**Morning Praise @ Home 19th May 2024**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Acts 2: 1 – 21

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**Reflection from Sue**

1. A SPECIAL DAY

I’m sure we can all recall notable days in our lives, some for good and some for sad reasons. Memorable for me were the two separate days when, following some years of being single, John first proposed to, then married, me.

* For me, amazingly there was no more waiting and hoping, no more expectancy beset by doubt. I’d known what it was to go it alone, to have to fend for myself with no one to truly understand my feelings and longings.
* What a difference it made that now there was someone promising always to be with me, someone with whom I have walked life’s path through good and tough times, but who has always been alongside me
* Suddenly I had someone who was ‘for’ me, on my side, who had my back, who would care for and understand me, advocating my cause when necessary
* In the face of my self-doubt, there was now someone to encourage me, someone who could see my potential and help me realise it - John has been someone who, rather than squashing my enthusiasm has helped to bring out the best in me: I believe I am a better person for knowing him
* Above all, I now had the comfort of someone who utterly loved me and inspired my love in return.

What a good job I said ‘yes’ to his requests on those two memorable days!

But the Church also has special days that help it recall important events. Does anyone know why Sunday is a memorable day for the Church?

* Yes - it’s the day of Jesus’ Resurrection – when we celebrate life being restored to the physical body of Jesus on the day following the Jewish Passover
* Less well-remembered, but actually just as important, it’s also the day, 50 days after Passover, when we celebrate that the powerful Spirit of God, which resurrected Christ, was sent to all who believed, or later came to believe, that Jesus’ achievement had saved them and reconciled them to God. That too was a Sunday.

Given that the first believers were Jews, why did God choose the ‘50 day feast’ which was known as ‘Pentecost’ to pour out His Spirit?:

* At Pentecost, Israelites recalled how Moses went up a mountain and returned with God’s intimate rules for his people, inscribed on tablets of stone. Now, after Jesus has ascended to heaven, His Spirit comes down and writes God’s guidance within believers’ hearts.
* Pentecost was also one of the Jewish harvest thanksgivings, expressing gratitude that God was providing for His people and that there would be more to come. Jesus spoke of harvesting lives for the kingdom and promised that this would extend throughout the world, energised by His Spirit.

So in choosing this special day God was taking what was already understood and breathing through it powerful new meaning. He was giving His redeemed people a new way of living, a fresh power by which they could carry out His purposes.

1. THE CULMINATION OF JESUS’ MISSION

Through the church year we celebrate the God’s mission actioned by Jesus:

* At Christmas it’s about God taking on human form to be alongside us, what we call the Incarnation.
* Good Friday commemorates Jesus saving humanity by dying in our place.
* Easter Day celebrates His defeat of death and the forces of evil.
* His Ascension to heaven marks Christ’s heavenly coronation, victoriously reigning over earth.
* But Jesus’ mission to save all humankind can only be *completed* by what Pentecost celebrates: His Spirit coming once again to be with us, working out *within* us what He has won for us.

This time, Jesus isn’t with us at one historical time, in one geographical place, for one racially defined people, but powerfully for all time and to all people. The multiple languages that those gathered in Jerusalem heard represented the then known world – God revealing Himself to a context that was multi-racial, multi-national, multi-lingual. As the prophesy from Joel stressed, God was ‘pouring out His Spirit on all people (v.17), so that ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’ (v.21).

So ‘Pentecost is a giant leap in the human journey … it is the moment that makes the church possible; that opens up God’s purposes; that reveals at last the secret plan hidden from time immemorial: to shine *through* people. The gift of the Holy Spirit changes history’. As the Creed puts it, *we* have been given ‘The Lord, the giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.’

1. THE CHANGE THE SPIRIT BRINGS

On that first, Spirit-awakened Pentecost Sunday, there wasn’t just the sound of fresh wind and visible flames externally announcing the Spirit’s arrival, but an internal transformation in Jesus’ followers.

* Having clustered inside since Jesus’ passion and resurrection, now they are impelled to be seen and heard as they ‘declare the wonders of God’ (v.11).
* Peter is transformed from someone easily overtaken by anxiety to a confident spokesperson, whose faith shines unwaveringly throughout the rest of the book of Acts.

