



Pentecost

31 May 2020

Jesus stood up and cried out "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of 'living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive,..
John 7:37-9

The flame of holy life lights up the skies and brightens the shadow of our human struggle with hope and healing and this is the day of celebration for the people of faith.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

On this day of Pentecost, like the faithful of long ago, we wait in wonder to know the power of the Holy Spirit. May our lives be opened to new experiences of energy and insight that we may more truly be the people of faith in our place and time.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Hymn 408

*O breath of God, breathe on us now
and move within us while we pray;
you are the spring of our new life,
the very light of our new day.*

*How strangely you are with us, Lord,
neither in height nor depth to seek:
in nearness shall your voice be heard;
spirit to spirit you will speak.*

*Christ is our advocate on high;
you are our advocate within:
O plead the truth and make reply
to every argument of sin.*

*But what a faithless heart is mine:
the way I know my guide;
forgive me, O my friend divine,
that I so often turn aside.*

*Be with me when no other friend
the mystery of my heart can share;
be always known when fears descend,
your best name of Comforter.*

Confession

Lord Jesus, in the power of your Holy Spirit you call on us to forgive others and ourselves that all may become your forgiven faithful people. But we are not always ready to receive your grace or share it with others. Now, then, we open our lives to you in worship and adoration, trying to be honest with you and with ourselves:

Be present in our lives this day, our Lord and Christ.

Breathe within our bodies, hearts ,minds and souls the healing forgiveness of your Spirit, we pray.

Lord Jesus, we know that there are times when we have failed to offer your grace to others and have been judgemental and self-righteous rather than being true to your Spirit and bearing witness to your kindness and love. We know too that we never really live fully in the embrace and conviction of the power of your Holy Spirit; it is easier to turn our backs on the suffering of others.

Be present in our lives this day, our Lord and Christ.

Breathe within our bodies, hearts ,minds and souls the healing forgiveness of your Spirit, we pray

Gospel

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were ... Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

John 20:19-23

Assurance

Lord Jesus, our hearts soar with thanks and praise as we receive your peace and the gift of the Holy Spirit so may we go back to the everyday world to share with others the life of the Spirit and walk in thankfulness in your way of love and forgiveness.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

*Longing for light we wait in darkness
longing for truth we turn to you
Make us your own, your holy people
light for the world to see*

*Christ be our light!
Shine in our hearts
Shine through the darkness
Christ be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today*

*Longing for peace, our world is troubled
Longing for hope, many despair
Your word alone has pow'r to save us
Make us your living voice*

*Christ be our light!
Shine in our hearts
Shine through the darkness
Christ be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today*

*Longing for food many are hungry
Longing for water many still thirst
Make us your bread, broken for others
shared until all are fed*

*Christ be our light!
Shine in our hearts
Shine through the darkness
Christ be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today*

*Longing for shelter, many are homeless,
Longing for warmth, many are cold
Make us your building, sheltering others
walls made of living alone*

*Christ be our light!
Shine in our hearts
Shine through the darkness
Christ be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today*

*Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong
Let us be servants to one another
making your kingdom come.*

*Christ be our light!
Shine in our hearts
Shine through the darkness
Christ be our light!
Shine in your Church gathered today.*

Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

" 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Reflection

This story in Acts is a reminder of the incredible impact that was made by the explosion of the new faith in the lives of those who were accepting the teachings about Jesus. The dynamics of the occasion brought about a vitality and energy that was almost unbelievable. And it was all-embracing; everyone was being caught up in it. An invasive new spirit was at large changing perceptions and drawing people into a new way of living and believing. This they were recognising was the ongoing spirit of the resurrection being realised as the continuing life of Jesus in their world as Lord and Christ. This was a third dimension of God's reality in relation to humankind. This was the Holy Spirit: this was beyond their imagining and expectation and not removed from the human realm to the heaven above but in the fullness of earthly experience at its most intimate and grounded. And no-one was excluded. No-one!

