

# Pentecost Service

## 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020

**Title: Water, Wind & Fire**

### ***Opening Reading***

Joel 2:28-32

<sup>28</sup> "And afterward,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your old men will dream dreams,

your young men will see visions.

<sup>29</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

<sup>30</sup> I will show wonders in the heavens

and on the earth,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

<sup>31</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

<sup>32</sup> And everyone who calls

on the name of the LORD will be saved.

### ***Opening Words***

Come, Holy Spirit:

*Breathe into our worship*

*Your breath of life.*

Come, Holy Spirit:

*Fan the flame of love within us,*

*and draw us into the life of God:*

*Father, Son and Spirit.*

Come Holy Spirit:

*Renew us and revive us, that in our worship*

*and in our living, we may live a life of love*

*for the praise and glory of God.*

Father as we come before you this morning, may we understand more of Your purposes for your world and how we fit into it.

Lord Jesus may we understand more of Your purposes for Your church and how we may extend Your kingdom.

Holy Spirit we welcome You as the disciples did. May we understand more of Your purposes for us, and may we receive power to walk in Your ways.  
Amen

### **Part 1: Water**

Pentecost is the time of the year when we remember how Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples. It was the day when the promise of Jesus in Acts 1:4 came to pass: *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup> For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

God frequently uses stories, poetry, metaphors and parables to reveal Himself to us. By giving us words and descriptions from life, we can understand better what He’s like and how we can relate to Him. In the first two chapters of Acts, we see the Spirit being described in three ways and those are, water, wind and fire. These three descriptions help us build up a picture of what Spirit is like.

The first one we’ve just come across is water. The Spirit is not so much described in terms of water itself, but in the action of water so words like pour, fill, flow and immerse (that’s baptise) were used in the first song and reading.

The action of pouring and flowing reflect a release of something in quantity. In the Bible we see God pouring out His love, mercy, and grace on us; and we can see that in the gift of His Son – the One who suffered, who bled and died (He poured out His life); and who has risen again. God has given the gift of His Spirit to us – He’s been poured out on us. He’s been released generously in quantity on us, His people; actually God has soaked us in His Spirit rather like having a bucket of water poured over us, or better being pushed into a swimming pool. God’s desire in pouring, flowing and immersing us in the Spirit is to soak us in Him, to fill us up with Him. Such is the relationship God wants with us and has with us – He wants to be in every part of us and our lives.

On that Pentecost day 2000 years ago that was certainly true for the disciples as the Holy Spirit was poured out on them in a powerful way. Here’s the story from Acts 2.

*(Bible Reading Acts 2:1-13)*

God still willingly pours out His mercy, as well as His love and His grace and of course His presence in the form of the Holy Spirit on all who ask, on all who follow Jesus. What an amazing God we have!

Others need to know! Everyone needs to know! How do they get to know? Through the Holy Spirit is in us, and it’s we His people that He uses to proclaim the God who pours out all these things. . . It was the first thing the disciples did at Pentecost – to excitedly go out and tell everyone what God has done.

As I looked at the Deben estuary whilst filming for this morning, I realised that there was a vast amount of water moving on the tide. The mercy, the grace and love of God is like a river. There’s vast quantities available to all who would ask Him and with the Spirit huge power if we will only let Him flow through us and in us.

## **Prayers**

We are a people called to make known the mercy of God to those that don't know Jesus. And we do that in the power of the Spirit of God. There is no time like the present to show the mercy and love for others and call on God's Spirit to work in power.

The world at present is being attacked by a microscopic Coronavirus. It's taking lives, robbing families of loved ones, creating fear, causing hardship, closing economies and now starting to pit one against another. The BMS has called for today to be known as Solidarity Sunday, when we affirm our solidarity with others all over the world as we face the pandemic together, many who are so much worse off than ourselves; so let's pray with BMS

Father we pray that out of your limitless resources, that you may have mercy on our world. We pray that you will halt the spread of the virus and be with those who are developing treatments and vaccines. We pray that the response to dealing with the virus will be positive around the world, and Governments may act wisely in the decisions they may because of the lives it can cost, nationally and globally.

We pray Lord that you will keep NHS workers safe, as well as other healthcare workers across the world also risking their lives in the fight against the Coronavirus.

We pray too for people across the world who are unable to work and are struggling to support themselves and their families.

We pray for BMS mission workers who have returned to the UK, that they will be able to continue their work as best they can remotely. Pray for workers still overseas, that the Coronavirus will not prevent them from carrying out their vital work.

We ask all this in Jesus' name

Amen.

We are coming to the end of the eleven days of Thy Kingdom Come. Let's wrap it up as we pray and look forward to God working in the lives of those we prayed for.

Father, we pray for those we have been lifting before You all week, that Your Holy Spirit will open their eyes and that we will have the strength and the perseverance to keep on praying for them. May we show in our praying and caring that Jesus loves them and may they come to a living faith in Him. May they know for themselves forgiveness of sins and an eternal hope. May they understand that walking with Him will enrich their life and drive out fear. Work in their lives we pray.

In Jesus' name

Amen.

## **Part 2: Fire**

A second word to describe the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 is fire. The coming of the Spirit was marked what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of the disciples. Why fire? Fire can mean two very different things in the NT. It's often associated with death and judgement, but on the other hand it is also associated with bringing spiritual understanding, holiness and spiritual vitality. It is the latter that is meant in Acts 2.

Fire is used to refine ores, reducing them to shiny metals. Fire is also used to purify brittle metals like iron into much harder steel. It's used to forge lumps of metal into beautiful and useful items.

All of these are pictures of what the Holy Spirit brings to human beings when they follow Jesus. He brings the transformation of new life. He turns us into a holy nation, set apart for God – hence His title: the **Holy** Spirit. He is the power in our lives that enables us to change and become more like Jesus. But there's so much more His power brings: He works through people to do the works of God and we see how He does this through answered prayers and gifts of the Spirit.

