

Worship at home – 23rd May – Pentecost 2021

Key Scriptures: Acts2:1-21

Key Themes:

The Coming of the promised Holy Spirit.

Call to Worship:

Spirit of compassion, we bring you our hearts. Spirit of discernment, we bring you our choices. Spirit of wisdom, we bring you our minds. Spirit of boldness, we bring you our words, Spirit of fulfilment, we bring you our longings. Spirit of abundance, we bring you our resources. Spirit of creation, we bring you our lives.

Amen

Hymn: Come down, O Love divine

Come down, O love divine, seek thou this soul of mine,
and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn, till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
And let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity mine outward vesture be,
and lowliness become mine inner clothing;
True lowliness of heart, which takes the humbler part,
and o'er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace, till they become the place
where-in the Holy Spirit finds a dwelling.

Author: Bianco da Siena; Translator: Richard Frederick Littledale

Tune: DOWN AMPNEY

Prayers: Adoration:

We praise you, God of all time, for speaking to us through the tongues of Pentecost, for stirring our longings, with the excitement of Pentecost, for uniting our communities with the inclusiveness of Pentecost.

Fill our lives, we pray, with the enormity of Pentecost, until they overflow with compassion and commitment to care for and celebrate all creation to the glory of your name.

Prayer of Confession:

Forgive us, Creator god, when we have not heard your voice in the song of the birds and the rustle of leaves:

Open the ears of our hearts.

When we have not seen you in the grandeur of the mountains and the rhythm of the waves.

Open the eyes of our hearts.

When we have not rejoiced at the vibrance of spring or the colours of autumn:

Unlock the joy in our hearts.

When we have stifled your Spirit and confined you love

Deepen the love in our hearts.

Forgive us, and release in us the true Spirit of Pentecost.

Today and always.

Amen

Assurance of forgiveness:

Gracious God, ignite our prayers with the life-giving fire of Pentecost, that we may not fear our inadequacy, our hesitancy or our doubt, but bring before you all that we are, all that we have been, and all that we can be. May we know that we can never aim high enough, and never conceive anything complete enough, to prepare for all you would bless us with – individually, as communities and as nations. Help us to gather together and wait for you afresh, trusting your love, mercy and forgiveness.

Amen.

Psalm 104:24-34,35b

- ²⁴ LORD, you have made so many things!
How wisely you made them all!
The earth is filled with your creatures.
- ²⁵ There is the ocean, large and wide,
where countless creatures live,
large and small alike.
- ²⁶ The ships sail on it, and in it plays Leviathan,
that sea monster which you made.^[a]
- ²⁷ All of them depend on you
to give them food when they need it.
- ²⁸ You give it to them, and they eat it;
you provide food, and they are satisfied.
- ²⁹ When you turn away, they are afraid;
when you take away your breath, they die
and go back to the dust from which they came.
- ³⁰ But when you give them breath,^[b] they are created;
you give new life to the earth.
- ³¹ May the glory of the LORD last forever!
May the LORD be happy with what he has made!
- ³² He looks at the earth, and it trembles;
he touches the mountains, and they pour out smoke.
- ³³ I will sing to the LORD all my life;
as long as I live I will sing praises to my God.
- ³⁴ May he be pleased with my song,
for my gladness comes from him.

Praise the LORD, my soul!

Praise the LORD!

Reflection:

- These verses celebrate the dependence of living creatures and the natural world of God's orderly wisdom.
- Living creatures are particularly reliant on God's 'breath' or 'spirit' (both translate the Hebrew word 'ruach'.)
- The ground, from which humans are formed as recorded in the book of Genesis, is also very important.
- The role of God's spirit here leads us on to Pentecost.
- The birth of the church.
- The very breath of God, bestowed on those first disciples, changing them from terrified fisherman into active proclaimers of the gospel.
- The Pentecost Spirit is the current of communication that connects the whole of God's creation.

Reading: Acts 2:1-21 - The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. **2** Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. **4** They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

5 There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious people who had come from every country in the world. **6** When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because all of them heard the believers talking in their own languages. **7** In amazement and wonder they exclaimed, "These people who are talking like this are Galileans! **8** How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? **9** We are from Parthia, Media, and Elam; from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia; from Pontus and Asia, **10** from Phrygia and Pamphylia, from Egypt and the regions of Libya near Cyrene. Some of us are from Rome, **11** both Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism, and some of us are from Crete and Arabia—yet all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!" **12** Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other, "What does this mean?"

13 But others made fun of the believers, saying, "These people are drunk!"

Peter's Message

14 Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means. **15** These people are not drunk, as you suppose; it is only nine o'clock in the morning. **16** Instead, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about:

17 'This is what I will do in the last days, God says:

I will pour out my Spirit on everyone.

Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message;

your young men will see visions,

and your old men will have dreams.

18 Yes, even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will proclaim my message.

19 I will perform miracles in the sky above

and wonders on the earth below.

There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke;

20 the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will turn red as blood,

before the great and glorious Day of the Lord comes.

21 And then, whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.'

Reflection: Tongues of fire

The voice of Andrew

What a rollercoaster we had been on. From the highs of being called out of fishing, into discipleship, through the plateau of three long years of travel. To the lows of arrest and the pits of despair, through death on a cross. From fear and hiding, to boldness and confidence as Jesus returned. Through days of discovery as he showed us new ways to being, to that final departure when a promise was made, and a commission given.

We waited. Ten prolonged days of emptiness, before we gathered again, in the upper room, hoping that the promised advocate would come soon. We had lived in limbo. Our faith had been renewed, but it wavered again with his departure. Now fear gripped us once more. With doors and windows locked, we considered our future? What would it look like without Jesus at our sides? Would we just slip back into life as it was before? Would God allow that?

