



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 23 MAY 2021 – Pentecost

COLLECT

God, who as at this time
taught the hearts of your faithful people
by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit:
grant us by the same Spirit
to have a right judgement in all things
and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;
through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 104: 25-35 & 37

- 25 People go forth to their work ♦
and to their labour until the evening.
- 26 O Lord, how manifold are your works! ♦
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
- 27 There is the sea, spread far and wide, ♦
and there move creatures beyond number, both small and great.
- 28 There go the ships, and there is that Leviathan ♦
which you have made to play in the deep.
- 29 All of these look to you ♦
to give them their food in due season.
- 30 When you give it them, they gather it; ♦
you open your hand and they are filled with good.
- 31 When you hide your face they are troubled; ♦
when you take away their breath,
they die and return again to the dust.
- 32 When you send forth your spirit, they are created, ♦
and you renew the face of the earth.
- 33 May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; ♦
may the Lord rejoice in his works;
- 34 He looks on the earth and it trembles; ♦
he touches the mountains and they smoke.

35 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; ♦
I will make music to my God while I have my being.
37 Let sinners be consumed out of the earth
and the wicked be no more. ♦

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Acts 2: 1-21

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 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?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Peter Addresses the Crowd

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.'

John 15: 26-27 & 16: 4b-15

²⁶ "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

⁴ I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, ⁵ but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. ⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

¹² "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

Reflection- this week from Hannah

As we celebrate Pentecost, our annual remembrance of this event helps us to once again recognise that it was a moment that set the course of history- not just for a handful of generations, but for two millennia, and into eternity. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost marks the birth of the church. As with any anniversary or commemoration, it's also a time to reflect- to look back at what the original meant, and means, and to look around us for signs that it continues.

The primarily Jewish community understood this too. Pentecost was the festival that came fifty days after Passover, to celebrate the giving of the Law to Moses on the mountain-top. It was also a kind of harvest, where the first-fruits of the crop were laid before God in thankfulness and prayer. Both those meanings resonate and are deeply significant to our understanding of Pentecost as the pouring out of a new way of life- a new age- the age we still inhabit, the age of the Holy Spirit. As those followers of Jesus waited in the upper room, as the tongues of fire came, the new languages, the confidence in the power of God, a new era began.

For those first few who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they immediately recognised its wider context. Peter stood and quoted from the prophet Joel, to declare that those 'last days'- prophesied, longed for, waited for- had finally come. All that God had promised, the Helper Jesus had mentioned, was here. The Spirit- full of wildness, power and blessing- set-sail on that first Pentecost and continues to work in our lives and in the world today.

When we consider the words Peter chose, we notice that they proclaim a radical inclusivity and yet an eye to the marginalised. As it 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. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days,'

The Holy Spirit is for everyone and manifests in a number of ways- prophecy, dreams, visions, tongues and more. It's not just for the religious elite (who are strangely absent on the arrival of this great gift), not just for the holders of power- no. It is for everyone- including those who in that culture, and ours, are often forgotten: the very young, the very old, those of lowly status. The age of the Spirit had come, and Peter's speech reminds us that it looked nothing like anyone expected, and yet was authentic fulfilment.

Where are the signs of God's Spirit at work in the world today? For some, those dramatic first experiences continue to be repeated- in the Pentecostal tradition most notably. For others, the Holy Spirit works in quietness and power to liberate and transform our world- in the kindness of a stranger, in those peculiar and particular moments when prayers are answered through the coincidence of events, in the unwavering and mighty faith of a child who teaches us how to believe and how to trust, in the beauty of a friend who greets his own mortality in peace, in the out-flowing of the gifts each of us have to bless and help one another. This is the age of the Spirit. That first Pentecost is not just a piece of Christian history, it is a living, life-giving, ongoing process that we are invited to participate in today- to notice, to own for ourselves, to herald heaven in the depths of earth.

As T.S. Eliot writes 'the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.' This movement began 2,000 years ago, but as we greet it today, we are invited to consider what new things it can teach us. The Holy Spirit enabled people to hear the gospel in their own language, and unlikely members of society set out and changed the world. Who are those surprising people God continues to call to a life of love? We know at the very least that it includes us, but who else? Where, as we survey the landscape around us, where might we feel that yearning to cry 'come, Holy Spirit,' to spot God at work and to join in?