

## 09, May 31, Pentecost, Acts 2: 1 to 17 Clothed with Power

### SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

- The book of ACTS can be seen as a sequel to the gospel of Luke. – they're written by the same author. In the gospel story, the risen Christ sends out his disciples as witnesses to all the nations. But, he says, they must first wait in Jerusalem until they've been clothed with power from on high.
- The book of ACTS sees them waiting. They wait, 50 days. 50 days of prayer and praising God, waiting and seeking. Until the Jewish festival of Pentecost arrives. (The Greek word Pentecost means 50<sup>th</sup> day)
- At Pentecost, Jews celebrate the giving of the law on Mt Sinai, which happened 50 days after the Exodus from Egypt. So at Pentecost, Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims, devout Jews from all the surrounding nations.
- And on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Jesus had risen from the dead, at the Jewish festival of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples, as Jesus had promised.
- People heard a rushing wind, they saw tongues of fire hovering over each disciple's head, and all those strangers heard God praised in their own language.
- Pentecost brought together people from every nation, it was unifying experience, and so today we're going to do our scripture reading a little differently, we're going to read it all TOGETHER in UNISON.
- You'll find it in your worship folder; I'd ask you to read it loudly and boldly- to declare the good news together, and please keep reading through to the end.
- So let's proclaim the word of God. We read together: When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.....

### SERMON.

It wasn't possible. That a visitor from a remote region in Asia Minor might hear his own language in the mouth of a simple Galilean. But in the power of the Holy Spirit, each pilgrim was addressed personally, as though someone had been expecting him and had prepared a welcome.

It was a wonder that those who were personally addressed could not deny, and if we read a little further, 3,000 hearts were touched and gave their lives to Christ. What is not possible for human beings, is nevertheless possible for God.

The risen Christ had told the disciples to go into all the world, to preach, to teach, to heal, to make disciples. Could they do this? They knew they couldn't. How could they find the words to witness to what they'd experienced? To witness to the mystery of a man, like themselves, who'd burst the bonds of death....

They knew they couldn't. and so they waited, as Jesus had told them to do. They waited. Empty, mourning, yearning for Jesus. They prayed, they praised God, which is the Jewish custom in the face of loss, and they waited, waited in their emptiness.

And as air rushes in to fill a vacuum, so after 50 days, the Spirit came rushing in like a mighty wind. Beyond all human reason and possibility, they spoke in other languages, Peter preached, 3,000 were converted. And the church was born.

It began with waiting, in emptiness, and yearning. Jesus said, “blessed are you who mourn, another word for mourn is yearn, blessed are you who long for what is not. For into our longing, our yearning, our emptiness, the Spirit rushes in. And what happens is beyond anything we might expect or hope for.

It has always been that way. Ever since the Wind of God blew over the waters of chaos and out of nothing stirred creation into being, the wind has continued to blow into empty, hungry places.

When the world did not know God, the wind blew through the ancient land of Teran, and drove a man from his home and his family of origin to seek a new land and new ways. His name was Abram. God promised he would be father of great nation.

Could Abram be a father of a great nation? He knew he couldn't. He was old and so was his wife Sarah. They had no children. But the wind blew and Isaac was born.

Abram's descendants were NOT a great nation; they fell into slavery in Egypt. And the wind swirled around the mountain top of Horeb, fanned a fire in a bush, to tell Moses that he was to go and rescue the Hebrew people.

Could Moses do this? Could he speak to Pharaoh and say, “let my people go”. He knew he couldn't. He was slow of speech and terrified. He said, “God, send someone else!”

But in the power of the Holy Spirit, Moses worked miracles, led the people into freedom, gave them a law to live by. And when they couldn't keep the law, when they failed to protect the weak, and their lives were barren and empty, God blew in prophets to call them back to faithfulness.

Could they turn back to God and God's ways? God knew they couldn't. Not in their own power. And so, through Jeremiah, God says, “One day, I will put my law WITHIN them, and I will write it on THEIR HEARTS” .

And through Ezekiel God says, “I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit within you.. I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give to you a heart of flesh.” And Joel declares, “I will pour out my Spirit on everyone! No one will be left out”

And this is what happens on Pentecost. Into the barrenness and helplessness of the human heart gone astray, God pours God's Spirit, so that we may be ABLE to live as God wants us to; so that our lives may show the fruits of the spirit: love, peace, joy, justice, goodness, kindness, self control, humility, patience, endurance.

The Spirit is for ALL who seek, for all who yearn to be filled with God's life and empowered in God's ways, for all who yearn to serve God , for all who long for justice, for all who long for a better world, who long for love and harmony, for all who long to be made whole.

Peter says, “all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved,”( which means to be made whole, to be healed.)

The wind of God has blown from the beginning to bring into being a world of God's making. And the Spirit has never ceased to blow. It seems the greater the evil, the more we see of God's Spirit, blowing, swirling, seeking to enter the emptiness, seeking to reshape and reform.

And this last century also certainly seen great evil in terms of violence, wars, genocide, organised crime and the trafficking of drugs, guns and people.

But we've also seen extraordinary things happening. The wind of God has been blowing people together, tearing down barriers of all kinds. The fact of the President the United States is a



**What is not possible for us as human beings, is nevertheless possible for God. When we open our hearts even a crack, the wind comes whistling in and what happens can be way beyond our hopes and expectations.**

**Today five young people will be committing themselves to walking in Jesus way. They will be opening the door of their hearts for the wind of God to blow through their lives. We will be laying on hands and praying for them to be filled with the Holy Spirit.**

**Becky, Kim, Michele, Lindsey, Sarah, know this that if you continue all your life to seek God's face, what the Holy spirit will do in you and through you is beyond all your hopes and imagination.**

**We will also be praying for a fresh filling of the Spirit in OUR lives, to revive our faith, to set our feet on right paths, and to use us in ways large and small to bring God's kingdom and God's will into being.**

**When we have never experienced the power of the Holy Spirit, it's natural like those mentioned in the scripture this morning, to have a tendency to sneer a little at the idea that God might act in a supernatural way.**

**But know this: when we come in humility, when we come knowing our limitations, knowing our need, when we come empty and hungry, the Spirit of God will fill that emptiness that yearning. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

**I want to end with a story, told by Tom Rees, in his book 'The Spirit of Life,**

**Tom goes on a shopping trip from the countryside to London. Has a long list of stuff to buy in the big city. In the first store, he has all his items on the counter, they've been rung up in the till, he reaches for his wallet only to discover that it's not there.**

**Maybe some of us have had that experience. It's really embarrassing- the stuff has to go back on the shelves. We walk out of the store without anything. In his case he can't now do anything he's planned to do in the city; he has to drive the long drive back home without having achieved anything, feeling foolish, frustrated, having wasted his day.**

**He arrives home and goes straight to his suit from the day before to retrieve his wallet, but it's not there. Now he panics. It's been stolen.**

**Then, in a sort of desperate way, he runs his hands over the jacket he's wearing. I think you know where this is going. He finds his wallet- it was there all the time.**

**He'd taken it with him to the city, he had it with him in the shop, he brought it back home with him; and he'd behaved as if he was penniless. Not because he didn't HAVE any money, but because he didn't KNOW he had it.**

**We do not need to behave as if we have no power. We do not need to behave as if we can do nothing. We have the Holy Spirit. It is for us and for our neighbour and for those who are far away. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.**

**To God be all the power the honour and the glory. Amen.**