**PRAY**

Today is Pentecost, the day that the Holy Spirit was made for everyone – up until that point, it is apparent that as a generalisation, the Holy Spirit came upon specific people, at specific times and then only for only a limited period of time.

Some of the people mentioned in the OT certainly were filled with the Holy Spirit for their entire lives – Samuel for one.

But although the Holy Spirit has been part of the eternal Trinity of God, He was not seemingly available to all, though at Pentecost that situation changed.

Remember that just before Jesus’ ascension, He told His disciples, **‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’**

So, in obedience to Jesus’ command, ten days after that command, the disciples were gathered in Jerusalem.

Pentecost as we call it, because it was fifty days after the Passover, had yet to be named that. The day was already special for the Jewish people being named the Feast of Weeks – a celebration of the first fruits of the wheat harvest, a celebration that was commanded in **Numbers 28:26, Leviticus 23:15-22**.

Jewish tradition also taught that the Feast of Weeks marked the day when the Law was given to Israel and one Bible commentator has written that ‘it was the best-attended of the great feasts because traveling conditions were at their best. There was never a more cosmopolitan gathering in Jerusalem’ than this one.’ (Hughes)

Ten days after the time Jesus ascended – I spoke about being patient and waiting upon the Lord last week – ten days after the time Jesus ascended – I spoke about being patient and waiting upon the Lord last week – **they were all with one accord in one place.**

That means they were all together, but more than that, they were all in agreement as to their purpose and need to wait for the Lord to act. They knew that whatever Jesus had promised was worth waiting for.

But equally, there was nothing those men and women could do to bring the Holy Spirit if it was not part of God’s timing.

Luke tells us that **suddenly there came a sound from heaven** – the sound of a **rushing mighty wind**.

This, we are told was associated with the Holy Spirit arriving, as He had done throughout the ages.

[**Genesis 1:1-2**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/genesis/1/1-2/s_1001) - the Spirit of God is the breath/wind of God, blowing over the waters of the newly created earth.

[**Genesis 2:7**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/genesis/2/7/s_2007) - the Spirit of God is the breath/wind of God, blowing life into newly created man.

[**Ezekiel 37:9-10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/ezekiel/37/9-10/s_839009) - the Spirit of God as the breath/wind of God, moving over the dry bones of Israel bringing them life and strength.

This sound from heaven, was accompanied with **tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.**

Possibly what is being conveyed here is the use of fire to purify. In the refining process, the fire burns away the impurities, leaving the pure substance that will last.

One of the benefits of being filled by the Holy Spirit is not just a matter of obtaining power, rather it is to purify us in our service before God and here the Holy Spirit **sat upon each of them**.

Previously, the Holy Spirit rested on God’s people more as a nation, that is, Israel. But under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit rests upon God’s people as individuals – you and I have that opportunity to have God’s Spirit rest on you.

While it would be wrong to expect a **rushing mighty wind** or **tongues, as of fire**, to be present today when the Holy Spirit is poured out, we can experience the true gift. We should be wanting to **all filled with the Holy Spirit**.

We should all want this thing that caused Jesus to say it would be better for Him to leave the earth bodily so He could send the Holy Spirit [**John 16:7**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/john/16/7/s_1013007).

I said last week that we live in a world where things are instantly available, but in this instant, those present (not only the twelve apostles) **began to speak with other tongues**.

They spoke languages that they had never been taught or had previously spoken – so this was a miraculous occurrence.

We know from historians that Jerusalem would have been packed during the period between Passover and the Feast of Weeks. They were both appointed festivals that all Jewish men were expected to attend Jerusalem to celebrate.

For many, their homes were so far away that it did not justify going home after Passover, only to return a few weeks later – so they stayed. But they would have been ready to leave once this latest Feast was over. God’s timing is perfect.

Luke tells us that when the sound of the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples was heard by the people, a crowd quickly gathered – and they heard people speaking in their own languages.

It has been noted that few homes of that day could hold 120 people – from that it has been supposed the room where the disciples were meeting was part of the temple courts, which was a huge structure, with porches and colonnades and rooms. The crowd came from those who were already in the temple courts to worship God.

Wherever they were, the crowd says, **we hear them speaking in our tongues the wonderful works of God**.

The crowd is described as being **amazed and perplexed** – this was definitely something out f the ordinary. They recognise it as the work of God.

Throughout all ages, when God acts some recognise it as a work of the Creator, whilst other merely mock or dismiss the matter as a random event. Here it is no different.

Some people asked, **whatever could this mean? –** in terms of a genuine enquiry, to want to know more and explore God’s provision.

But others used the same event as an excuse to dismiss the work of God and claim the disciples were just drunk. They said, **look, are not all these who speak Galileans?** Galileans were characterised as being uncultured and poor speakers.

So them speaking eloquently in other languages, was all the more of a thing to behold and enquire into.

Comment – ‘Ever since the early church fathers, commentators have seen the blessing of Pentecost as a deliberate and dramatic reversal of the curse of Babel.’ (Stott)

The subject of speaking in tongues (which means speaking in a different language that is led by the Holy Spirit) is one that has been and is strongly debated, to the point where it has caused divisions in the church and its ministry.

