

ACTS 2. 1-21. JOHN 14. 8-17 (25-27). ST. NICHOLAS 9.30 AM. 15.5.16  
*Pentecost*

As we sit here try and imagine the scene described in Acts this morning. “Suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each one of them all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”

How do you think you would feel? Maybe you would feel absolutely terrified, ready to run and get away as fast as you could and hide, or maybe you would feel amazed, filled with wonder? Perhaps a little of all of the above.

Their spirits were completely under the control of the Holy Spirit; their words were his words. The Spirit enabled them to speak in languages they had not previously learned. There were people from many different places, and yet they were able to understand. There were some who thought they had been drinking.

I wonder what folk would think if we rolled out of this service as if we were drunk? Perhaps numbers would rapidly increase next week?! Good Communion wine they’re using at St Nicholas!

When we decide to follow Jesus and we ask God to fill us with His Spirit it’s not always an easy thing to do. We aren’t always very good at allowing the Spirit to work within us. The letting go of our own will isn’t easy and we struggle to allow God to work within us.

Various people in the OT were filled with the Spirit. They spoke God’s word, led his people, encouraged, rebuked, prayed for and agonised over Israel. But several of the prophets recognised that this couldn’t be God’s final will for his people.

Jeremiah declared that all God’s people would know him. Joel declared that the Spirit would be poured out on all sorts of people. Not just the special few, but young and old, male and female, slave and free alike.

Today’s readings told us about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the effect on the early Christian church. So what difference did the coming of the Holy Spirit have on the disciples?

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit the disciples seemed relatively powerless. We see examples of them unable to heal a boy without the help of Jesus. They ask ignorant questions, jump in without thinking. They fall asleep when Jesus needed them most. They were very much learners prior to Jesus’ death.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit changes all that. The Spirit fills them with confidence, with knowledge and with power. They aren’t timid, frightened men any more. The Spirit enables them to become strong and sure in the knowledge that God is with them.

Straight away we see Peter and then Stephen arguing fluently that Jesus is both Lord and Messiah. In Acts 3.6 Peter and John heal a lame man in the name of Jesus.

The Acts of the Apostles describes the transformation of a small group of undistinguished men and the effect this transformation had – not only on them but on others present in Jerusalem at Pentecost who were able to understand the message in their own language.

The disciples no longer had Jesus present with them in person, but Jesus didn't leave them alone to carry on with His work. He sent his Holy Spirit to live within them, giving the power, the strength, the wisdom and the love of God to carry on His work in the world.

And this is the really exciting bit. The Spirit, who lived in Jesus and raised him from the dead, lives in you and me, and the Spirit's power, working in us can do infinitely more than we can think or imagine. So this day of Pentecost is an opportunity to receive afresh our inheritance, the breath of God which can breathe new life, power and joy into our body and spirit.

We may not go out of this service as though we are drunk with wine, but we should continue to strive to go about our lives so filled with the Spirit that others will be amazed and wanting to know more about God. We should be allowing the Spirit to work in our lives so that we can become the people God wants us to become.

Jesus said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

So we can pray confidently,

"Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me; melt me, mould me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me." Amen.