

# BEING CHURCH

1. *Discovering Stewardship*



31 MAY, 2020

## **Welcome Church AND Welcome to Worship!**

Another glorious day in the Kingdom of God on earth and we, you and I are privileged to enjoy it! We are blessed to enjoy another day dedicated to worship of our great God, all He is and all He does for us.

This morning we are grateful to God for His gift of the Holy Spirit and shall express this in worship. God has called and gathered you where you are. Though your bones may be tired and your muscles ache from the work of the week gone by, the Lord our God has set you down, to worship Him and Him alone. We pray the Word of God awaken you, the Breath of God revive you, and the presence of God satisfy you!

### **LISTEN            Holy Spirit Come to Us**

**PRAYER** We are gathered in Your presence O God, to offer You praise! We enter Your presence with confidence knowing this, when words escape us and we cannot find what to say, the Holy Spirit is with us, giving shape to our wordless hopes and longings, as Jesus our Christ pleads for us before God's throne of grace. We join with Christ's Church, here and everywhere, to be surprised with joy as you release afresh, Your Holy Spirit in our midst.

### **HYMN                Spirit of the Living God, fall Afresh on me**

**READING    During a time of conflicting views and opinions,  
of point-scoring and one-upmanship, a Prayer to  
shape our Attitudes and for Discernment.**

In these days of knowing and of not knowing, of confusion and doubt, we, like buds on trees, are waiting to burst forth into the world, as witnesses of your Majesty and Glory!

Teach us restraint, not to impose our views on others, nor weigh them down with our inconsiderate opinions.

Teach us patience as you hold us gently and show us ways of loving our neighbour, careful not carelessly toss them nor us, into thoughtless, ill-considered harm.

Teach us, all life is sacred to You, not only that of the unborn child, but also those whose hands and faces are etched with lines and wrinkles, the scars and trophies of life.

The media and people in power offer blustering words, tired rhetoric, and repeating choruses of memorised jingles.

Open our ears to hear beyond our own anxiety and grief, the true tragedy in this time of coronavirus, and consider what kindness, however small, we might offer someone.

Open our hearts to dream how You might wants us to enter our communities to be a beacon for those living in disorder and without hope, to journey with them while they find order and reorder their lives.

Help us Lord, to always remember to worship you with our heart, soul and mind, that our worship extends naturally to include loving our neighbour as ourselves. **AMEN.**

**LISTEN**            **Wait for the Lord**

**PRAYER for our WORLD**      *(please feel free to add your own prayers)*

Loving God. We ask for your Holy Spirit to help us pray as we ought; to give us words that intercede for the needs in our world.

We pray for those whose lives are overshadowed by illness or pain; whose lives are darkened by sorrow or bereavement. Let the Holy Spirit comfort them in body, and refresh them in Spirit.

*(pause for your own focussed prayer)*

We pray for those facing oppression and injustice in their quest for medical help and those who also struggle with poverty and hunger. Release the Holy Spirit to move the hearts of men and women to be compassionate and extend their own meagre resources, which You multiply because it given in faith and with love.

*(pause for your own focussed prayer)*

We pray for leaders of nations, of provinces and counties, leaders in community and leaders in families. May they be ashamed of their pursuit of their “self” and humbled by Your vision for Your world. Open their eyes to see the energy and direction of the Holy Spirit at work, and recognise they cannot and should not stand in its way.

*(pause for your own focussed prayer)*

We ask the Holy Spirit grant peace and calm to those living in the shadow of war and violence; for those eaten up by guilt and anxiety, and whose Christian life has become dry.

*(pause for your own focussed prayer)*

Father, there are many who are uncertain how to use your gifts of time and talents; grant the Holy Spirit guide and show them how they can glorify Your Name on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Father, there are many who labour to be a witness for you, but all they see is defeat and loss. Let Your Holy Spirit comfort and encourage them; show them, nothing in Your world is ever in vain!

Loving God! For those whom we prayed, and for ourselves, grant us the assurance of Your daily, moment-by-moment presence with us, in our relationships...; in our work and service...; in our worship...; in our times of joy... and in our times of pain and difficulty.

