanks.

Spirit of Peace,
May the sound of your presence dissolve the destructive noise of hatred, fear and anger that are heard in so many communities and relationships. Today we pray especially for the Holy Land, Jerusalem, the holy places shared and sacred to those who currently hurl weapons of war in crowded spaces destroying innocent lives as they fall. Blow through our world a powerful wind of change that peace may finally prevail.

Spirit of Peace,
We give you thanks.

Spirit of Joy,
Help us to see visions and dream dreams and thereby find hope for ourselves and our communities. Having been confined for many months to our homes and immediate surroundings we have a greater care for and understanding of their value to our physical and mental health. Encourage us to cherish, nurture and protect the natural world and built environment in which we live. Help us to find joy in the beauty that is all around us.

Spirit of Joy, **We give you thanks.**

Spirit of Life.

You are both our advocate and comforter. Be with us when we need a voice to speak for us in our weakness and vulnerability. Where we are fragile or forlorn help us to feel you are the gentle breeze that whispers in the leaves words of love and consolation. Draw close to those who suffer in body, mind or spirit, those who we know and love, those of whom we know nothing and those whose pain is known only to you. In some moments of quiet we offer our prayers to you.

Spirit of Life

We give you thanks.

We offer these prayers to Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity of God living eternally in an everlasting community of love. Amen.

The Collect

God, who as at this time
taught the hearts of your faithful people
by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit:
grant us by the same Spirit
to have a right judgement in all things
and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;
through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Being made one by the power of the Spirit,
as our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Hymn 342 Breathe on me, Breath of God

The Conclusion

All God of power,
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,
may the gifts of your Spirit equip us to serve and
worship you now and always.

And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
be among us and remain with us always.

All Amen.

May the Spirit kindle in us the fire of God's love.

All Amen.

Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.

All Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.