

Welcome to this morning's Live-streamed worship from Christchurch. My name is Andy Searle, and joining me this morning providing our music are Steve Cook, Mandy Pye and Toby Scott, our reader is Diane Graham and Tony Edmonds is behind the desk making all the complicated technical stuff possible.

Today, is of course Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the Church, when we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit in power to the first disciples. 12 people transformed from being shut away in an upper room, to a group that changed the world. A hidden potential was unlocked on that day. The influence they would have is still being seen today and we continue the work started on that day.

Our opening verse is from John 14:5 v 15-17

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

Hymn. Come down O love Divine

1 Come down, O Love divine!  
seek out this soul of mine  
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;  
O Comforter, draw near,  
within my heart appear,  
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

2 There let it freely burn  
till earthly passions turn  
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;  
and let your glorious light  
shine ever on my sight,  
and make my pathway clear, by your illuming.

3 Let holy charity  
my outward vesture be,  
and lowliness become my inner clothing;  
true lowliness of heart  
which takes the humbler part,  
and for its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

4 And so the yearning strong  
with which the soul will long  
shall far surpass the power of human telling;  
for none can guess its grace  
till we become the place  
in which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Prayer

When was the last time that we heard the wind of your Spirit roar through this place?  
When was the last time your fire lit up this room?

When was the last time we took you at your word and met together in expectation of your Spirit filling this place, and these lives with your Glory and Power?

Lord, you challenge us with Pentecost.

Do we believe that this was a once in eternity experience, never to be repeated?

That the Holy Spirit was poured out on your followers for a single purpose, and ended His work at that instant?

If so, then maybe that is why the Church seems so powerless in this age, helpless when faced with the needs both spiritual and physical, that we see in the world.

Lord, as we meet together, and celebrate once again

the memory of that first Pentecost,

may it be for us as it was then a moment of empowerment,

an awareness of your Glory in this dark world,

a life changing experience.

Amen

### **Acts 2:1-21**

2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And 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 of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs--in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

### Message

When I was last here three weeks ago I spoke about John 15 - I am the true vine and you are the branches. We thought about how we must be connected to God in order to bear fruit in our lives. One of the key verses in that passage was when Jesus said to his disciples 'Apart from me, you can do nothing'. I wonder what the disciples really thought when they heard him say this. They had

become used to always being with Jesus. Maybe they thought he is just saying this but he is not going anywhere. I know he had told them that he was going to have to suffer and die, but did they really believe him. When they had been apart from him, they didn't always do very well. Left on their own in a boat on the lake on one occasion facing a storm, even experienced fishermen like many were, they had to be saved by Jesus walking in the water to meet them. When Jesus was with them, everything was fine, so I'm sure he will always be with us, is what they thought. It is a very natural thing to assume. When you have something really good you never want it to change.

Events that followed would turn out to be a roller coaster ride – when he said he would be arrested and put to death, he was serious. And so the events of Good Friday left them afraid and seemingly helpless. They were apart from Jesus and they really could do nothing. Then they experienced the euphoria of the resurrection - Jesus was back with them, he was different, but he was with them. But this was not to last and he left them again when he ascended, but left them with a promise and a challenge. 'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' So they were back to Jerusalem and waited. They were apart from him again, I wonder what they really felt – given this great new mission, but at the same time, they could do nothing.

These 12 disciples had the potential to change the world, but there was something missing, preventing them from realising their potential. You may have heard of the scientific concept of Potential Energy – this is described as energy that is stored within something that is waiting to be released. At Easter time, the daffodil is an image we often use – we decorate the cross with their beautiful yellow flowers. This flower comes from a bulb planted in the ground which is nothing much to look at, but this is the store of energy that becomes the flower. When the bulb receives the right food and water, it produces a shoot that turns into a wonderful flower.

In a sense, the disciples sitting in that upper room waiting were like a bulb, waiting for something to happen – then on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit came and their lives were transformed, bursting into life they had never experienced before. Pentecost was the day that their Potential was released and everything they could do in their lives was realised. They were not apart from Jesus, they really never were but just as they had known him as their physical companion before, now they knew him as a spiritual companion, and things would never be the same for them ever again.

Peter assumes the centre stage on this day – Peter, once known as Simon – someone in whom Jesus has seen his potential probably from the very first day he met him by the Lake of Galilee. He more than most, had his ups and downs, but knowing that future potential, Jesus stuck by him even after his denial. How great was the contrast between the man who said he never knew Jesus a few weeks ago, now standing before a great crowd, addressing them, proclaiming the Good news – made possible by just one change in his life, the coming of the Holy Spirit.

