

SERMON NOTES Sunday 28th May 2023

sunnysidechurch

Theme: **Pentecost**

Passages: **Acts 2:1-21 and John 7:37-39**

Some of the main themes from the sermon

Fire and wind

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit arrived where the disciples were 'like the blowing of violent wind' (v1) and rested on each of them like 'tongues of fire' (v3). They were transformed and empowered. The Holy Spirit is characterised by two elements that can be both gentle and unimaginably powerful. This is how our God has chosen to act in His world in these 'last days' (v17)

A new chapter in the greatest story

This is the beginning of a new and exciting chapter in 'The Greatest Story Ever Told', that we have been looking at since early 2023. It is the story of how God is restoring His creation by mending the damage resulting from human wickedness in the Garden of Eden and forever since. It's particularly exciting because it's the chapter when we can choose to be part of the story.

God is at work in a new way! Peter explains this by quoting from the prophet Joel in verses 17-21. The Holy Spirit makes God accessible to everyone. Jesus, no longer confined in an earthly body is with all his people all the time.

Decoding the meanings

This passage is rich in echoes from God's story.

- Verses 4-12 are a reversing of the Tower of Babel, when human arrogance led to chaos and confusion.
- Pentecost (the 50th day after Passover) was when the people of Israel offered the first fruits of their harvest to God. Today, empowered by the Holy Spirit, the disciples are the first fruits of the Church, the Body of Christ.
- Pentecost became to be celebrated as the time when Moses went up Mt Sinai and received the Torah (the Jewish Law). Jesus, having ascended now sends the Holy Spirit from heaven (v2); God's love letter to us.

The Go-between God

What do we learn about God from today's Bible reading?

- God takes the initiative. This is God's story and the disciples and we are invited along for the ride.

- We have an active part to play. We are Jesus' witnesses ...'to the ends of the earth'. See Acts 1:8 and John 7:37-39.
- The Holy Spirit, God's spirit fulfils Jesus' presence. He is like Jesus in every way, just not constrained by time and space.
- The Holy Spirit can be as unimaginably powerful as a hurricane or a forest fire and gentle as a breath and comfortable as a campfire.
- The Holy Spirit breaks down barriers caused by human sin and establishes true connection and communion.
- The Holy Spirit is here, now, within each of us and between us.

Let us thank God for His wonderful ways and for inviting us to be part of His story, the greatest story ever told!

Some questions for thought and discussion this week:

1. *Talk about your own experience of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever felt the power or the comfort of the Holy Spirit?*
2. *The Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to communicate across barriers of language and culture. Have you ever had the experience of unexpectedly being able to connect with someone at a deep level?*
3. *We like to think that our world is pretty well explained and understood. Can you call to mind any times the action of the Holy Spirit is the best explanation for something that's happened in your life?*
4. *How, practically, do you go about trying to hear the Holy Spirit's voice?*
5. *Look at the quote below. There are moments when creation seems to shout that God is good and is active in His world. It may be the beauty of a sunset or birdsong or a piece of music or a human face. Why not call something like this to mind and thank God for His Holy Spirit, who gives these connections the power to transform us.*

Quote for the week.

'The Holy Spirit is that power which opens eyes that are closed, hearts that are unaware and minds that shrink from too much reality.' The Go-Between God by John V Taylor p19.