

**Pentecost Fr Michael 20th May 2018**

Pentecost, the 'fiftieth day,' a Greek name which was given to the 'Feast of Weeks' because it fell fifty days after Passover. The Jewish people commemorated the giving of the law of Moses on this day and now we remember the giving of the Holy Spirit on this day.

The Bible tells us that on the day of Pentecost, Jesus' followers were all gathered together in one place and God sent the Holy Spirit to give them the power to teach others about Jesus.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

The power of the Holy Spirit enabled them to do strange things. It gave them the confidence to speak out about Jesus and what knowing him meant for their lives. It gave them the ability to be heard clearly by everyone who was listening, even if people came from other countries. Yes, people could understand the message that the disciples had for them - as they could hear the good news about Jesus in their own language. Peter's words are recorded in the Bible and he finishes his first sermon by saying, "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Yes, Luke introduces us to the complex theme of salvation here in Acts chapter 2. Being saved means so much more than just going to heaven when we die, it means really knowing God through the person of Jesus – who rescues us from all that takes us away from God, both now at this present moment and from here into eternity. Salvation had begun – that is what Peter is announcing – call on the Lord and you will be saved!

But what of the Holy Spirit? Where had she been previously? Well, she had been at work inspiring prophets to speak out, inspiring great leaders and kings, but all of these were individual people. God had acted by his Spirit among his people, but always inspiring one or two people – now in a sudden rush of wind and flames of fire, God's Spirit was poured out upon a lot of people at once. The death and resurrection of Jesus had released this mighty force and as Jesus promised his disciples – they

would not be left alone – here they were on this day of Pentecost, this birthday of Christianity speaking out about freedom. No longer would there be discrimination – male and female, slave and free, black or white, young or old, gay or straight – all are to be marked out as God's new people – God's new creation – all this for those who 'call on the name of the Lord!'

But, why now? Why was the Holy Spirit not sent to faithful people before this day? Well, I have already said that the Spirit had been at work in prophets and kings, in inspiring and giving words and a voice. But things were now different, because of Jesus. God had come down to earth, he had visited his people and had lived among them in the human form of Jesus of Nazareth. No longer did God dwell in the Temple, but he lived in hearts and minds, in the bodies of believers. God lived in the apostles who evangelised that first day. He lived in the form of the Spirit, giving them words and languages that a simple fisherman could not have known. This was a miracle in itself, performed by God through the power of the Holy Spirit - a miracle that changed lives. Lives that would give everything up for the love of Jesus. Love that knew no limit, that those receiving the Spirit would sacrifice everything for love and telling everyone they met the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is still with us today. We can't see her, but we can hear her, as he or it speaks to our hearts, we can see her moving in our life, and we can feel the power of her presence as she guides us through each day as we continue to call on her name.

Jesus my Saviour, have mercy on me!

Amen.