The earliest followers of Jesus had withdrawn from the world initially in fear and insecurity until they recognised that Jesus was with them with a greater reality in resurrection life than they had imagined after the trauma they had experienced in his horrific death on the Cross. This changed everything. Everything! Especially their relation to God and its focus for them. As we recognised in recalling the Ascension last week, Christ ascended into eternal life but, as the disciples so long ago stood looking up into heaven they were being called to recognise where they stood, where their ongoing reality was; for, although Jesus was leaving them for other dimensions of life with God, they would remain earthbound and were to live resurrection life with their feet on the ground and their eyes wide open to life in all its dimensions around them. And so we are not to be locked away in church culture and any 'holier than thou' piety to be faith people. To use our current experience as a pointer for faithful living, it is not a matter of going into lockdown to protect ourselves and others as we are now doing with Covid 19. It is a matter of the opposite. We who are people of faith are to engage with our faith as fully as possible so to enable faith into the lives of all.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

John 20:21-23

Jesus counselled the disciples to declare forgiveness to the world. And what is such forgiveness? It is the capacity to enter into the new relationship with the whole of life that Jesus' death and resurrection has brought into being. If we, the faithful, do not offer such forgiveness to the world and share in it with the world then the grace and peace of salvation will not be a reality and the Holy Spirit will not be at large in God's world. This is the truth that the Pentecost experience brought into being on that explosive day remembered in the Book of Acts and passed down to us today.

Hymn 671

*Birds in the mountains sing of your praises
called in the morning to tell of your love
bell-birds and whip-birds sing of creation
celebrate always that Christ is the King.*

Refrain *Made in God's likeness,
moved by the Spirit
called to create a new world for the Lord.*

*Summoned at noon-tide,
come now and follow,
joyfully marching wherever you lead;
roller birds stuntmen, king-fisher's laughter,
crowns of creation in the circus of God.*

Refrain *Made in God's likeness,
moved by the Spirit
called to create a new world for the Lord.*

*Called in the night-time to act in your drama,
to take on the Christ roll, your script in our hearts;
masked owl and bower-bird teach us to study
the part we must play and the gifts we can share.*

Refrain *Made in God's likeness,
moved by the Spirit
called to create a new world for the Lord.*

*Called now at all times to wait on the Father,
follow his lead as he partners our dance;
brolga bird dances, retreats, and returning,
bowing at last to his partner the Lord.*

Refrain *Made in God's likeness,
moved by the Spirit
called to create a new world for the Lord.*

Prayers for ourselves and Others

Eternal God, present to us through your Holy Spirit, there is never a time when we do not need you. All that we are or can be awaits your healing grace and love. As your people we pray for your faithfulness increasing ours, your inspiration within us when the way forward is daunting in its demands upon us. When we deal with our critics and their scepticism in an often faithless and cynical world give us humility and the openness of vulnerability to the turmoil around us. And give us the grace to forgive others as we forgive ourselves so that we may be truly known as the agents of your love and grace.

Hear our prayers, holy Spirit of Christ our Lord as we place our lives into your care yet again.

O Holy Spirit, whose influence is like a flame warming all the cold places in all the earth, be known among all who wait in hope yet are tempted to despair in fear. Where there is war and terror infiltrate the nations of the world with your dove of peace so that people and leaders may realise different ways of being and relating, of understanding and seeking for truth.

Hear our prayers, holy Spirit of Christ our Lord as we place our lives into your care yet again.

Grant us all that we need to be truly faithful for whatever the journey ahead may ask of us. Embrace us in your forgiving love as always.

Amen

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

We go in courage and faith, for in the Holy Spirit our Comforter we are never alone.

Benediction

May the risen ascended Lord hover in love above us,
the earthly Jesus be known in the ground of our lives each and every day
and the truth of God in three persons be our reality, our hope and our joy now and always

Reverend Graeme Kerr

As we enjoy the new freedom of reductions in lockdown and look forward to resuming worship together again at St Andrews, I invite you to reflect on St. Paul's words on the marks of the true Christian in his Letter to the Romans, written as he prepared for his visit to them at the end of his missionary travels.

Romans 12:9-18

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be conceited. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.