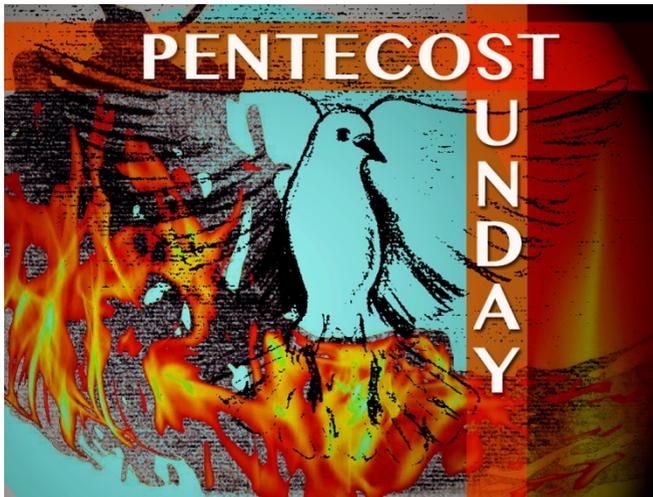


Sermon. All Age Service. Pentecost. June 9th 2019.

Acts 2:1-21, also Ephesians 5:15-21

Luke 11:9-13



To begin, I want to say, thank you to all of you for making last Sunday a very special service and memorable celebration and day! Thank you to everyone who was involved in making last Sundays' service where we were inaugurated as a self standing Anglican Chaplaincy, a great worship filled occasion.

I think it is important Pentecost is the first Sunday, after last week. The disciples knew the tasks, yet had been told to wait until they were clothed with power from high. We may know the tasks that lay before us as a chaplaincy. But, as already has been suggested, in our worship, ministry, mission, we seek to walk in the Spirit, led by the Spirit, filled by the Spirit, and not to do

things only in our own intellectual strength or personal disciplines.

"And of them were filled with the Spirit." (Acts 2:4). The promise by Jesus before his ascension, that John baptised with water, but they would be baptised in the Spirit, *is fulfilled*. And when He came, there was wind, fire, sound, sight, and charismata - gifts of grace - as they could speak in existing languages they never knew before.



And Peter preaches. He quotes Joel 2 - OT prophecy - these events were promised hundreds of years - what Joel promised, Peter says is happening now. It is important to remember, for the NT, Jesus inaugurated the last days or Messianic Age - we were inaugurated as a separate chaplaincy last week - Jesus inaugurated the last days, the Messianic Age - the kingdom had come, broken in, with its full consummation still to come. The final proof of these last days - was the outpouring of the Spirit - this was an OT promise for the end times. So the whole Messianic Era, which stretches between the two comings of Christ, is the age of the Spirit; the Spirit that came upon Christ at his baptism, is now poured out by Christ, from the right hand of the Father, on his Body., (cf Acts 2:33).

The word "poured out" is used by Joel and Peter. It is an image of abundance. One writer says, that what we saw in the last few days with rain, downpours, illustrates God's gift to us - it is not a drizzle which comes, or a shower, but a downpour. Also the word poured out - is something final - the rains poured down, they cannot be taken up. The Spirit has been given and will not be taken back. And upon whom is it poured? All, not just upon prophets, priests, kings as it had been in the OT. Male, female, young, old. There are no social distinctions for receiving the Spirit - not class or education, age or gender.

In this service, in our opening liturgy, we have already prayed for God to fill us with his Spirit. After the sermon, there will be an opportunity to receive anointing with oil, oil being one of the OT images for the Spirit, and Oil is used as a sign of the Spirit when used in confirmation. To receive the anointing as a symbol of your desire to be filled afresh with the Spirit. This asks the question. Do we need to be filled again?

Is it a one off occurrence when the Spirit comes, when we become believers, or at a service like confirmation that we are filled once and for all. When we read Acts, it seems not. Luke is writing to a believer or a seeker, and explaining the life and experience of the first decades of the church. This day - Pentecost - the Festival of First Fruits of the Harvest - centuries ago - the 120 believers (not just the apostles) are filled; then weeks or months later, when the church gathers in prayer after Peter and John's arrest, it says they were filled with the Spirit - a re-filling, (cf Acts 4:29-31).

To go deeper on this, we need to go to Ephesians 5:

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. ¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Paul is writing about being a disciple. He began earlier - 'I urge you to live a life worthy of the Lord...' (4:1) then at the start of chapter 5 - 'be imitators of God as dearly loved children and live a life of love...' he urges them, as we heard to live wise lives, understanding the Lord's will. To achieve all of this, he says, 'be filled with the Spirit'. The Greek he uses is a command. A positive imperative. Not advice or an idea. He says - this is what the disciples should do / seek to be. Think of how Jesus says - 'take up your bed and walk' - and up the man gets. Paul uses the same tone and word of command - be filled! Something we should seek. Also the way in which Paul writes:

"The imperative is in the present tense, indicating that believers' experience of the Spirit's fullness is to be a continuing one." (Lincoln, Word Biblical Commentary, *Ephesians*).

Paul really says, to live the life worthy of the Lord, to live a life of love, to be an imitator of God, you need to be filled daily, and keep on being filled, a continuing seeking. If you aren't, you will only get so far, maybe not that far. This may sound harsh, but think of Paul in Galatians 5. There he lists a long list of sinful practices, and then he says - 'but the fruit of the Spirit is...'. He is the one at work transforming us, into patient people, into kind people, into gentle people, people with self control, joyful and peaceful people, faithful and good people.