I want to draw out three simple points about what happened when the potential of the disciples was released by the Spirit.

Firstly, they lost any inhibitions they might have had. Frightened people were now very excited about something – clearly, their change in behaviour was noticed, being accused of being drunk. We can be very reserved when talking about our faith – but through the Spirit, they dropped any inhibitions they might have had and allowed the Spirit to lead them. People noticed, the flowers had bloomed, they were bearing fruit and it was wonderful.

Secondly, the message could be understood by the people. They heard them in a language they can understand – lovers of Star Trek will know about the Universal translator that allowed different

species to communicate (funnily enough, always in English). But I think we can think beyond language in terms of French and German and Italian etc. The Spirit enabled to connect the disciples with the crowd – that could be language, but today, it is more about relevance of the message to those outside the Church so it is real to them, spoken in the terms they can understand – that is what the Spirit can enable us to do if we allow him to, communicate clearly with the world.

Finally, the Spirit came to share the Good News – the commission the disciples had been given was to be witnesses, to be evangelists all over the world – this meant putting the message of Jesus at the heart of all they did and said – in the second part of Acts 2, Peter goes on to preach the first ever evangelistic sermon after his quotation from the book of Joel. These were the closing words from this sermon.

‘When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ‘Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

When I was out walking one morning thinking about this service, a Van passed me with the words, ‘Unleash your Voom’ on the side. It was a van installing Virgin Superfast Fibre Broadband. It’s a modern way of saying, ‘Release your Potential’. Just as the disciples had this potential before Pentecost which when released, enabled them to change the world, so we possess that same potential through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit leads each of us is something personal and individual, but we must allow him to fill us over and over to experience this grace and power.

I would like us all to use our next Song as a personal prayer, asking God to fill us again, to fan in flame this great power. What is my potential, what is it that you want me to do Lord, that I haven’t achieved yet – what is the untapped potential waiting to be released in my life.

Let us Sing, There must be more than this, O breath of God, come breathe within – Consuming Fire.

Song Consuming Fire

There must be more than this  
O breath of God, come breathe within  
There must be more than this  
Spirit of God, we wait for you  
Fill us anew, we pray  
Fill us anew, we pray

Consuming fire  
Fan into flame  
A passion for your name  
Spirit of God  
Would You fall in this place  
Lord have your way  
Lord have your way with us

Come like a rushing wind

Clothe us with power from on high  
Now set the captives free  
Leave us abandoned to your praise  
Lord let your glory fall  
Lord let your glory fall

Consuming fire  
Fan into flame  
A passion for your name  
Spirit of God  
Would you fall in this place  
Lord have your way  
Lord have your way

### **Romans 8:22-27**

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

### **Prayers**

Those words from Romans 8 bring out two further themes about the Holy Spirit. Firstly, that Pentecost is just the start. These are just the first fruits of the Spirit and there is so much more to come and that is a hope that sustains us. But beyond that, we see the role of the Spirit in prayer. We don't know how to pray - How often have we experienced this. Paul is encouraging us therefore to let the Spirit into our prayers, to intercede with God in a way that transcends our words. So for our time of prayer this morning, I want to use simply a time of silence – a slide will be shown with some ideas and themes you might want to pray silently for, or you might just want to let the Spirit wash over you and enable you to hear God speaking. At the end of our time, we will draw together our prayers with the Lord's Prayer.

### **Prayer Themes**

How can I realise my potential for you Lord ?  
The Coronavirus pandemic and vaccination roll out.  
The conflict between Israel and Palestine  
The life and mission of Christchurch when we reopen fully again  
How can my witness be more relevant to the world?  
Help me to bear the fruit of the spirit in my life?

### **Lords Prayer**

### **Blessing**

Song; Purify my heart (Refiners fire)

Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold and precious silver  
Purify my heart  
Let me be as gold, pure gold

Refiner's fire,  
My heart's one desire  
Is to be holy  
Set apart for You, Lord  
I choose to be holy  
Set apart for You, my Master  
Ready to do Your will

Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from within  
And make me holy  
Purify my heart  
Cleanse me from my sin, deep within

Refiner's fire,  
My heart's one desire  
Is to be holy  
Set apart for You, Lord  
I choose to be holy  
Set apart for You, my Master  
Ready to do Your will