

PENTECOST

Acts 2, 1-21; Psalm 104, 26 – end; 1 Corinthians 12, 3b-13; John 20, 19-23

Brothers and sisters in Christ, what a wonderful day! And on this special day, may each of us know and experience – the joy, the wonder and the power of Pentecost in our lives.

If it were not for the coronavirus pandemic this morning we would be having a team service. As our reading relates, "*When the Day of Pentecost came they were all together in one place.*" (Acts 2:1) Whilst it is not possible for us to physically together; yet spiritually we are, as we worship, break open the word of God and in our spiritual communion come together with the whole church (militant, expectant and triumphant) in the wondrous mystery of the eucharist.

Now would be a good time, collectively, to say a big thank you to everyone who has assisted in any way, in producing, collating and circulating the materials & information which have enabled us to maintain our rhythm of worship over the past weeks. To all concerned – thank you!

Over recent weeks, as we faced the onslaught of Covid 19, many will have asked the question, "*Where is God in all this?*" This same question was posed by a concentration camp victim as he and hundreds of others were paraded to watch a brutally gruesome execution. A nearby victim whispered back, "*God is with them, on the giblet.*"

Though it can never reduce the pain of the suffering, it is a great comfort to know that through all the sufferings and trials of life there is Paul's assertion that nothing can "*separate us from the love of God.*" (Romans 8:38&39). And the promise of the Lord Jesus, "*I am with you always.*" (Matt 28:20)

So on this Pentecost morning may our risen, ascended, Lord, the dispenser of the Holy Spirit, bless us richly, as independently we worship together. The task on which we need to reflect is how individually we can be spirit filled and spirit led people; and, how collectively we can be both, a spirit filled and spirit led church and a spirit filled and spirit led team.

Today, the Feast of Pentecost – completes the five great saving Acts of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the Christian Year has followed since Advent.

Jesus was born for us

Christmas

Jesus suffered & died for us.

Lent & Passiontide

Jesus rose from the dead for us

Easter

Jesus ascended to the Father for us.

Ascension (and in so doing, wonder of wonders, our humanity was taken into the Godhead)

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit for us.

Today, Pentecost! Alleluia!

For the celebration of Pentecost our liturgical chronology follows the Lucan timings as recorded in the gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles; as in today's reading

from Acts chapter two. We should remember in the Johannine chronology, which is today's gospel reading, Jesus dispenses the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room on the evening of Easter Day when he breathes on the ten disciples saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit".

How do we deal with this discrepancy? Think of Lucy. Lucy won two million pounds on the lottery. She isn't bothered if it was won on the Wednesday draw or the Saturday draw – the vital element is that Lucy has won two million pounds!

So the discrepancy is not important; what is vital – is that Almighty God, through the Lord Jesus Christ anoints the nascent Church with the Holy Spirit. For the church then to be spirit filled and spirit led; and for the church now, the churches of our team, to be spirit filled and spirit led.

We pray to be spirit filled and spirit led people. But how does the Holy Spirit come to each of us? Let us take two well-known examples.

First, Paul on the Damascus Road. This was a mighty event, like the parting of the Red Sea or the mana in the wilderness and which we know so well.

Second, there is the example of John Wesley's *Aldergate Experience* which occurred on 24th May 1736. So it is very appropriate to reflect on it this morning, just six days after the 184th anniversary of the event. So what occurred? In his Journal Wesley recounts, "Whilst Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans was being read which described the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

"I felt my heart strangely warmed." No great fanfare; but rather a gentle warming of the heart and an assurance that the Lord, the Spirit of God, is with you.

I suspect that many more experience this "warming of the heart" than a theophany like that of the Damascus Road. Indeed is it possible that for some the "warming of the heart" may just pass by unnoticed?

So on this Pentecost Sunday as we listen to and reflect on the Word of God and as, individually, we come to receive the risen, ascended, glorified Lord in our spiritual communion; so may we feel our hearts "strangely warmed" and have the blessed assurance that the Holy Spirit abides with us and dwells within us. Then in the power of the Spirit may we live our lives to God's power & glory. This is the challenge before each one of us, before you and before me, on this Pentecost Sunday.

To conclude: prayerfully and reflectively read through, a number of times, the words of the well-known chorus below and let the Spirit do the rest:

"Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me, Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me, Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me; Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.

Amen.