

Sermon Pentecost Sunday, Yr. A @ St Johns – 31/5/20
“God’s Life-giving Spirit living in you” (Acts 2:1-21; John 7:37-39)
Pastor André Meyer

Pray: Heavenly Father, bless and fill us with your Spirit as we hear your Word, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

We’ve certainly had an interesting week of weather, haven’t we? The wild winds last weekend certainly got our attention. Just *another reason* to stay indoors – as if we needed another 😊. Although, it brought the rain we’ve sorely needed as well.

Today, we celebrate the birth of the Church in the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Just as Jesus promised, and as prophets long ago foretold, God’s Spirit was poured out in an amazing way that day in Jerusalem. The ‘city of God,’ was literally the centre of the world for the Jewish nation, and still is. People came on pilgrimage from far and wide to visit the city and the Temple, particularly during festivals, to worship and offer sacrifices of thanksgiving for blessings received, or to atone for their sins.

In John 7, Jesus spoke prophetically about what was to come. It was during an important festival in Jerusalem, the great seven-day feast called ‘Tabernacles’ (built small temporary ‘booths’/‘shelters’). Tabernacles celebrated the completion of the grape and olive harvest and remembered God’s goodness towards their ancestors in their wanderings in the wilderness. So, in the 7th month of the Jewish calendar, on the 7th day (or 8th), the ‘greatest’ day of the week-long feast (perhaps while the wine was flowing freely), Jesus promised the Spirit of God would one day fill those who believed in Him and, it would be like rivers of living water flowing from within them. He was drawing their attention, yet again (see Jn. 6), to a comparison with the great prophet Moses whom God used to lead His people out of slavery to the Promised land. In Jesus, God was providing One, greater than Moses, to lead His people to salvation. In the wilderness God provided water in the desert for His thirsty people through Moses. Now, Jesus gets their attention prophesying of a new era (and festival!) for God’s people: *“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them”* (Jn. 7:38). Well, the early Church very clearly understood Jesus’ promise was fulfilled when God’s Spirit was given during the highpoint of *another* festival in Jerusalem, the feast of ‘Weeks’ or ‘Grain Harvest,’ 50 days after Passover, known as *Pentecost* (= 50th).

There’s no mistaking Jesus’ promise. Indeed, God’s Spirit came to the believers through the sound of a violent wind and appeared as tongues of fire resting upon their heads. The Disciples then poured out of their bubbling hearts the wonders of God they had seen, and the Spirit enabled them to speak in many different languages. The symbolism is powerful in itself – let alone what happens as a result. Yes, the Spirit of God, coming like a storm to the spiritual heart of Jerusalem, truly got their attention!

The violent wind, the ‘*ruah*’ (Hbr.) or ‘*pneuma*’ (Grk.), points to the presence and breath of God’s powerful, life-giving Spirit, spoken at Creation, seen in God’s servants, prophesied through Ezekiel bringing dry bones to life, and present in many other ways, had now come *to them*. The same Spirit was at work powerfully in Christ as He taught with authority, healed the sick, commanded nature, spoke God’s Word, forgave sin, and, as He brought the dead back to life.

The fire and flames are signs of God’s presence. They recall the LORD appearing to Moses in the burning bush, and guiding His people in the wilderness by the pillar of fire, and the fire of His glory in the tabernacle, and more... And lastly, they spoke of the wonderful things God had done in many different languages. It draws to mind the ‘wonderful things’ God’s people wanted to do long ago by building the Tower of Babel to get to heaven, and because of their sin God confused their languages. As a result, they had to cease because they simply couldn’t understand one another, and were scattered far and wide into their own language groups. Now, the believers were enabled to speak the Good News in many tongues as a sign the curse of Babel had been undone, for sin had

been atoned for in Christ. And now, by the Spirit and the Gospel, people gathered together to receive a new relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

We can't miss it. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' promise of a river a life flowing from all who believe in Him became a reality. As a result, many heard the Good News. They heard about sin being forgiven through the cross, and were cut to the heart because of what they had done to God's Son. They heard how Christ had been raised from death to show that death is not the end for all who trust in Him. God's Spirit was poured out upon all who were there... And Peter proclaimed that God's salvation was available not only to the Jews but *to all*: "...Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). The Spirit of God and His love overflowed and many believed, trusted and called upon the Lord to be saved, and, about 3,000 were baptised that day. It would have been amazing to see.

But let's not make the mistake of thinking God's Spirit only works in wonderful ways like that. The Spirit came in this way to get people's attention that God was doing something new and important. Often, as we might be more familiar, God's Spirit changes hearts in not so spectacular ways, and yet, they are just as effective. By the end of Acts 2 we hear the Spirit was powerfully at work through the believers as they gathered in prayer, fellowship and worship together, at the Temple, and, in their homes (v.42-47). Yes, a river of "*living water*" was flowing from within them.

The wonderful gift you are to receive and hold on to today is that God's Holy Spirit is living *in you*. As God's child you've been 'born again of water and the Spirit' and Jesus lives *in you* (Jn. 3). You have God's Spirit and the power of His love working *in you*, and *for you*, and *through you*. You might not always feel it, but God's Spirit is there, dwelling within you, helping you trust and turn to Jesus in faith as your Lord and Saviour each day.

It means that you don't have to make miracles happen as you serve your Lord, no. You are free and enabled to respond to God's great love for you in many different ways – doing whatever you do in Jesus' name to the glory of God. It means you simply need to live out the new life God has given you, sharing the Good News of His love – however and whenever you can, and in whatever way you choose. There's *no limits* to what the Spirit can do through you. And, there are as many ways to share God's love as there are people who believe. Ministry, service and sharing the Good News is not only for pastors – it's for everyone to do. And, *you* are part of God's important work in our world. Through you, the Spirit of Christ is living and seeking to flow from within you to others.

You may have a heart to serve people, or the Church; it might be in the loving care you give your family; or through teaching your children, grandchildren or godchildren about Jesus. It might be through prayer, or through calling or visiting people. You might encourage someone in need, or befriend or listen to them. You might share God's love in an amazing way, or, it might be in a very quiet, gentle or humble way, that only the Lord knows. God has filled *you* with His Spirit, and, as you drink of Jesus and His living water, the Spirit bubbles and lives within you to give *you* life. And God's Spirit seeks to flow from you to share life, hope and love in Jesus' name to all who need the Lord as their Saviour.

So, as those who are God's very own, continue to drink of Jesus' living water in His Word, in prayer and by connecting daily with Him, to be filled with God's new life and love. Drink deeply of the forgiveness He won for all of your sins. Drink deeply and know that you are a new creation. Drink deeply of Jesus and be assured God is working for your good despite your frustrations and cares. Drink deeply of Jesus' living water and be assured of His very near presence in your life because of the Holy Spirit. So go, filled with the Spirit of God, to share Christ in all you do, so that His love, can *overflow* into the lives of others to the glory of God. Amen.

Lord Jesus, fill us with your Spirit so that you can grow your Kingdom on earth. We ask that you would, 'Revive your Church Lord; but, begin with me.' In your name we pray, Amen.