

**Title:****Date:**            *24<sup>th</sup> May 2015 Pentecost***Scriptures:**     *Ezekiel 37:1-14 Breathe Life & Acts 2:1-21 Talking Fire*

This is the day when the church celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit. It's a day of celebration and a day of adventure. It's a day of praise and prayer. So let's imagine we are gathered with the followers of Jesus as they wait and pray, day after day.

They were all together in one place, praying and waiting, praying and waiting, praying and waiting, praying and waiting.

The wind of God is blowing!

The fire of God is blazing!

The joy of God is flowing - in this place!

*Prayer for the message:* Heavenly Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thank you that You have not left us as orphans but have given us another Comforter, Counsellor and Helper, Who will remain with us forever, The Spirit of Truth, who enables us to do what we cannot do. As we open our hearts to the Word may You open the Word to our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ we refute every argument, theory, reasoning and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the true knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into obedience of Christ the Messiah, the Anointed One, in Your name we pray with thanksgiving, 'Amen'.

*The Message:* The very first message I ever preached on the ***Feast of Pentecost*** and the coming of the Holy Spirit was not received very well. I was hardly into my message when I felt an invisible wall come up between me and the small congregation gathered in our church in Mandini. All I wanted to do was gather my things together and walk out of there as quickly as I could. *I think I preached the message as fast as what the chipmunks in Alvin and the chipmunks speak, and I promised myself, 'next Feast of Pentecost I will get someone else in to preach'* and I did exactly that; I invited a Local Preacher from a neighbouring circuit to come and preach.

But guess what happened, a couple of days before Pentecost she phoned to say she was unable to preach, *I can't even remember the reason why, I just know it was a very valid reason.* AND so I had to preach! I spent a whole lot of time in prayer and even went into the church early to pray there.

I delivered the message the Lord had laid on my heart to preach and when I asked if anyone would like to respond to the message and be filled with the Holy Spirit to my utter amazement 2 thirds of the church responded, it was incredible!

*But because of past experience I am always a little nervous about the message, for the **Feast of Pentecost** and the coming of the Holy Spirit in *wind* and *fire*.*

I recently read an article on the *Feast of Pentecost* entitled, '**Pentecost: the forgotten festival?**' and the article began by saying the following ...

**Pentecost used to be a big deal in the UK. Churches would gather and march through town centres. Brass bands and choirs would play in the streets. There was even a special bank holiday on the Monday up until 1971. But somehow, Pentecost seems to have been lost from society and even from our church calendar.**

*What do you think? Is **Pentecost** the forgotten festival? In two-and-half years of ministry here, I have listened to arrangements being made for *church anniversaries*, but I have not heard anything special being arranged for **Pentecost** and yet it was at **Pentecost** that the Holy Spirit ignited the disciples to be the Church, **Pentecost** is the worldwide Churches birthday if you like.*

The **Feast of Pentecost** should be a *big deal*. It was and is a *big deal* to God for in **Deuteronomy 16:16** it is one of 3 festivals where the Lord commanded *all Jewish men to appear before Him at the Temple in Jerusalem - the **feasts of Passover** 50 days before **Pentecost** and the **Feast of Tabernacles** 4 months after **Pentecost** were the other 2 feasts. That is why there were **devout and God-fearing men from every country under heaven** in Jerusalem.*

***Pentecost** was originally a harvest festival celebrating the **Firstfruits** of the grain harvest and that is really significant when we read in **Acts 2:41** that as result of Peter's first sermon 3000 souls came to faith in Jesus - those 3000*

were the *Firstfruits* of the many thousands who would come to faith in Jesus down through the ages including *you* and *I*.

*But at the time of Jesus Pentecost* had become associated with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai. *So*, at the same festival, thousands of years apart 1<sup>st</sup> God gave His Word and then He gave His gift of the Holy Spirit, *signifying*, not only does God want us to KNOW His ways but He empowers us by His Spirit to live **His way**, which is the way of holiness.

The magazine article I read suggested that here in the UK the church has begun to discover that it cannot just wait for people to turn up to their buildings on a Sunday morning, because it is just not happening *and so the* phrase used by the announcer at the end of an Elvis Presley concert has been adopted by several London based churches at the *Feast of Pentecost*.

