

Pentecost: I will pour out my Spirit

**31 May 2009
Rev Brian Senior**

Readings:

Acts 2:1-21
John 16:5-15

Sermon

SKETCH: "No Time for the Present"

"Once upon a time there was a present."

Before Jesus returned to his Father in heaven, he had one last conversation with his disciples:

- he gave them his instructions
- he made them a promise
- Jesus' instructions were that they were to be his witnesses. They were to tell other people about him so that they could know him for themselves. They were to start in Jerusalem where they were, but then to move out into the whole of Judea ... and then across the border into Samaria ... and eventually 'to the ends of the earth'.
 - Jesus wanted everyone to hear the good news about forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. He wanted everyone to have the opportunity to know him as their friend, their Lord, and their Saviour. The disciples were to be the ones who would start it off.
- Jesus' promise was that he would send the Holy Spirit, who would give them power to go out and tell people about him. The Holy Spirit is not some sort of vague presence, like 'The Force' in Star Wars. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. We speak of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit ... a mysterious fellowship of love who are all part of God himself.
 - The Holy Spirit was the one who had spoken through the prophets long ago ... the one who had given power to God's special people ... men like Abraham and Jacob, Moses and David ... so that they could do God's work. But now he was to come to all Jesus' followers, to give them power to be his witnesses.

So ... imagine the disciples all gathered together on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost was a Harvest Festival, and people would come from all over the known world to be in Jerusalem to celebrate ... which is why Luke gives us that long list of people who spoke different languages: Parthians, Medes and Elamites ... Cappadocians ... Pamphylans ... Egyptians.

What was it like, when the Spirit came?

Get ideas from children and discuss

However it was exactly ... and we can't know for sure ... the important thing was that

the Holy Spirit did come as Jesus had promised ... and it was very obvious that he had come. They couldn't really have missed the moment, could they? ... it really changed their lives.

Not long ago, these disciples had been frightened for their lives, hiding from the authorities, wondering what would happen to them. Then Jesus came back to them, after the resurrection, and they were so excited about that ... but they were still confused about what was going to happen next.

But at the Ascension, when Jesus returned to his Father in Heaven, Jesus had still told them to wait. Wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes. And so they waited ... and waited ... and wondered.

What would it be like when he came?

What difference would he make?

How would they feel? ... what would they do?

Well, they didn't have to wait long! Ten days in Jerusalem, and then it all happened.

The noise of a mighty wind .. tongues of fire ... and this amazing ability to speak in other languages, so that these visitors from all over the world could understand what they were saying. Of course, there were bound to be some people who got the wrong end of the stick, and came to the wrong conclusion ... thinking that they were drunk!

Jesus had fulfilled his promise.

So here we have Peter ... good old Peter who was always opening his mouth and putting his foot in it ... given new power by the Holy Spirit, and standing up to preach a sermon which ended with three thousand people coming to put their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. What a sermon that was!

Peter explained that this amazing event was what the prophets had spoken about so many hundreds of years before ... that instead of the Holy Spirit coming to just a few people ... the ones specially chosen by God to be his spokesmen, and to lead his people ... now, the Holy Spirit was being poured out on everyone who believed in Jesus ... young men and old men ... men and women ... adults and children.

God was doing a new thing, in which everyone who called on the name of the Lord Jesus would be saved. Saved from their sin ... saved from the consequences of their sin ... saved from punishment and given the gift of eternal life ... and three thousand people accepted the offer!

The Day of Pentecost was an amazing day ... a day when God broke in on his people in a new way ... but it did not end there. Peter went on to say, in his sermon:

"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:39)

God's gift of the Holy Spirit was not just for then ... it is for now.

God's gift of the Holy Spirit was not just for them ... it is for all of us.

God's gift of the Holy Spirit was not just to make them look good .. it is to change our lives.

The question is: Are we willing to have our lives changed?

If we just want to stay the same ... living for ourselves ... leaving God out of the picture ... then that is our choice. But it is a choice with very serious consequences.

No gift is any use unless we accept it ... take it ... open it ... and use it. A gift that is left in a cupboard or on the shelf won't make any difference to our lives at all. It won't help us ... it won't make life any better.

In John's gospel, we read what Jesus had to say about the Holy Spirit:

- *"When he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."*
- *"He will tell you what is yet to come."*
- *"He will bring glory to me."*

It is through the Holy Spirit that we come to faith, grow in faith, and live the life of faith. Without the Holy Spirit in our lives we will struggle to believe, and we will not grow in faith.

We may agree with Christian principles ... we may appreciate the teachings of Jesus ... we may come to Church and join in the singing and listen to the sermons ... but we cannot live an authentic Christian life without the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

Sometimes people are bit afraid of the Holy Spirit. They are afraid that if they invite him into their lives he will do something weird or scary to them. But remember, he is the Holy Spirit of Jesus ... so he is just the same as Jesus.

To trust in Jesus and open our hearts to him is to welcome the Holy spirit into our lives as well. He will change our lives, but only for the better. He loves us, and he wants to bless us ... to help us to grow more like Jesus ... to grow into our inheritance as children of God.

God gives us his Holy Spirit to change, renew and empower us, and so to make us effective witnesses to Jesus.

Without him, we are powerless ... and we cannot live our lives to please God. If we resist him, we are shutting ourselves off from the many blessings which God wants to lavish on us. If we welcome him, we will begin an adventure with God which will last for eternity.

SKETCH: "Pentecost: the Present"