

Acts 2.1-21

Receiving the Spirit

Christ Church Selly Park

Pentecost Sunday 5 June 2022

Part I – Pentecost

On table: toaster (not plugged in) and bread, covered with a cloth.

The Lord said, ‘Come fourth and receive the Holy Spirit.’
But John came fifth and only won a toaster.

Who’s had breakfast this morning? I haven’t I’m afraid – I’ve been waiting for mine – I hope you don’t mind but I thought I’d have some during my sermon. I’ve brought my toaster and some bread *remove cloth, put bread in toaster, and push down.*

Jesus had given his friends an important mission – to **go and make disciples of all nations** (Matthew 28.19). He had promised to send them help – but that was days ago.

And so they waited. They were all gathered together (1) – perhaps not quite as upset or afraid as when Jesus had died, but definitely confused. What was going to happen?

And then it began – only what happened can't really be described. Luke does his best: it was **like the blowing of a violent wind** (2), and something that **seemed to be tongues of fire** rested on each of them (3).

They weren't literally on fire, nor had they left the windows and doors open during a gale. This was something new, something special – it was what Jesus had promised. The Spirit (or 'wind' – the word is the same in Greek) was rushing in, anointing them, filling them, changing them.

I don't know about you, but I've never seen anything quite like that. However I *have* had a drink of cold water after a long walk on a hot day. It is so refreshing, it makes me feel better, it makes me feel alive again.

Suddenly Jesus' friends could do things they couldn't before – speaking in other languages (4). They were filled with courage and spilled out into the streets, telling people all about Jesus, just as he had told them to. Then Peter stood up and spoke to the gathering crowd (14). He preached a message that brought thousands to faith in Jesus (41) – all because of the Holy Spirit.

Let's see how my breakfast is getting on. *Inspect the toaster...*

Ah. Something's wrong – the toaster doesn't work. Can anyone guess why? It's not plugged in! This toaster can't do the thing it was made to do without electricity.

Without the Holy Spirit we are like a toaster without electricity – we can't do the things we were made to do, we can't be what who we were made to be. The disciples could never have done all this without the Holy Spirit.

Let's listen to a song about the Spirit and the change he can bring.

Casting Crowns, The Change in Me

Part II – Receiving the Spirit

All the Father does, he does by the Spirit. He enables us to trust God. He helps us follow Jesus. He gives gifts so we can do what God is calling us to do. He speaks through the Bible and teaches us about God's best way to live. He assures us of our Father's love, reminds us of God's promises, brings us God's peace. He convicts us of our sin not so we feel bad but so we can say sorry and receive forgiveness. The Spirit brings the life of Jesus into our life so we can be children of our heavenly Father. Without him we are stuck in our old life, with him we are made new.

Do you see why we need him so much?!

Now the thing about being filled with the Holy Spirit is that it's like filling a car up with petrol – only much cheaper – or like breathing, or like watering a plant: it needs to happen again and again. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost wasn't a once-only thing: the Bible says **go on being filled with the Spirit** (Ephesians 5.18). Why? Because we leak!

We need to ask for the Spirit to come because we leak – but also because when he comes, it hurts, so sometimes we shy away. We prefer comfortable ignorance to the piercing truth of the Word and the Spirit.

Like fire the Holy Spirit brings warmth and light – but like a consuming fire he burns away our sin and pride. Like a mirror he shows us the truth about our broken and rebellious hearts – but he also shows us how he is transforming us to be more like Jesus. When he fills us the Spirit leaves no room for anything else – which means some stuff needs to be booted out.

That can hurt – but it is good. We are none of us born as God wants us to be, we all need to be changed, healed, renewed – and that can only happen by the Holy Spirit at work within us. It can hurt – but it is good because bit by bit he transforms us to be the people God is calling us to be.

Friends I don't want to be stuck as Birth Ben – I want to be Born Again Ben – made new and transformed day by day by the Spirit. I have a little prayer for us to use – I wonder if you are willing to pray this every day?

Come Holy Spirit,
be poured out on me,
fill me,
and make me new.

It's not a complicated prayer – but it is a prayer that can be the beginning of something very special indeed: the miracle of God changing us into the people he is calling us to be.