It is not for now to discuss that issue – suitable for study at another time.

We shouldn’t assume each person among the 120 who spoke in tongues on the Day of Pentecost spoke in a language that could be understood by human ears.

The text says, they began to speak in other tongues – so there were 120 individuals speaking, but as one commentator has pointed out, the countries listed in [**Acts 2:9-11**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/acts/2/9-11/s_1020009) total only fifteen.

Possibly others were present but not mentioned, but that leaves the likelihood that many of the 120 spoke praises to God in a language that was not understood by someone immediately present. We are not told that someone present could understand each person speaking in tongues.

If that was so, they may have praised God in a language completely unknown, yet completely human. Or some may have spoke in a completely unique language given by God and understood by Him and Him alone.

Whatever happened, Peter was led by the Holy Spirit as he stood and preached to the crowd the Word of God.

Peter didn’t preach in the many languages of those present – he spoke in the common language of the day – on which they all would have understood, Greek.

What a contrast for Peter – he stood and **raised his voice**. He was filled with a courage and boldness – in complete contrast to his denials of Jesus before being filled with the Holy Spirit.

This was a contrast too from other teaching that may have been going on around them - rabbis in those days sat down and instructed their disciples and any others who might listen. Instead, Peter proclaimed the truth like a herald.

Peter did this without preparation – when he woke up that morning, he had no idea that he would be preaching God’s Word to thousands that morning.

Maybe it is as well at times that we don’t know what God has planned for us.

That sermon may not have had preparation in terms of being written down, but it had been prepared throughout Peter’s prior life and relationship with God and Jesus.

Although the circumstances are different, Jesus’ own words in **Mark 13:11** give us the assurance that we will be given the words we need to say - **when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit.**

With the help of the Holy Spirit, it flowed spontaneously – from a man who had been radically and permanently changed by God into the man God wanted him to be.

**But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.”**

It is almost certain that Peter’s sermon is not included in full – we have an abridged version that has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Peter starts to answer the criticism that the disciples were drunk at the equivalent of 9am.

‘…most Jews – pious or not – did not eat or drink until after the **third hour of the day**, because that was the time for prayer, and they would only eat after their business with God was accomplished.’ (Clarke)

So Peter is actually laying out his Jewish credentials, before he quotes Scripture to the crowd, which would no doubt have grabbed their attention.

Peter effectively says, let’s look at what **the prophet Joel** wrote, then we’ll have a look at some of King David’s Psalms - **Joel 2:28-32, Psalm 16:8-11, 110:1.**

He does what all preaching and teaching should do – stick to God’s Word, not move off into personal feelings and experiences – that is humanism.

All of what Peter needed to say to convince this crowd was already known to them in their Scriptures – they just needed to have it explained and the Holy Spirit guided Peter’s words.

In allowing himself to be God’s mouthpiece, guided by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word of God, Peter was fulfilling and proving the Trinity of God.

The Father, Son (Word) and Holy Spirit are all equals and anything that teaches otherwise is not of God.

Peter assures the crowd that they are part of prophecy being fulfilled.

**Joel 2:28-32** speaks about God’s promise to pour out His Spirit on everyone. The events on the day of Pentecost was part of that promise – but there will come a greater outpouring in the last days.

We can forgive Peter if he believed he was in that period that God called the last days.

The idea of the **last days** is that they are the times of the Messiah, including His coming as a humble servant and also His return in glory. Because Jesus had already come in humility, they were aware that His return in glory could be any time.

It may also be helpful to see the **last days** as a general period of time (like a season), more than a specific period (such as a week). In the whole span of God’s plan for human history, we are in the season of the **last days**.

In quoting Joel, Peter explained what these curious onlookers saw – the Holy Spirit poured forth upon the people. Being poured out on all flesh.

This is the glory of Pentecost for us.

Under the Old Covenant, certain people were filled with the Spirit at certain times for specific purposes. Now, under the New Covenant, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is for all who call upon the name of the Lord, even as Joel puts it – God’s **menservants** and **maidservants** – God’s servants will be blessed.

Peter assures everyone that this God does not have some exclusive or secretive club – he says, **whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved**.

The Gospel is for everyone. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit meant that God now offered salvation in a way previously unknown – to **whoever calls on the name of the Lord**, whether they are Jew or Gentile.

**CONCLUSION**

The disciples were not strangers to the person and work of the Holy Spirit, they had seen Him at work continually in the ministry of Jesus.

But on that Feast of Weeks, the first day of Pentecost, the disciples experienced something of the power of the Spirit as they stepped out and served God.

Jesus promised a new work that would come through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has come for everyone – as did Jesus to offer salvation, the only route that we have to God’s offer of eternal life.

Have you properly called on the Name of the Lord?

Have you sought and received the salvation that each one of us need individually? No one else can do that for you.

If not, this is the moment to do so.

**PRAYER / OFFER**

**READINGS**

**Acts 2:1-21**

**When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.**

**And began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marvelled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs; we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?” Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.”**

**But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.”**

**“But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”**