

**Sermon – Acts 2:1-21 – 31 May 2020**  
**The Acts of the Holy Spirit**

- **Introduction**

- COVID 19 – perhaps we are waiting and wondering
  - Waiting - to see when 'normal' returns
  - Wondering – what the 'new normal' might be
- Our reading today – giving us the narrative about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
  - The disciples would indeed be both waiting and wondering
- Jesus final instruction to his disciples before his ascension was “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:49)
- The disciples are surely wondering what is that all about
- And so we come to the coming of the Holy Spirit – Pentecost – narrated by Luke in Acts 2:1-21
- The waiting and wondering is over – the Holy Spirit has come – so what happened?

- **Point 1 – The Spirit was transformative**

- Firstly, the Spirit was transformative
- The effects of the Spirit are powerful – enabling timid fishermen to become bold

proclaimers of the gospel – uneducated men from a backwater of the Jewish world to be able to communicate with people from around the region in their own language

- Peter preaches his first sermon in vv 14-36 – I bet that the Peter who was timidly hiding in the upper room before Pentecost could never imagine doing this
- The immediate result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was the ability to speak in other tongues or languages – resulting in the amazement of the Jews in Jerusalem (vv5-7)
- Galileans would have been seen as rather rustic and certainly not well educated – they spoke Aramaic with a distinctly local guttural dialect - so all this would seem unbelievable to the Jews around so they could only question what was going on (vv7-12), and indeed disparage what they saw as drunkenness (v13)
- ***Application*** – Are we open to the transformation of the Spirit?

## **Point 2 – The Spirit was to be expected**

- Secondly the Spirit was to be expected
- Pentecost should not have been a surprise – vv17-21 Peter addresses the crowd seeing what is going on and reminds them of the prophetic voice of Joel 'declaring that the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all people'

- However, there is no indication that the disciples were expecting anything like this – they seem to have been taken completely by surprise
- Indeed, Luke struggles to describe what is going on – he seems lost for words as we says the Spirit is **LIKE** the blowing of a violent wind or **SEEMED** like tongues of fire – it was something dramatic and unexpected for which no existing way of speaking or describing would be adequate
- Acts 2:4 – All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit – fulfilling the promise that Jesus had previously spoken
- John the Baptist had foretold that those who were being baptised by him with water for the forgiveness of sins would then be baptised in the Holy Spirit – Peter reminds his listeners of this later on in Acts when he speaks in Jerusalem, reflecting on his encounter with Cornelius (Acts 11:15-17) “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’”
- **Application** – Are we expecting an outpouring of the Holy Spirit – even today

- **Point 3 – The Spirit brought people to believe in Jesus**

- By speaking to these various groups of people (who would have been in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost anyway), the barriers of culture and language are broken down
- Pentecost – the birthday of the new church – what was just a story about the Jewish people becomes a salvation story that breaks across boundaries of culture and language – the hallmark of this new church is its intelligibility - each hears the gospel story in his or her own language – this is cross cultural – Pentecost becomes the heart of mission
- The start of the ministry of Jesus was affirmed by the Spirit (e.g. Matthew 3:16), so the start of the church was affirmed by the same Spirit
- Pentecost brought to the apostles the equipment that they needed from their role – to be primary and authoritative witnesses – now all the people of God can be equipped and benefit from the Spirit’s ministry.
- We only need to turn to verses 41 and 47 to see what happens as a result – at Pentecost as a result of Peter’s preaching and his exhortation to repent and be baptised 3000 people became disciples. The Spirit filled church was so attractive and the way they conducted themselves so compelling that daily

people came to put their faith in Jesus as saviour

- **Application** – Through the power of the Holy Spirit people come to faith in Jesus
- The visible action of the Holy Spirit is changing lives across the globe as people seek answers to questions raised by the COVID 19 Pandemic.

- **Conclusion**

- John Stott – ‘Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be 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 his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead’
- Purpose of the Spirit – to make salvation possible to the ends of the earth – particularly at times like this where many are seeking answers to the question of meaning
- Today we are empowered by the same Holy Spirit to witness to the good news - the Gospel - of Jesus
- Our prayer should be that we are emboldened by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel – to our neighbours, friends, work colleagues, as perhaps they too wonder and wait for answers at this time.