Believers are also given supernatural spiritual gifts so that they can be witnesses of Christ:

* Needing to proclaim the good news to a multi-ethnic crowd, in Acts 2 they are given the ability to speak in different languages
* Wanting to respond to the crippled and sick in Acts 3 & 5, they are endowed with the gift of miraculous healings
* As mainly uneducated folk needing to persuade religious scholars and legal experts in Acts 3, they are given courage and biblical insight
* Addressing the economic vulnerability amongst believers in Acts 4, the Spirit prompts an outpouring of generosity
* Needing to discern the integrity of new believers, in Acts 5 the Spirit provides words of knowledge.

None of these abilities are innate to the individuals involved but, importantly, each is open to the Spirit working through them for the purpose of glorifying God. These accounts also show us that we should never get hung up about *who* is endowed with *which* gift – that’s up to God, as He knows is appropriate. We should simply delight to see how the Holy Spirit is working variously through every believer.

1. EXPECTING THE SPIRIT

The question today is: How much do *we* long for the Holy Spirit to transform *us*?

When I said ‘yes’ to John’s proposal, from being on my own I gained a lifelong companion, who understood me and was my advocate, who encouraged me and helped me become my best self, who loved me and inspired my love in return.

The Spirit has all those attributes (and more!). Are we ready to say ‘Yes’ to Him?

* To change us from sometimes listless but dutiful church attenders to people lit from within?
* For the Holy Spirit to take what we already understand and breathe into it powerful new meaning, a fresh power by which we can carry out God’s purposes and become like His Son?

If so, we need to talk to Him, to schedule a heart to heart in prayer. This Whitsun!

If we try to religiously ‘go it alone’, we face a stark alternative, as Christian author John Stott explains: ‘Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship is 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 the Spirit’s fruit, no effective witness without the Holy Spirit’s power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the Church without the Spirit is dead.’

God’s Spirit is given to everyone who accepts Christ as their saviour and Lord, but we need to be willing to give Him the run of the house, not consign Him, as it were, to the cupboard under the stairs, full of handy things but rarely where we spend time.

The Spirit comes where he is invited: will we let Him move the furniture of our lives, even choose different colours for the walls? Will we allow Him to open the curtains and throw wide the doors, inviting incomers to be guided to Jesus via the light shining in us? Because, ultimately, the purpose of God pouring out His Holy Spirit is so that ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord can be saved’ (v.21).

I think God longs to see a congregation whose hearts are burning to extend His kingdom of love, who are enabled to serve those around them with the strength, courage and insight He provides, as did those first Pentecost Christians.

*May the words of this hymn become your prayer:*

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew,

that I may love the way you love, and do what you would do.

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,

until my will is one with yours, to do and to endure.

1. Breathe on me, breath of God; fulfil my heart's desire,

until this earthly part of me glows with your heavenly fire.

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die,

but live with you the perfect life for all eternity. AMEN

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by Philip**

Lord we thank you for the chance to meet and worship you together this morning. We pause for a moment as we reflect on the week past, the things that were good, the things that we had hoped might be better and the things that were not good. Help us to learn from all these things, to appreciate the good things, to learn from how we responded to any disappointments.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

At this time of Pentecost we think particularly of the gift of the Holy Spirit. We ask you to help us understand Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To appreciate how we can carry your spirit with us and in us throughout our lives, wherever we are. We ask for your Spirit to shape us, that we might live our Christian lives to the full, unleashing all the potential we have, and even more.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Help us to live Spirit-led lives, enriching us with the gifts of your Spirit. So that we go forward not on our own, but with all the power of The Holy Spirit as we look to do your will in the world.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Lord we pray for all we know who are unwell or distressed. Be with them and give them your comfort.

We pray for our local community; help us to build bonds of trust and friendship. Help us to play an active role, to the best of our ability, showing the love of Christ and his care and compassion to all.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We pray for our vicar John as he continues his working recovery. Help him recover his strength and stamina in the coming weeks.

We pray for all those who help with all the events taking place in the coming weeks, in the church and in the community.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**