**LISTEN**            **It is Well with My Soul**

**READ**            **Acts 1:1-14**

My Dear Theophilus, In my first book (Gospel of Luke) I gave you some account of all that Jesus began to do and teach until the time of His ascension. Before He ascended he gave His instructions, through the Holy Spirit, to the special messengers of His choice, His Disciples. After his suffering He showed Himself alive to them in many convincing ways, and appeared to them repeatedly over a period of forty days talking with them about the affairs of the kingdom of God.

On one occasion, while he was eating a meal with them, he emphasised that they were not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "You have already heard me speak about this," he said, "for John used to baptise with water, but before many days are passed you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit."

This naturally brought them all together, and they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

To this he replied, "You cannot know times and dates which have been fixed by the Father's sole authority. But you are to be given power when the Holy Spirit has come to you. You will be witnesses to me, not only in Jerusalem, not only throughout Judea, not only in Samaria, but to the very ends of the earth!"

When he had said these words he was lifted up before their eyes till a cloud hid him from their sight. While they were still gazing up into the sky as he went, suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them and said, Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking up into the sky? This very Jesus who has been taken up from you into Heaven will come back in just the same way as you have seen him go.

At this they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives which is near the city, only a sabbath day's journey away. On entering Jerusalem they went straight to the upstairs room where they had been staying. There were Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Patriot, and Judas the son of James. By common consent all these men together with the women who had followed Jesus, Mary his mother as well as his brothers devoted themselves to prayer.

## **MESSAGE**

Pentecost! The next milestone in our annual pilgrimage through the Bible. Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to Heaven, returning to His eternal home<sup>1</sup>, having accomplished His objective of defeating death,

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:3

the only grasp Satan had to hold us back from eternal life with the Father. Jesus *commanded* his apostles *not (to) leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised ... in just a few days you will be baptised **with** the Holy Spirit.*

We are baptised **with** the Holy Spirit and not **by** the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not act independently on His own accord choosing whom to baptise. The Holy Spirit is co-equal with God the Father and God the Son, and of the same Divine essence, yet distinct from them. He does the work only God can do<sup>2</sup> and in keeping with God's plan<sup>3</sup> (*for a short, comprehensive study on the Holy Spirit click on the link below<sup>4</sup>; to request a printed copy, please phone the church on 07742 662668*).

We tend to be drawn to the **WOW factor** of Pentecost: the flames, the sounds, the speaking in languages and the spectacular revival. This year, let's focus on the background to Pentecost to discover, it is an integral part of God's plan of salvation, **from the beginning!** Scholars examining Hebrew texts from the past have brought to light the similarity of three words used in Exodus 19 and Acts 2 (**fire, descended** and **sound**), written by two authors thousands of years apart (!!), are associated with the presence of God manifest at both events.

Seven weeks (50 days) after the "Passover" by the angel of death in Egypt, Jews celebrate the gift of God's Laws to the Hebrew people at Mount Sinai. It is poignant, therefore, 50 days after we celebrate the Passover and Jesus' crucifixion, God releases the Holy Spirit to gather to Himself, an extended "chosen" people, His Church, who will lead us to the ultimate promised land, God's eternal Kingdom.

The two events (at Mt Sinai and Jerusalem) are also strangely linked. At Mt. Sinai 3,000 people lost their lives for worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32:28); now at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit restores 3,000 people as the foundation of the Church<sup>5</sup>, a foretaste of the salvation which goes

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:2; John 3:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 13:14

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.moodybible.org/beliefs/positional-statements/holy-spirit/>

<sup>5</sup> Acts 2:41

from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. God's ways are not easily understood, but knowing God, we accept His ways as perfectly fair, absolutely just and unconditionally loving.

The first thing we recognise about Pentecost is that, **the Holy Spirit is God's gift to us.** Jesus told the Apostles, *return to Jerusalem and do NOT leave the city UNTIL the Father sends you the GIFT he promised ... in just a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.*

Second, Jesus did not give the date, time and means when this would happen; all He said was, *in a few days...* Jesus invites us to trust Him, that at the right time, we will receive the Holy Spirit. Now, don't panic! You won't all start seeing tongues of flames bouncing around, sounds of a mighty windstorm and people speaking in unintelligible languages, the **WOW** factors of Pentecost.

