

Gloucestershire
Methodist Circuit
Worship at Home -
Pentecost
23rd May 2021

Happy Birthday! Pentecost is often described as the birthday/the beginning of the Christian Church And we do indeed see this day as a day of amazing New Beginnings. Whether people of Jesus's time celebrated birthdays with cake, I doubt it, but they were certainly given fire that day to light any candles, and wind to blow to them out, and plenty to fill them up. May we also be filled this day.

LET US READ TOGETHER (STF 383)
Holy Spirit, gift bestower, Breathe into our hearts today, Flowing water, dove that hovers
Holy Spirit guide our way Love inspirer, joy releaser, Spirit take our fears away,
Reconciler, peace restorer, move among us while we pray.

Holy Spirit, Christ proclaimer, wisdom bringer, light our way, Fire that dances, wind that whispers, Holy Spirit, come today. Ease disturber, comfort bearer, move among us while we pray.
Truth revealer, faith confirmer, rest within our hearts today.
Come, Holy Spirit.

We sing.....STF 372Come 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.

O let it freely burn, til 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.

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.

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 they become the place
where-in the Holy Spirit finds a dwelling.

Let us pray....With each birthday we should be wiser and bolder for our Lord, but we confess there are times when we give the opposite impression, we have been afraid of the fire of your Holy Spirit, we have shut our hearts against any breeze flowing through us, concerned about where it may lead. Holy Spirit do a new thing in us today.

Spirit of truth
Whom the world can never grasp,
Touch our hearts
With the shock of your coming;
Fill us with desire
For your disturbing peace;
And fire us with longing
To speak your uncontainable word
Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction to today's reading

It was the 9th day , 8 days had already passed since that truly amazing day – the one when Jesus Ascended to Heaven. But how many more days would there be like this, how many more days until the promised 'gift' arrived? Waiting! Waiting! But God knew when was the right time. Jerusalem was packed with people, a beautiful time of year enabling people to travel in from many outlying places, a great festival atmosphere. Indeed it was Pentecost- the festival of all festivals, praising God for his creation and for his Word, like having Harvest Thanksgiving and Bible Sunday all rolled into one.

Yes this was the right time for God's gift to arrive.

Reading – Acts 2 **The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost**

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. **2** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. **7** Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?" **8** Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? **9** Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Sermon

And so the promised Gift came. I wonder if you have ever had an experience so incredible that when you tried to explain it to someone else, you just couldn't find the words to do it? Maybe a stunning scene, the colour of the sunset, or something somebody said that warmed your heart, that moment when God was present and you were lost in wonder, love and praise?

I am pretty sure that this particular Pentecost was one such occasion for the disciples. Perhaps THE occasion. This was their experience of being completely and overwhelmingly filled with the Holy Spirit for the very first time.

How do you share an encounter like that with others - how do you describe a filling/ or an infilling, by God himself? From running on empty to running over!

Come to that -how do you describe the Holy Spirit? Thankfully God knows that we need the tangible to work with and so he graciously provides images that we can latch on to.

'Wind' and 'fire' were accepted symbols for the powerful and cleansing work of God's Spirit, and so it makes sense that he should appear in such a way that can be likened to these elements. We are told that there was 'a sound like the blowing of a violent wind' that filled the house, and 'what seemed to be tongues of fire' which sat upon them.

The apostles were ready for the Holy Spirit - one of the many messages of Pentecost is that it was only when they were empty that they could be filled. Only when they were empty could they be transformed.

As we worship today, some in church buildings for the first

time, some at home, we won't be far different from those first followers. We too praise God for his creation, the beauty that has kept us going this last year and for his Word which has been an unchanging rock - but we too come empty. Well, I hope we do, for that's **not** a bad thing, indeed that's a brilliant thing - for only by being empty can we be filled.

So today let us be those empty vessels, today let us be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive... well actually let's enjoy being filled and then see where that leads, for the Spirit has gifts a plenty to give us. Some of you will recall a song which we used to sing many years ago - 'Running over, running over, my cup's full and running over, since the Lord saved me I'm as happy as can be, My cup's full and running over.' The apostle's cups were full to the brim that day and certainly running over, as

they then went on to preach sermons and perform miraculous acts 'In the Name of Jesus', and in the Power of the Holy Spirit. They were the leaky buckets that watered the seeds along the path as they shared their faith and told people about Jesus.

Of course there would be things that would challenge them as they did that and that is the same today. One of the biggest challenges we can have is not quite knowing what to say! But the apostles didn't have any carefully prepared scripts, they spoke from their hearts as much as their head. God overcame their communication problems, by filling them with a new language. For some that would mean what we describe as 'speaking in tongues', for many it didn't mean that, and for many of us it won't mean that. For most of us it simply means that if we allow ourselves to be filled

by the Spirit, then he will fill us with the words we need. In Romans we read these words
8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray (speak/act) as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

The apostles were filled with a top grade fuel, it was the birth day of all birth days. Today, may we enjoy the party, may we give to God our empties, for the return will be great. Let the fire light the candles, feel the breeze as they are blown out, have a slice or two of cake, raise a glass, and tomorrow may you go round singing... Running over, running over, my cup's full and running over.

Hymn STF 395

Spirit of the Living God
Fall fresh on me
Spirit of the Living God
Fall fresh on me
Break me, melt me
Mould me, fill me
Spirit of the Living God
Fall fresh on me.

Prayer

Holy One, We are not sure what it would be like if the Holy Spirit blew through our churches again as it did on the day of Pentecost. However, we want to speak the language that you have given, louder, and more clearly in our lives and church.

So we pray,
come Holy Spirit come,
pour out your fire of love upon us to be the body of Christ in a world that is often hurting, hungry, and cynical.

We want to bring the good news to the poor,
heal the broken-hearted,
preach deliverance to captives,
bring recovery of sight to the blind and set at liberty all that are bruised.

As your disciples,
we pray for all who suffer, are poor, despairing, burdened, blind and battered.

In your loving breeze,
we pray for health and wholeness for those who are physically ill,
for those who are mentally ailing,
for those who are money sick,
for those who are spiritually unwell.
We pray for the healing of your creation,
and the renewal of the face of the land.
We pray for those who are thirsty,
that they would drink from your fountain of living waters
and never thirst again.
Amen.

~ written by rev karla, and posted on **RevGalBlogPals**. <http://revgalblogpals.org/>

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn - STF 564 O thou who camest from above

O Thou Who camest from above,
The pure celestial fire to impart,
Kindle a flame of sacred love
On the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for Thy glory burn
With inextinguishable blaze,
And trembling to its source return,
In humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
To work and speak and think for Thee;
Still let me guard the holy fire,
And still stir up Thy gift in me.

Ready for all Thy perfect will,
My acts of faith and love repeat,
'Til death Thy endless mercies seal,
And make my sacrifice complete.

SENDING OUT PRAYER

As we enter a new week,
may we experience God's presence.
May we feel God pouring out the Holy Spirit
over our heads and our thoughts and
the words of our lips,
over our hearts and our feelings and
emotions
and our compassion for all others,

and over our hands and our feet
as we put into action all that God
commands us.

During this week,
may the grace of the Lord Jesus
Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with each one of us; Amen.

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