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# Pentecost

Sermon • Rev'd Andrew Hoggan • 8th June

Joel 2:28-32 • Acts 2:1-13

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As we look at what happened on the day of Pentecost I hope it will be helpful and encouraging as we seek to grow and expand the ministry here in Halswell.

**Let's Pray,** Lord Jesus by your Holy Spirit that fell so powerfully that first Pentecost day, encourage and equip us through your Word we pray, amen.

Just before Jesus ascended and returned to his Fathers side and take his rightful place as sovereign and Lord, he gave an encouragement and an instruction. Acts 1:8 "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

- The encouragement was the promise of power.
- The instruction, was the instruction to witness.

Then as the 120 were together, waiting and praying in an environment of apostolic teaching, it happened.  
The Spirit fell. And nothing like it had happened before.

Very often when we think of what happened at Pentecost we focus on things like:

- What of this tongues or languages?
- Does that happen to everybody that gets filled with the Spirit?
- How do I know that I'm filled with the Spirit?

Some of those questions we will touch on as we look at the passage. But let's look at a challenge that are often missed when we unpack what happened at Pentecost.

Imagine if you can, that you are among the 120. On this day another 3000 people are going to become followers of Jesus. The majority of these 3000 are visitors. It's the Festival of Weeks holiday and the population of Jerusalem has quadrupled as Jewish pilgrims, some from thousands of kilometres away, have flooded into Jerusalem. Given this influx of out of town believers, the local believers are going to be outnumbered by about 4 to 1.

It's what happens next that presents such a challenge. Many of these new believers decide not to go home. It will be several years until persecution drives them out, further spreading the gospel. So, who is going to look after these new believers?

Imagine if as we left church this morning each of us had to take 4-5 new believers home and look after them while things are getting sorted and this new community figures out how to cope with this massive growth.

We will probably never face that particular challenge although wouldn't it be wonderful if we had to face the challenge of dramatic growth. Pentecost was dramatic indeed and maybe never to be repeated in exactly the same way, but as followers of Jesus we do have the instruction of Jesus to be his witness, which means we are called to live out the gospel and make it known.

With that in mind let's take some encouragements from the text. **The first one is this: Whatever the challenge, we can trust the one who is always true to His word.**

Pentecost was the fulfilment of what the prophet Joel promised over 800 years before the coming of Jesus. Then Jesus himself assured his followers that he would send His Holy Spirit and empower his people for their work and witness. We can trust word of God. We are his witnesses. We have his power. We can trust the one who is always true to his word.

Second point **We rely on the resources of God. As he calls us to a great task, he gives us a great equipping.**

**Vs 2-3** Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came **from heaven** and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Divided

tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.

Did you catch it? From heaven. This is Jesus is working. What happened that day was sourced in heaven, and came from heaven. As the ascended and sovereign Lord is at the right hand of God Jesus is working and he empowers us and gives us his Holy Spirit.

So whatever the challenge, when it comes to sharing the gospel, witnessing to Jesus, we are about heaven's work. We rely on a power and a presence that is infinitely greater than us, or our experience. I for one am very thankful for that.

Lets look a little at the way the Spirit showed himself as this wind and fire was seen and heard.

Imagine going to a hospital. There will be certain things you would expect to see at a hospital. Doctors, nurses, patients, hospital beds, cubicles. There will be hospital sights, hospital sounds, hospital smells. There is something "hospitalish" about a hospital if I can put it that way.

Just so, if God was working, as people understood how God worked, there would be certain things you would expect to see and hear and experience.

Let's take this wind and fire for example. What might it bring to mind for those familiar with Gods redemptive story through the OT? In the creation account in Gen the wind, the breath, the Sprit of God hovered over the waters. Then as humanity comes into being the picture is of God breathing the breath of life, his life into us.

To those who recognised the symbolism, the wind of Pentecost was a potent sign that God was working creatively again. Something new was coming into being. Gods people, a living temple, Spirit filled believers. Church.

Fire. Fire symbolises the powerful presence of God both in judgement and provision.

- Moses and the Burning bush.
- The people of the Exodus being led through the wilderness by the pillar cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
- The fire coming down on and consuming the sacrifice that Elijah set up as he was having a showdown with the priests of Baal.
- Fire consuming the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now generally, through the OT, the fire of God was something of a double edged sword. Provision, and or, judgement.

Here at Pentecost though, as the believers are filled with the Spirit, and what appeared to be tongues fire that rested on each of the heads, it is not about judgement. It is about the provision and presence of God. A provision and presence made possible by the life, death, resurrection and now ascension of Jesus.