**Baptism** is a process of publicly identifying to whom we belong. When we are absolutely convinced, God's work of salvation through Christ has been accomplished and the door opened to eternal life with the Father. Through water Baptism, we identify with Christ and declare our **belonging** in God's family; the second baptism by the Holy Spirit is that of **enablement**, to *receive power (be enabled) by the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit comes upon you ... you will be my witnesses, (telling people about me, what I have accomplished for you) everywhere - in Jerusalem (your hometown), Judea and Samaria (in counties adjacent) and to the ends of the earth (wherever God takes you)*<sup>6</sup>, that they too many do the same and enjoy God's Kingdom on earth and in the world to come.

Finally, Jesus does not specify date, time and place because He wants the period of waiting as a time of preparation, and the best and only way to prepare oneself to be enabled for god's work is *constantly united in prayer*<sup>7</sup>, seeking the will and plan of God, of what is about to happen in our lives. The example of prayer during times of waiting is illustrated in Acts 1:15-26

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 1:8

<sup>7</sup> Acts 1:14

1. Look for the company of people who will commit themselves to pray with you for the same thing you are praying for (v.15)
2. Read the Bible, individually and together, and let those with the gift of discernment review the Word of God and reveal its meaning (16-22)
3. Continue in prayer as choices and decisions are made (23-26, esp v24) and let the Holy Spirit guide you into God's will and plan.

Pentecost is God's gift of the Holy Spirit, and His invitation to stewardship: will you accept the gift of the Holy Spirit and invest it in your life and the lives of those whom God brings you into contact?

Or, will you bury God's gift and return it to Him saying, *Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate* (bad mouthing God because he did not know God's character). *I was afraid I might lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back (exactly as you gave it!).*<sup>8</sup>

Those who invest the gift of the Holy Spirit, will see results in Acts 2:37 onwards to the end of the book!

We are at such a time, in our life as a Church, and as a nation. We are stewards of God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Will you covenant with me to pray, individually and as a Church, reading and understanding God's Word to you and us, and prayerfully expecting the Holy Spirit to direct us to be witnesses for Jesus invitation into God's Kingdom, and when God gifts you the Holy Spirit, will you covenant to invest it and watch it grow and bear fruit?      **AMEN**

**LISTEN**      **Holy Spirit Rain Down**

**PRAYER**

The Apostle Paul says the Spirit of God prays for us "*with sighs too deep for words*". Father, on this Pentecost Sunday, teach us to be proper stewards

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 25:24-25 (*The parable actually starts in 24:45-51 and continues in 25:14-30*)

of Your gift of the Holy Spirit, that as we learn to learn to live with Him, we would accept His discernment, inspiration and courage to invest the life of Christ in the lives of those He brings to us, and in so doing, have the strength to seek first Your Kingdom and Your justice, knowing that when we do, everything we need will be added to us. **AMEN**

## **HYMN**                      **O Lord my God**

### **BENEDICTION**

This has been our place of worship, and it will always be our place of worship, for this is where we live.

While much of the road ahead is uncertain and the path constantly changing, we know these things are solid and sure, as sure as the ground beneath our feet and the sky above our heads.

We will never be orphaned from God's love

We will never walk in darkness for Christ's light endures.

We know the Holy Spirit is closer to us than our next breath,  
binding us and holding us fast to You, Eternal God

In the Name of our Christ, who is coming to reign, we go in peace, to serve our world. **AMEN.**

**LISTEN**    **Make yourselves coffee or tea, or pour yourself a glass of juice, cut a healthy slice of cake and enjoy a ....**

## **Medley of Joyous Hymns**

*As a member of Botley Baptist Church, please do not forget to remit your tithe and offering, either directly into the bank or drop-off your envelope at Church.*

*If you are not attending this Church and would like to contribute to its ministry, please click "EMAIL US" at the top of the home page. Thank you*