

Pentecost

20 5 18

God, who at this time
taught the hearts of your faithful people
by sending them the light of your Holy Spirit:
grant us by the same Spirit
to have a right judgement in all things
and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort.

Our text may be found in parts of two consecutive verses from the start of Acts chapter 2: ‘. . . the sound like the rush of a violent wind . . .

Divided tongues as of fire . . .’ (2/3)

The liturgical colour in church changes from white to red today as we move from the season of Easter to the Day of Pentecost. Red, the colour of fire; red, the colour of energy. What better colour to suggest, to symbolise, the power and energy embodied in the Holy Spirit ? And, today, I’d like to focus briefly on the potential of the Holy Spirit to transform our lives.

Jerusalem, 50 days on from Passover. Shavuot, one of the three great pilgrimage festivals in Judaism. The twelve disciples including Matthias are meeting together. Tradition has it that they are meeting in the Upper Room. Tradition has it that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there with them too. Tradition has it that they were praying together at the time. And as they sat there, attentively

concentrating on speaking and listening to God, the extraordinary penetrated this ordinary room: ‘ . . . the sound like the rush of a violent wind . . .

Divided tongues as of fire . . . ’

And full of energy and joy, bursting with enthusiasm, they rush out into the crowded city street to share the good news that Jesus Christ is truly their long-awaited Messiah. Inspired, these Jews from Galilee seem to be speaking in the foreign languages spoken by the foreign Jews from different parts of the Roman Empire: Greek, Latin, Egyptian, Parsee. Or were they speaking in tongues and, miraculously, some of those who heard them were gifted with the power to understand what was being said ? Though, to the ears of some, they sounded as if they were drunk.

Peter takes the opportunity to preach to the crowd, to share the good news, and his words touch a cord in the hearts of many who hear him, who ask what they must do to be saved: repent and be baptised. And that day the church was born.

So my question for us today is, ‘How are our lives transformed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our heart and minds ?’ One distinguishing characteristic is encapsulated in the word ‘enthusiasm’ – en theos, God in us. If we are enthusiastic , then we are excited and moved by what we believe. Personally, I can’t think of anything more exciting than the fact that God our Father loves us, that he has called us by our names and that we can serve him by how we live our lives as practising Christians.

The second word that encapsulates the Holy Spirit for me is 'inspiration'. To inspire literally means to breathe in; inspire, the breath of God which animates us, influences us, prompts us to do something.

And the third word is 'inform'. To inform: that which shapes us by communicating the truth by which we live our lives. To be informed is to be shaped by Scripture, shaped by what we read in the Bible. It is God speaking to us and us listening to him and then acting on what we have heard and understood.

So how are our lives in truth transformed by the Holy Spirit, the third person, of the Trinity? Simply, he is God with us, God up close and personal, God speaking to us and transforming our lives by inspiring us to be the people we are meant to be in the sight of God. What a wonderful gift: to be full of joy and peace and love and to encourage others by mirroring God's love to them.

May that be true, I pray, for all of us who are here today.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

20th May, 2018

G: Sermons 37 : Pentecost