- **Whatever the challenge, we can trust the one who is always true to His word.**
- **We rely on the resources of God. As he calls us to a great task, he gives us a great equipping.**

**Thirdly: Every follower of Jesus has the Spirit of Jesus.** There is no such thing as a believer who misses out on receiving the Holy Spirit. V 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages and as the Spirit enabled them.

There is something new and different going on here. If we were to compare the OT and NT working of the Spirit we could generalise by saying through the OT the Spirit worked in specific people, for a specific task, for a specific period.

Think Samson praying for the empowering of the Spirit so he could push over the central columns in the temple of the god Dagon and extract vengeance on those who had captured him, blinded him and were mocking him and his God. Samson prays for power so he can take revenge on those who had maimed and imprisoned him. Not the greatest motive on Samson's part but it gives an example of temporary power in order that Gods superiority over this false god Dagon could be shown.

Contrast Pentecost. Now the Spirit rests on each and every believer. Further, the Spirit indwells every believer. Permanently.

Ok. Lets look a little at this speaking in tongues, or languages depending on the translation of the bible you have. I should probably say at this point that there are different interpretations on this issue given the different experiences that genuine and Spirit filled believers have.

That said, it might be helpful to note that what is spoken of in Ch 2 of Acts is probably different from that spoken of in Corinthians, which speaks of an unknowable spiritual language that many, but not all, Christians experience. That's what folk often first think of and equate to speaking in tongues or languages.

In Acts 2, the NSRV uses the word languages, which when you look carefully at the context, is probably a more fitting and useful translation. V 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not these men Galileans? And how is it then we each hear them speaking in our own native language? V 11 in our own language we hear them speaking about Gods deeds of power.

What's going on? It looks like Spirit is giving these 120 believers the ability to talk about Gods deeds of power, and in a way that this multi language speaking group of visitors to Jerusalem can understand.

In other words the people needed to hear about God and Gods work and the Spirits equipping of these believers prevailed even when there was a language barrier. I hope that is an encouragement as we are faced with the need and the responsibility to make the gospel know in this community.

Sometimes, when I don't feel confident, and I wonder if I'm going to come out with just the right words for the occasion, I remember this passage. It's worth remembering too that love is a great bridge builder, and even if we don't fancy ourselves as a good communicator, love, generosity, grace, and compassion speak powerfully and we can back that up with a proclamation of the gospel as best we can, and as the word of God and the Spirit of God helps us.

- We can trust the one who is true to his Word.
- We can rely on the one who equips us for the task he has given us.
- We can be assured that this applies to every believer. Every follower of Jesus has the Sprit of Jesus

**Lastly, and by way of further encouragement. It's good to know God will be working regardless of peoples response.**

We might face situations where it looks to us like not much is happening spiritually. But the fact is God is usually working in the situation before we jump in.

At Pentecost as the Spirit fell in a new and dynamic way, for some, it was the opportunity to learn and grow. Vs 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" For others not so much. Vs 13, Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine. "

Peter wasn't worried. The same Peter who had denied Jesus three times, and had been affirmed by Jesus three times now had a new power.

Following his filing with the Spirit in the face of the opposition and opportunity, he preaches a cracking and challenging sermon and 3000 devout Jews came to faith. And that was just the beginning if we continue to read the story and history of the early 1st century church.

Again the encouragement for us. Personally, while there are times I lack confidence and wonder how on earth God could use me, I remember it's not really about me at all. It's about God and what God can do as he equips and empowers us.

- We can trust God who is true to his Word.
- We can rely on God who equips us for the task he has given us.
- We can be assured that this applies to every believer, every follower of Jesus
- We can be confident that God is always working, regardless of what it might look like.

Jesus promise and assurance. "You will receive power when the HS has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth".

It happened. It is still happening. We are a part of it.  
I hope you can say a wee Hallelujah inside.

As a relative newbie here let me say also, its fantastic and encouraging to see growth happening at St Marys under the leadership and vision of John, and the team around him.

Further, given some international trends we may well see more people taking an interest in spiritual things and church. The bible society has conducted research by a very credible polling agency in England and Wales and something remarkable and unexpected is happening.

Among the general population people are returning to church. There has been a 53% growth since 2018.

The most remarkable growth is among young men 18-24 years old. From 2018 - 2024 there has been a 421% increase in regular church attendance among young men in this age group. There are reports of increasing church attendance among young men in Australia too.

Maybe there is a generation of young men who are calling nonsense on much of what our culture offers and are seeking instead direction and guidance, and in a spiritual way.

Did anyone see the news reports of 350 baptisms at Catholic Churches across Auckland this Easter. A years worth in one day. It looks like something is going on.

I'm sure we want to be a part of it.

Lets pray, Lord Jesus you are true to your word. Encourage and equip us to the glory of your name, and to the extension of your kingdom, Amen.