Recently, I've been reading some writings by Dallas Willard, who teaches that some Christians have fallen into a belief that this world, is only about waiting for heaven, that we cannot live the lives Christ calls us to, that the only transformation that can happen is, when the Lord returns. And yes transformation will come when he returns, but the Lord Jesus was the greatest, most amazing relevant, clued in teacher, and he said - this is how to live **now** as a member of the Kingdom. Transformation is needed but it can come. And Paul teaches similarly. Here is a list of expectations he says. But it is not a law. He states 'Be filled'. Already, when we pray - 'fill us with your Spirit' - we have in mind Paul's words in Galatians that beautiful life and say fill me - I want my life to become like what we read, which is the Christ like character.

It is not clear in the English, but when Paul talks about worship, and relationships, in the Greek the phrasing, he is saying that there are other things that flow from it, these are the experiences or possibilities from being filled. As we allow the Spirit to flood our life and control it, there is a new love and

appreciation for worship, it shapes our thanksgiving, and it affects our relationships with others - if you keep reading beyond v21, it affects our marriages, our work, our parenting, how we are as children. In fact it is easy to take those passages separately from what Paul is saying here - and seek to live them out only in our own wisdom and strength - but Paul he says be filled, that will affect your worship, your thanksgiving, your relationships with your spouse, your parenting, how you act towards your parents, your work - how you work and how you treat your employees and how you treat your boss.

Be filled and keep on being filled with the Spirit - the great apostle exhorts us, to allow the Spirit to have the fullest control of all that we are conscious of in our lives, to open our lives continually to the One who can enable us to walk wisely, to understand God's will, who can inspire our worship and thanksgiving. Doesn't this just happen? In one sense, to seek to live wholehearted for the Lord, is opening our lives to his presence within us. But in another, to consciously take these statements about the Spirit and invite the Lord to work more deeply to fill us, each part of us, is us consciously saying 'Lord, I want you to be at work, I want to walk but I need your Spirit.'

Theodore Austin-Sparkes (1888-1971) wrote: "Nothing else will ever carry the people of God through the last part of world history, unless they rediscover the real power of the Holy Spirit."

Can we pray for the Spirit? It is important what Luke records what Jesus says in Luke 11 -

⁹ 'So I say to you: ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ 'Which of you fathers, if your

son asks for¹¹ a fish, will give him a snake instead?¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

Jesus says his followers can ask for the Spirit. He is teaching about prayer in general. Yet he knows that the Spirit will be given on Pentecost. But he says, in their life of prayer, his followers can pray for the Spirit. Also, he reminds them - if the parents among us, with all our damaged and selfish attitudes to our kids, if our kids ask for an egg, we aren't going to give them a scorpion. So if we won't do that, God won't. He gives good gifts. And this is a good gift he wants to give.

So again what we pray in this service is saying Lord, fill me afresh, again, more deeply. We have in mind what that looks like. Maybe it is about trying to walk wisely as a Christian - we have to be honest, fallen too much in personal disciplines and not enough reliance on the Lord... it can be our worship - it has become less heart, more words, we desire the Spirit to renew us so the words and songs matter, it can be our thanksgiving - we need help to thank God for the blessings he has given us in life and in Christ; it can be we look at our marriage and we are struggling how to love our spouse, we look at our parenting and we are finding it hard, or children, you too if you believe in Jesus, can be filled with the Spirit, are struggling to honour and obey your parents... Lord fill me afresh. It can be to do with your work - how you are as an employee, how you are as a manager or boss.

Praying for the Spirit doesn't take away our responsibility to live in the way Paul is teaching. But when we try to do it - without the Spirit - using only our good will, intentions, intellect - then

we are missing what Paul is teaching and one of the reasons the Spirit is given to his people, why another advocate, another counsellor comes, to enable us, to transform us into living Christ's way.

So when we come to the anointing with oil. It is an opportunity. No pressure to come forward. I will not ask you anything why you come forward. But be confident that our Lord loves to give good gifts. Can I finish a story. Sandy Millar was an Anglican vicar, of a church in London. He had heard about teaching about being filled with the Spirit - he had not come across it before - and so one evening, in the church, he prayed for God to fill him with the Spirit, as Luke 11 promised. He said, afterwards, he felt no different, he got up, and went home. No strange feelings, no spiritual gifts manifesting etc. However he said, the next day as he walked to the church office, he noticed how alive his spirit was, the joy that was there and he saw beauty in so much of God's creation. As Paul said, his worship was enlivened.

"And all of them were filled with the Spirit."

Let us pray:

Almighty God, who on the Day of Pentecost sent your Holy Spirit to believers, with wind from heaven and in tongues of fire, filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel. By the power of the same Spirit, strengthen us people who live by the Spirit, who walk by the Spirit, and use us to draw everyone to the fire of your love. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Here below is some of the liturgy that was used in the service on Pentecost, which was mentioned in the sermon.

And now, with the followers of his own time, we look again, in need and hope, for the promised Holy Spirit, his gift to his people, through whom we make Christ known to the world.

As we wait in silence,
All Lord, fill us with your Spirit.

As we listen to your word,
All fill us with your Spirit.

As we worship you in majesty,
All fill us with your Spirit.

As we long for your refreshing,
All fill us with your Spirit.

As we long for your renewing,
All fill us with your Spirit.

As we long for your equipping,
All fill us with your Spirit.

As we long for your empowering,
All fill us with your Spirit.

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