

## **Pentecost 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021 - Sermon**

Everybody loves a good birthday party, and Luke tells us that God does too.

When the New Testament Church was born on the Day of Pentecost, God threw her a birthday party unlike any other.

The 120 disciples had prayed and waited for ten long days since Jesus ascended to heaven, but when the Holy Spirit finally came, he was definitely worth the wait.

It must have been frustrating to be part of God's People before the great birthday party of Pentecost.

In the book of Numbers chapter 11 we read of Moses who was struggling with the moaning Israelites in the desert. They were fed up of manna and wanted some meat for a change.

And God said bring me some of the elders and I'll take some of the power I have put on you and put it on them so they can share some of the burden. So, God Spirit given to one man and spread about a few.

Then there was the Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel who prophesied that God would give his people, the Jewish nation a new heart and put his spirit in them. The promise of the Spirit of the Israelites

And then the prophet Joel, who was quoted by Peter when he addressed the crowds on the first Pentecost as we heard in our Acts reading - I will pour out my Spirit on all people. The Spirit would be given to all who called on the name of the Lord.

We read that John the Baptist promised the Spirit would come through Jesus, when he said in Mark 1, that after him would come the one more powerful than he that would baptise with the Holy Spirit.

And then Jesus told them to wait, because the time had not yet come.

Most of the books of the Bible date back to that long period when God's People waited for this "promise of the Father" to be granted, and although he gave a taster by filling a few individuals with his Spirit, it still seemed a very long time in coming.

This helps us understand why the Church's birthday party was such a spectacular event. They knew that their waiting was over. Jesus had told them not to begin their work of church-planting and world mission until they were "clothed with power from on high" but Peter knew on Pentecost morning that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised to life and lifted up to heaven, and had received the promised Holy Spirit to pour out on all his People. Because of Jesus' life, death, resurrection and ascension, a new era of life in the Spirit had begun.

The disciples were so intoxicated with joy that their neighbours assumed they must be early-morning binge drinkers.

It was such a noisy, joyful affair that thousands of onlookers rushed to join the party too.

So Peter knew that he should stand up and tell everyone that the promised day had now arrived. Peter had not been a great preacher. He was well known for opening his mouth before putting his brain in gear. But on that first Pentecost, Jesus sent the gift of the

powerful holy Spirit and Peter was a changed person. He now had the eloquence, the amazing ability to speak in a way that people wanted to listen to.

After Peter spoke to the crowd that gathered, 3000 people turned to Jesus.

That was one powerful sermon. 3000 people's lives were changed, and the church was born. From that day on the church grew and grew.

And we now live in the age where the Holy Spirit is available to all who call on the name of Jesus. God doesn't just bless the leaders of the nations, or a few chosen people, but the Spirit is available to all.

And with the Spirit comes power to transform lives and situations.

Throughout the book of Acts, we see the Holy Spirit healing people, saving people, helping turn hearts.

And Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts that the spirit can bring.

Over 2000 years later, we too, like the disciples need the powerful Holy Spirit to fill us so that we can follow Jesus and carry on the work of the Kingdom of God, changing the world.

And boy, don't we need situations to change in our world today.

We're going to see a few pictures on the screen just to give us time to reflect on where we need the power of the Holy spirit to be working today...

PPT – of images of climate change, war, drug abuse, poor & hungry, refugees, sickness

Jesus, quoting Isaiah 61 in Mark 4 – shows us why the Spirit was sent to us...

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.”

In Acts 1: 1 Luke wrote about all that Jesus had begun to do, and by the sending of the Holy Spirit the work continued through the disciples, through the early church and is continuing through us today.

The reason he baptizes us with the Holy Spirit is, so that we can carry out the next phase of his plan. We have work to do.

Coming out of lockdown this church – this church of St Paul with All Saints has work to do. And each and everyone of us has a role to play. Jesus longs to fill those who are devoted to his mission – so clearly laid out in Isaiah 61. It's not about the leadership doing stuff, it's about each one of us longing for the Spirit to fill us afresh, to guide us, and show us where He wants us to be.

He wants all of us in our own unique way, enabled by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to:

Preach good news to the poor... to show others how Jesus can lift them out of both material and spiritual poverty.

To proclaim freedom to the captives – those who are weighed down by the powers and concerns of the world – Jesus can bring relief and freedom in their lives

To recover sight to the blind – To open the eyes to our loving, Lord Jesus.

To bring release to the captive....where the Spirit of the Lord is – there is freedom.

Jesus has told us to go into the world and change it one person at a time with his message of love and forgiveness. But we don't do it alone. We do it with each other and with the power of the Holy Spirit. We are "clothed with power from on high."

The church was born on the first Pentecost.

And today we celebrate. The church is still here, alive and well, and has a task to do.

Will you commit to help transform people's lives and look after our broken world?

What has God put on your heart today?

How do we, church together, ensure that we carry on the mission God has given us to do?