



Prestongrange Church

Sharing in worship

Reflections on Pentecost: Acts 2

The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

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 as the Spirit enabled them.

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

a). Preparation- to make a people ready for himself.

Pentecost was the feast of Harvest: Celebrating the completion of the grain harvest. Or the Feast of Weeks, because it took place 7 weeks or 50 days after the Passover when the grain harvesting began. And certainly there was a great harvest of men & women (about 3,000) were drawn into the kingdom of God that day.

God was about to birth the Christian church but he needed people to be ready for this. He needed them to be prepared to listen and to act.

Before Jesus returned to be with His Father, Jesus told his followers to ...Wait in Jerusalem "for the gift my Father promised" & we discover that they waited in prayer: "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." It was astounding that his cynical & unbelieving brothers had become believers. This encourages us to pray on and witness to our brothers and sisters & our families to the power of God in Christ. When God intends to work through us, he draws us to pray for that which we seek.

We read: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. "They knew the importance of gathering together- because they were in this together- in terms of being the Lord's people and they didn't want to miss out on anything the Lord might say to them and make known to them. There was no room for indifference or apathy; no place for lachiness or a "couldn't care less" attitude. There was a sense of commitment and expectation- arising from a real love for the Lord and for each other.

b). Power- to dynamically change, equip and embolden

By God's grace and in answer to prayer, the Spirit of God came.

There was what sounded like a violent blowing wind and filled the whole house where they were sitting. The very breath of God came upon them to drive them out and empower them to be his witnessing people.

The Holy Spirit came like tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each one of them. Fire gives life & warmth. It also purges and purifies.

John Stott says: "Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is

a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead.”

Notice: v.12 “Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’” When God’s people are filled with the Holy Spirit, people will see God at work and will begin to ask questions.

c). Promise- Of the Holy Spirit for all.

v.14 Peter seeks to give explanation to what was taking place as the followers of Jesus were enabled to speak in all the different languages present among those who had gathered for the festival. Peter dismisses the idea of the mockers who made fun of the disciples (v.13) & said “they have had too much wine.” “These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning!” (v.14). He proceeds to quote from the prophet Joel which many of the gathering would have been familiar with.

They were reminded that the Scriptures clearly predicted these unique events. The continuity of revelation in the Scriptures was being emphasised. Into their broken society, with its deep seated divisions and rivalries, Christ’s work and the Spirit’s coming had broken down huge barriers.

Racial barriers: v.17 “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.” The Holy Spirit was for Jew, Gentile and also Arab (v.11) Jesus is the answer to racial hatred and prejudice.

Barriers of inequality- including sex & age: “Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.” The generation gap is closed; young & old alike would be blessed by the Spirit’s power and equipped to speak God’s word.

Social & class barriers: v.18 “Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit on those days, and they will prophesy.”

Raymond Brown says: “In a bitterly divided world every local church should be a model of loving, unified and mutually supportive corporate life.”

The church’s mission is to speak to men & women of Christ & to call men and women to Christ.

The promise given to the followers of Jesus is: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (1:8). We are equipped by God to witness and assured that when we play our part (surrendering ourselves to him in love and speaking of what we know of our dear Lord), God will honour that witness and change lives:

“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”(v.21) No ifs or buts. Have we surrendered our lives to Jesus who gave his all for us on the cross? We read: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

As Peter preached the first Christian sermon on that Pentecost Sunday, he focused on Jesus as the Saviour- crucified for our sin but “handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge.” (v.23).

God for all. Salvation for all. The Holy Spirit for all- but we need to receive Christ if we are to know and enjoy all that he has for us.

A response is required if we are to the joy of God’s love and his wonderful salvation. Peter said: “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (v.38).

The Holy Spirit comes to be our counsellor and enabler; our advocate and comforter- our along- sider. How can we refuse such a gift?