The public address system would announce, '*Elvis has left the building!*' In this way fans would know that the concert was over, there would no encore and there was no point in hanging around to maybe get an autograph.

**The Feast of Pentecost** is a reminder to the Church, which is NOT actually bricks and mortar, *but* the people, *you* and *I* to **leave our buildings** and enter our hurting world to share God's love with hurting people.

**AND** isn't that what Peter and the others did? They did not stay in the *house where they were sitting* when *a sound like a violent wind came from heaven* and *tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them*. They left the building! **And** isn't that what our Lord Jesus told us to do in the Great Commission of **Matthew 28 verse 19**, '*Go then and make disciples...*'

**And** they left Jerusalem, going to *the ends the very bounds of the earth* just as Jesus had instructed them - proclaiming the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, calling people to repent of their sins and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ - promising that those who responded favourably to the Good News would be saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.

*But they* only went after they had been filled with the Holy Spirit, prior to Pentecost they were huddled together in an upper room trying to figure out the **what, how** and **where** of the Great Commission. **Even** Jesus did not begin His

earthly ministry until He had been baptised and the Holy Spirit had descended upon Him in the form of a dove.

**I** *just think* that if Jesus, Peter, Paul and all the other apostles needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit, how much *more* don't *you* and *I*.

Think about it, what happened to change Peter from a very ordinary man, like you and I, who, through fear, denied even knowing Jesus to becoming a preacher-come-evangelist who preached his first sermon to 3000 + people, and refused to stop preaching in the name of Jesus when ordered to do so by the religious leaders of the day, *what happened?* Where did his courage, his boldness, the understanding, the very words he spoke come from?

The *Feast of Pentecost 'happened'*, what the Father had promised *'happened'*, AND *the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth settled on each one of them and they were all filled, diffused throughout their souls with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other, different, foreign languages as the Spirit kept giving them clear and loud expression.*

*What happened* to those very dry bones that gave them life and empowered them for action? *Verse 10, 'So I Ezekiel prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath and Spirit came into the bones, and they lived and stood up upon their feet, an exceedingly great host.'* The people of Judah were in exile in Babylon, they felt that they were like dead, old, dry bones, they felt that all hope was gone - but the Lord was determined to raise them, to bring them back to the Land of Israel AND no dryness on their part would hold Him back - and so He sent the Wind of His Spirit to breathe life into those dead, old, dry bones.

**I**t was the Holy Spirit Who enable the disciples to *turn the world upside down* by taking the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ *to the ends, the very bounds of the earth. I would love to be accused of turning the world up-side-down for Jesus as were the apostles in Acts 17:6.*

**I**t was the Holy Spirit Who gave Peter insight into the events of the past few weeks AND filled him with the ability to witness clearly and with authority - the Holy Spirit will do the same for us, give us insight into the Word of God and enable us to be witnesses for Jesus.

It was the Holy Spirit Who enabled the apostles to *spea**k the Word of God with freedom and boldness and courage*** and without fear even though they had been threatened with imprisonment if they continued to do so.

It was the Holy Spirit Who provided the power needed by the apostles and believers throughout the ages to take the life-changing message of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

In **Old Testament** times, the Holy Spirit came upon isolated individuals or small groups of people only on a special occasion and only in a temporary way to help them accomplish God's purposes - *if they needed* the Holy Spirit to help them accomplish God's purposes *you and I need the Holy Spirit diffused throughout our souls in order to accomplish God's purposes here in Tamworth.*

**But then** in the **New Testament**, as the apostles were gathered together in Jerusalem as per Jesus' instructions and the *day of Pentecost had fully come* the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was permanent AND upon all those who believe, AND that could include *you and I* should we chose to accept this gift from God.