With this thought still ringing in our ears, we were shaken by a new sound. The sound of a mighty wind, penetration not only through the walls of the building, but through our very beings. Stirring our souls into new life. Warming our hearts with a blazing fire as what seemed like flames rested on each of us. Something inside awoke, like a dormant lion aroused from sleep. Suddenly, we were filled with a new sense of urgency. A new passion and desire to share the story we had become a part of. Our story and His story, entwined.

At once, fear was no more, banished by an internal confidence. A boldness to risk everything, even freedom, or life itself, now reigned. We all began to speak together, but not in our own language, in tongues we did not know or understand. However, it was no longer about us, men of Galilee, uneducated fisherman. For God's message was for the world, and we were merely the messengers.

We began our risk taking, now unlocking the doors and the windows, and removing the metaphorical chains that had bound us. We could no longer hide away, or keep silent, we had a story to tell. To our amazement the people in the street below heard God's message in their own language. A message of hope, and renewal, were some would see visions and others dream dreams of a better future where love took centre stage.

At first, people assumed we were drunk, but it was early in the morning, and nothing had touched our lips. So, as speculation grew, Peter addressed the crowd. He told them of ancient prophecies that were being fulfilled and that we have received the promised gift of God's Holy Spirit. The very same Spirit that had been in Jesus, was now in us. Living and breathing. Inspiring and equipping, empowering and encouraging us to risk everything for the sake of the gospel. That day we were transformed from quivering wrecks in the upper room, to courageous people for God. We have been touched by the perfect love of Jesus and now we were compelled to share this new life with everyone.

Through this encounter, the person I had been was changed. Now I claimed my true identity as a child of God. Furthermore, I knew, from that moment on, that it was my responsibility to present that identity to everyone, so that if they wished, they might claim it for themselves

Pause for Thought:

- The disciples are gathered again, maybe in the same upper room that they had shared in that last meal before Jesus' death, who knows.
- All the windows and doors are locked as they were terrified that they might be next.
- Jesus had died, had been raised, had walked and talked with them in his new form, before he ascended into heaven.
- Now, as instructed the friends wait for the promised advocate that will accompany them on the next leg of the journey and forever more.
- What would this look like, no one knew until the day of Pentecost arrived.
- Then a mighty wind, tongues of fire, and a new confidence inside them transformed them from frightened uneducated fisherman into comprehensive auditors of the gospel.
- Peter, the same man who had got it wrong on so many occasions, who had denied Jesus three times and who had fallen short at every turn, now stood up to be counted as one of Jesus followers and friends.
- He was enabled to give a full account of the story and where he fitted into it. He was transformed.
- I wonder- can we again this year, allow ourselves to be transformed as Peter was, to become brave and bold disciples of Christ?
- Have you claimed your identity as a child of God, and been filled with God's Holy Spirit?
- As our church begins to unlock the doors and reopen the windows, after the Pandemic, will we let go of unhelpful chains that have bound us to the past and risk doing some things differently?

- Are we willing to risk everything for the sake of the gospel? If we are, what might that look like for us as individuals and as church as we go forward?
- Where are we in our ongoing walk with Jesus and will we allow the power of the Holy Spirit breathing in us to transform all that we are?

Prayer:

Holy Spirit of God, fill us anew with your love and power, help us to be inspired empowered and encouraged to be active disciples for you. Equip and enable us to risk everything for the sake of the gospel, so that all might see your love and life breaking through. As we prepare to unlock the doors of our building, we pray that you unlock the doors of our hearts, so that we might welcome all, as they are, in your name.

Amen

Prayers of Intercession:

Loving God,

We ask for the gift of your Holy Spirit to help us to pray as we ought.

Holy Spirit: **help us.**

We ask for the energy and vision of your Spirit for those who are tiring in the battle against injustice and oppression; for those exhausted by the struggle with poverty and hunger.

Holy Spirit: **help us.**

We ask for the hope and comfort of your Spirit for those whose lives are overshadowed by illness or pain; for those whose lives are darkened by sorrow.

Holy Spirit: **help us.**

We ask for the peace and joy of your Spirit for those eaten by guilt and anxiety; for those whose Christian life has become hard and dry.

Holy Spirit: **help us.**

We ask for the guidance and strength of your Spirit for those uncertain how to use their money or time; for those tempted to do what is wrong.

Holy Spirit: **help us.**

We ask for the love and courage of your Spirit for those reaching out to comfort the distressed; for those reaching out to others with the Good News of Christ.

Holy Spirit: **help us.**

Loving God, we ask for the assurance of your Spirit to know your presence with us in our daily lives; in our relationships; in our worship; in our times of pain.

Holy Spirit: **help us – In Jesus' name Amen**

We continue to pray for:

Brain Margetts – Dalwood

Gill and Geoff Nicholls – Axminster.

Those who have experienced bereavement or who have received difficult news.

Amen

Hymn: Spirit of God unseen as the wind.

Spirit of God, unseen as the wind,

Gentle as is the dove;

Touch us with love and teach us to sing

Joy to you Lord above.

Your voice the sound, heard in the wind,
O'er fields and hills you sing;
Now I can hear the joy, my Lord,
the peace your song will bring.
Refrain

Love in our hearts, praise in our prayers,
We follow on your way;
Lord of the sky, Lord of the Earth,
Answer us when we pray.
Refrain

Meter: [96 96 and Refrain](#). Lyrics Copyright © [Richard M S Irwin](#) 2008. CCLI: 7152839

Blessing:

May the Spirit of God live within you, empower you, encourage you and inspired you to be the best that you can be for Christ, and may God go with us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit .

Amen