



The Anglican Parish of Whangaparaoa Peninsula  
3 Stanmore Bay Road,  
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## Sermon

4<sup>th</sup> June 2017

### ***Pentecost***

**Numbers 11:24-30; Acts 2:1-21; John 7:37-39**

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#### ***Background***

Today is Pentecost. The name means fifty because it was a feast celebrated 50 days after Passover.

The Jewish feast – one of the big three every adult man was commanded to attend – marked the beginning of the wheat harvest. With the first of the wheat harvest in, two loaves were baked and offered at Pentecost and thanks was given for the harvest. Then the main harvesting could begin.

The second significance of Pentecost was a celebration of the giving of the Law on Mt Sinai. From the record in Exodus, rabbis worked out that the Hebrews came to Mt Sinai 50 days after the exodus from Egypt which started with the Passover.

The giving of the Law was the making of covenant between Yahweh and the Hebrew people. Covenant with God made them who they are. The content of Law gave them revelation of God. As we come to the events recorded in Acts 2 these are important pieces of background.

#### ***New Testament Setting***

Acts 1 records:

Acts 1:3 After his suffering, Jesus showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

The period between the resurrection and ascension was a time of establishing the truth of the resurrection – a testing of the reality that Jesus was alive. It was a time to allow the disciples to receive teaching and understanding in the light of the crucifixion and resurrection. But now Jesus had ascended and told them to pray until the promise of the Father was given. They waited a further ten days and then it was the Feast of Pentecost.

#### ***The Day of Pentecost***

The disciples are overwhelmed by a spiritual event: there was the sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongues of something like fire appeared and distributed over each of them and they began to speak in languages they had not learnt.

The noise of the wind and their speaking attracted a crowd. These people who have come to Jerusalem for the feast are from all over the greater eastern Mediterranean and beyond: modern day Iran and Iraq, Egypt, Libya, Turkey, Rome, Rhodes. These foreigners heard these uneducated Galilean peasants praising God in their various, native languages.

These disciples not so long before had been locking themselves in the room for fear of the authorities. Now Peter stands up and launches forth in a brilliant speech explaining what is going on.

He dismisses the stupid suggestion, effectively the cry of a heckler, that this was the result of drunkenness. It was too early in the day and besides that we could add drunkenness does not result in greater fluency of language!

He goes on to explain that this was the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy that the Spirit of God would be poured out freely on young and old, male and female, servant and master. Joel prophesied that there would be signs in the sky with the sun being darkened etc. When you think about it that sign of the darkened sun had occurred at the time of the crucifixion. As I have said before, it was not an eclipse of the sun. Passover is by definition at a full moon and there cannot be an eclipse of the sun at full moon. It was a very strange event indeed – by which the people would have been terrified and they would still have been wondering about it.

Peter's sermon continues to show that Jesus was the Christ and that he had risen from the dead. The correct response was to repent, turn towards God, put their trust in Jesus and be baptised in his name.

How did he know to use these texts? Maybe they were inspired by the Holy Spirit as he spoke or maybe this was part of the teaching Jesus had given after the resurrection. Remember we read in Luke 24:

Jesus said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>1</sup>

And now Peter is starting that preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations beginning at Jerusalem! If we skip to the end of the sermon, we find 3000 people respond and are baptised that day. This is the start of the public church! That is the start of a really big harvest!

### ***Giving of the Law and Giving of the Spirit***

There are some strong parallels between the giving of the Law and the coming of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> Listen to the beginning of the account in Exodus of the giving of the Law.

Exodus 19:16-19 On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. ... <sup>18</sup> Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.

1. In both, the law of God was delivered to God's people –written on tablets of stone and written on the heart. Jeremiah 31:32 wrote,

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ... <sup>33b</sup> "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." <sup>3</sup>

2. Both are accompanied by manifestations of God with fire and loud noise.
3. Both are accompanied by many voices. In Exodus, the word (*kolot*) is often translated thunder but actually means 'voices' or sounds.

### ***Birthday of the Church***

Just as Mt Sinai was the birthday of the Hebrew people, so Pentecost is the birthday of the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 24:44-47

<sup>2</sup> See Stern, D.H., "The Jewish New Testament Commentary", 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1992, page 221

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-33

And we have some other very birthdays to celebrate today as well: You all know about Win turning 100 on Friday and Judy, Emma and Mark have their birthdays this week. There is another one as well: You know that this year is the Centenary of the old church, the chapel. Records tell us that the very first service in the building was held on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1917. That is 100 years ago on Tuesday. For practical reasons, we have chosen to focus our celebrations on the Patronal Festival rather than this June date or the December date when the building was consecrated, but still we might remember this Tuesday, that 100 years ago 50 people gathered for Holy Communion for the first time.

### ***The Spirit gives Life and Boldness***

We have seen that the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost made us God's people and gave revelation by writing God's law on our hearts. We also find the Spirit gives life and boldness.

When Jesus spoke of receiving the Holy Spirit in today's gospel passage. He was speaking during his public ministry during a Feast of Tabernacles. He likened the Holy Spirit to water flowing out from the believer.

John 7:38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

So too, when he spoke to the Samaritan woman by the well, he used the same illustration:

John 4:13-14 "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

We would probably not have understood him, but happily in John 7 John makes it explicit: "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive."

The gift of the Holy Spirit to the believer is for the individual but not for oneself alone. The gift is not a private pool of water/Spirit – a personal tank. It is a flow of the water/Spirit which flows out from within us to others. The Greek says the Spirit flows from the believer's heart/belly/womb/innermost being.

On the Day of Pentecost, instantly, the disciples are changed. They have a new courage. Peter preaches to a very large crowd with confidence and boldness and the others stand by him rather than running away! It is a first fulfilment of Jesus' words:

Acts 1:8 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."

The Spirit make us God's people, brings revelation, gives life and empowers us to speak.

### ***Conclusion***

May I urge you to seek the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life? The Holy Spirit is the presence of God with us in our lives. He is the Spirit of Jesus. You cannot know Jesus without the Holy Spirit. So if you know Jesus, you already have received the Holy Spirit. But there is more! None of us has experienced all that God can give us. There is always more! Why would you not want to receive more of his presence, his love, his boldness, his power?

One way to go further, would to come on the Alpha course which we are running in three weeks time. It provides a safe place to hear a straightforward presentation of Christianity, to ask questions and discuss your thoughts and to be prayed for both to give your life to Jesus and to receive an infilling of the Spirit. It is about fun, food and faith.

- Please think whether it is something for you.
- Please think whether it is something you might bring your friend to.

More details are in the Kitsheet and invitations will be available at the end of the service.

**Try Alpha – you've nothing to lose and everything to gain.**



**Thursday Evenings 6:30-9:30 starting June 22nd**

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