

I was writing a document this week and intended to have a summary of each section at the end of each page and then an overall summary.

Revd Terry said, no – put the summary at the beginning, that way if people don't read the rest, they at least have the conclusion.

I suggested I should preach the same way, just give you the summary and we can sing a hymn and move on. Excellent.

Pentecost reminds us that those who are thirsty can come and quench their thirst and that from those who believe in Jesus, rivers of living water will flow.

So, there you have it.

I do feel obliged to preach for a moment longer but for those of you watching at home you can nip and put the kettle on because I've given you the summary.

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The description of Pentecost can leave us with the impression that the Holy Spirit is an outside, external agency creating an impact on us. Rushing wind, tongues of flame.

But the Holy Spirit dwells within, the Spirit of Jesus is in us. That's an idea that is mystical to say the least. How does that work?

The writer of the fourth Gospel is definitely the most mystic of the gospel writers. Some of his themes are not simple.

- Jesus is more present through being absent.
- Life comes through death.
- Power comes through vulnerability.

Of course St. John illustrates these mystical ideas in the life of Jesus.

How is it Jesus is more present to us by being absent?

In what way is our thirst quenched?

How is it living water flows from us?

The 14th century Dominican Meister Eckhart (who is fairly mystic himself) tried to explore this idea of being more present through absence. The illustration he used was that of thought and speech.

(Everybody whose popped out to put the kettle on is missing this.) This is how Meister Eckhart explained it.

It is amazing that something flows forth, but remains within.

We can speak words that affect others, but the thoughts that formed them, stay within.

In fact, the more discipline and develop your skills in your thought processes, the more beneficial the words may be for others.

The degree to which we are absent from other people, going deep in thought, developing a richer spiritual life, the more we are present to them when we speak.

Let me offer an illustration. Each day I send out a church prayer on a WhatsApp message to those who have opted to sign up. Clearly, we are absent from each other.

The more time and reflection I give the prayer, the more benefit it is to those who read it. The thoughts that formed it are still with me. The words written have gone to those who read.

Jesus is absent from us, but the Holy Spirit reminds us of his words, his actions, his teaching, his desire and so Jesus is very present to us.

Jesus said "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."

My own need leads me to Jesus. I've not found anyone or any thing that will satisfy my desire for love, peace, joy, fulfilment, making sense of the random world, than Him.

The more time I spend with Him, reading his word, prayer, silence, listening, looking for parables in daily life – that is God speaking to me through something that happens...the more time I do that, the more a river of living water flows to others.

My absence from others spending time with the Trinity, the more a river of living water flows and ultimately the more present I am.

As they used to say to us at college, you can't preach when your well is dry. Each of us need to be paying attention to our souls, our spiritual life, drinking deeply to quench our own thirst, to release the flow of living water to others.

Where is the Holy Spirit in this?

The Holy Spirit releases in us the experience of joy and freedom that Jesus had and that we can have in our daily lives, but He also leads us to the truth, reminds us of all Jesus taught and continually prompts us to dwell deeply in God. The Holy Spirit is constantly drawing us deeper in.

The Holy Spirit also aids the development of Christlike characteristics, St Paul lists them for us. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Where you see these characteristics, you know the Spirit is at work.

The Spirit also gives gifts to God's people for the benefit of the church, however we read in Corinthians that having the gifts without quenching your thirst can lead to problems.

In his passage on love in 1 Corinthians 13, St Paul says that without love, no act of service, no gift of the Spirit is of any value.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples something incredible was released from within them. St. Peter stands up and preaches to a vast crowd and three thousand join the fledgling church.

The Holy Spirit prompts and inspires and motivates and reminds and encourages and comforts BUT the indwelling of the Holy Spirit doesn't exempt us from the disciplines as Meister Eckhart realised.

Our part is to drink deeply, quenching our thirst. To spend time with God and out of this flows a river of living water.

I said earlier that St John was a mystic and Meister Eckhart was a mystic but to be fair Jesus was fairly mystical as well.

This phrase "river of living water". We've heard it before.

Jesus choose to make a journey through Samaria and at Jacobs well meets a woman. After an initial "Please can I have a drink I'm thirsty" to which the woman replies, "I'm a Samaritan and you're a Jew how come you are asking me for a drink", it suddenly goes mystic.

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The woman doesn't understand.

"Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Those who believe in Jesus, who place their trust in him and seek him experience transformation; becoming Christlike.

Meister Eckhart said that the flow of living water to one another is a human/divine exchange. Human beings offering the love of God to one another. Where that is happening, the Holy Spirit is blossoming.

Pentecost is the music, and we are caught up in the divine dance of love between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to be part of them. Pentecost and the experience of the indwelling of the Spirit makes sense of Jesus saying, the Father is in me and I am in him and you are in me and I am in you.

Today Revd Terry and I are going to offer the opportunity for anointing with oil, symbol of the Holy Spirit, asking that our souls

are renewed and refreshed and that nothing will impeded the outward flow of love to others, the river of living water. Asking too that our desire to dwell deeply in Christ will be rekindled and restored.

Revd. Jon Hutchinson, 28 May 2023