And the Holy Spirit is a *gift* from God the Father. In **Luke 11** Jesus asks those He is ministering to, what father would give his son a stone if he asked for bread - a serpent if he asked for a fish OR a snake if he asked for an egg? Jesus then says in **verse 13**, *'If you then, evil as you are, know how to give good gifts, gifts that are to their advantage to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask and continue to ask Him.'*

To ask for and receive the Holy Spirit is a good gift - being filled with the Holy Spirit is to our advantage AND didn't Jesus say that to the disciples in **John 16:7**, *'... it is profitable, good, advantageous for you that I go away because if I go the Comforter, Counsellor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessory, Strengthenener, Standby will come.'* All of those are the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

*Forget all you* may have seen and heard that has put you off **Pentecost** and being filled with the Holy Spirit *and* hear what the Word of God is saying concerning Him, hear my personal experience of the Holy Spirit - if I hadn't asked God to fill me with the Holy Spirit I definitely would not be standing here ministering to you, before I was filled with the Holy Spirit I seldom understood

what I was reading in my Bible - I would not be able to speak to you with confidence - **I would not be able to do what I do without the help and power of the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit, the person of, His ministries and His gifts, which *He apportions to each person individually as He chooses* is a massive subject, certainly far too big for a single message - but something that is always a contentious issue is found in **verse 4**, *'And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages ...*

The one commentary I referred to in my preparation made a very good point concerning **verse 4** that the *other languages*, were languages of other lands outside of Israel, which those visiting Jerusalem for the **Feast of Pentecost** could understand because it was their language. *It would be like one of you suddenly speaking Afrikaans even though you didn't know a word of it and me understanding you.* ( I don't know which would be the greater miracle???)

So what the commentary is suggesting is that the languages those in the upper room began speaking was not *'tongues'* or *heavenly utterances* to which Paul refers to in **1Corinthians chapters 12-14**, but these were spoken, living languages, languages people understood, which is not the case with *'tongues'*, *tongues* always needs to be interpreted if spoken in a setting such as this. I found what the commentary suggested very interesting - **SO WHAT WAS** the purpose of the many different languages on the day of **Pentecost** it was to get the message of Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection out to the world, which is what would have happened as those in Jerusalem for the **Feast of Pentecost** who believed Peter's message took that message back to their own countries.

To conclude, we return to the magazine article, and I would like to quote what a couple of ministers said when asked the question, **'What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit?'**

He said, *I think being filled is a pre-requisite of our Christian walk - it's ultimately about spreading the love of Christ and sometimes we do need divine help to do that because people are not lovable all the time. This same person goes on to say ... I think being filled is more than just speaking in tongues. It's more than acting in a way we charismatics sometimes do. I believe there's more to it. It's about showing the power and love of God to our dying world. The passion of the Holy Spirit causes us to move in ways that we wouldn't normally. The Holy Spirit is an enabler. He enables us to work in love, to minister to the*

*people that are dying and hurting, to love those that society says are unlovable. We need more of the Spirit.*

And finally a minister said, *ultimately the Spirit is the agent of mission and our own mission is about joining in with the directing and empowering ministry of God's missionary Spirit. We are therefore dependant on the Spirit. So,*

***And when the day of Pentecost had fully come ... they were all filled, diffused throughout their souls with the Holy Spirit ...***

**Let us close our eyes and bow our heads...**

Jesus said, To ask for and receive the Holy Spirit is a good gift - being filled with the Holy Spirit is to our advantage AND He said ***it was profitable, good, advantageous for Him to go away because then the Comforter, Counsellor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessory, Strengthener, Standby*** would come ... He is still here waiting to fill you, empower you throughout your souls. This message may not have brought you to the place where you decide to ASK God to fill you with His good gift, but I do trust God's Word will not return to Him empty but it will accomplish the purpose for which God sent it.

Often in history God has used fire to show His presence, so I light this candle to represent God's Spirit with us. You were also given a candle as you came in this morning, I would invite you to come and light it from the larger one and as you do say, **'God's powerful, never-changing Holy Spirit lives in me.'** The words are written on a card next to the candle.

***Blessing:*** May God's Holy Spirit be your life (*hand on heart*) May God's Holy Spirit be in our world (*sweep hand out in front*) May God's Holy Spirit be love between us (*hold hands*) and the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with us, this day and always. **AMEN**

***Dismissal:*** We go into the world, filled with the Spirit to walk in God's light, to rejoice in God's love and to reflect God's glory. Go in the peace of Christ.

**Alleluia**