The second fire metaphor is one that has translated well into the English language. We talk about being fired up or on fire. It's the fire of passion, the fire of enthusiasm. It's the Holy Spirit who fires up, encourages us, makes us passionate for God, works through His people in power.

A third positive picture of fire is that in those days, people used oil lamps to light their homes in darkness. The Holy Spirit brought light to darkness and as the flame of the Spirit rested on the disciples that day, it switched on their spiritual lights. We know from 1 Corinthians 2 that it is the Holy Spirit who opens up our understanding of God's wisdom. He brings light into the darkness of our lives.

We see these characteristics of fire in the disciples on that Pentecost Day: he changed the disciples from a bunch of people hiding indoors into a group of people so excited that people thought they were drunk. But the sharp ones realised that the miraculous was happening. The disciples were speaking in other languages "as the Spirit enabled them." There were Jewish people from all over the Roman Empire, but they heard the disciples speaking in their local languages and dialects. The disciples were Galileans, who they knew would normally speak Aramaic, so how did they know their language? How could that be? That was impossible! No, it was miraculous!

When people heard the miracle, it left them asking questions – what's this all about? The Holy Spirit can and does bring the miraculous. They were all ready to hear what Peter had to say. And God changed the lives of 3000 people that day as they followed Jesus for themselves. The church I used to go to in London put on 90 members in a short period of time because of a few who accepted Jesus, were totally transformed by the Spirit and that made such an impression on their friends that they asked the question "what's happened to you?" It wasn't long before Jesus had changed their lives too. The fire of the Spirit is like all fire: it spreads.

I believe that God wants to fire up all believers. He wants to fill all of us with His Spirit that we to may speak and act in the power of the Spirit. Perhaps you already do. Great! On the other hand, perhaps you are wondering what I'm talking about. God the Holy Spirit still works today in power – healing sick people, speaking prophetic words, speaking through tongues, opens spiritual understanding, brings new life. I've seen it, I've experienced it, I've been involved in it. I continue to see it.

Perhaps you once received the baptism of the Spirit but now feel that your fire has gone out. That the Spirit has been quenched in you. Pray that God will fire you up afresh today. God wants to bless us, fill us anew, light us up again and if you need to pray that prayer, here it is again in music for you to sing and pray at the same time.

*O God of burning , cleansing flame*

### **Part 3: Wind**

There is a third picture of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 – wind. It was the sound they heard and the pressure they felt as the room was filled with a mighty rushing wind that blew in a totally enclosed room. What did that mean? Here's a video I made nearly seven years ago that I hope will help us understand who the Spirit is: the breath of God.

Video script: "Breath of Life" – October 2013

In the autumn of 2013 we experienced one of the strongest storms to hit the South of England for many years. I was out filming in the storm and the experience reminds me of what I'm sometimes told by those who don't share my Christian Faith. They say "it's well for you, but I can't possibly believe what you believe because what you believe is intangible. It can't be seen; after all no one can see God can they? Well at the moment, no, but I can't see the wind yet I can experience and see all the effects of what the wind does to things. I may not see the wind but I can see it's effect very clearly. It's exactly the same with God; I may not see Him, but I can see is Holy Spirit at work in my life and in the lives of others.

After the Storm there were many parts of Felixstowe where the landscape changed. The wind can be a destructive force, but the nature of the Spirit is very different to that. In Greek the language of the New Testament the word used for the ordinary wind is *anemos* from which we get the word anemometer, but in connection with the Holy Spirit, a second word *pneuma* is always used which can mean wind but also breath or spirit. Therefore we can describe the Holy Spirit as the wind or the breath of God and when He breathes into people's lives things change. And one of the biggest changes that happens is when people first decide to trust and follow Jesus.

A process occurs in their lives which Jesus described as being born again. He said this to somebody called Nicodemus. "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. John 3:5-6 NLT

The Holy Spirit brings spiritual life to those that trust Jesus. It's amazing to see the changes that occur in somebody's life when they start to change from asking lots of questions, to realising that God is real and trusting and following Him for themselves. I compare it to turning on the lights. The Holy Spirit has a massive effect on how we think and what we believe.

But there's more to the Holy Spirit than this, because when we decide to follow Jesus, He becomes a part of our lives. He's with us all the time. What's more the Spirit empowers God's people to understand what He's about, to speak and listen to Him, to live a life that reflects Jesus, to serve and honour God, to speak about Him to others. He gives us the means to serve God through spiritual gifts, which are supernatural enablements, so that we may serve God more effectively in the world and in the church.

As with the Wind sometimes we experience the Holy Spirit as a gentle breeze refreshing us; at other times we see Him working in power: healing people, changing situations, transforming lives.

If you aren't a Christian but what I said has sparked some interest in you, then ask the Holy Spirit to open up your understanding; that you might realise that He's real and follow Jesus.

If you're already a Christian, then I lay down this challenge to you. How much of the Holy Spirit can people see in your life, in a way that convinces them the God is real? If they can't see Him in you, or you know that you've quenched the Spirit, then ask the Him to change you; to empower you in order that you might reflect Jesus in your life and in your worship. And ask the Holy Spirit to empower you with His gifts in order that you might serve God and honour Jesus in every way in your life.

*(Transcript of video on Felixstowe TV in 2013)*

***Final Blessing***

Father, we pray that you fill each of us who desires more of you today, with Your Spirit. If they don't know you yet, but desires to know more, may you open their understanding, for those who have never experienced You in a powerful way, that You will baptise them in Your Spirit. For those of us who have become dry in our faith, that You will pour out Your Spirit afresh. Jesus, in everything, may You have the glory.

Amen.