



Worship and Pastoral Resources

For week beginning

Sunday 31 May 2020

PENTECOST SUNDAY

My Dear Friends

How I miss sharing worship with you in your various churches. We are very blessed with the Staying Connected material which we are able to share each week – and in the virtual worships which Adrian and others have been putting together – but there is nothing quite like meeting our brothers and sisters to worship together – and I know that is something many of us miss greatly – and hope we will one day be able to do again.

Yet in the midst of all this change – this period of uncertainty – there is new hope and new life. I - and I know others of you – have been sharing in the Central Hall Westminster Sunday morning services online – and most weeks there are around 1500 people joining in those worships. Many, like us, will be using that as an alternative to our usual time of worship – yet others are exploring and seeking faith for the first time. For as a door closes – a window of opportunity opens! So whilst we miss what is familiar and important in our own lives – let us give thanks for every person drawn to faith through this alternative medium – and if God is leading us forward to new ways for the future, let us try to respond with grace and acceptance. We think we know what God wants of us – but perhaps there are times when he is leading where he really wants us - his Church - to be going. Just maybe this is one of those times!

Today is Pentecost Sunday – the day that the Holy Spirit descended on the Disciples of Jesus. Let us not forget that that Holy Spirit still descends and touches lives – renewing and strengthening some – but falling anew on others who will, maybe because of the crisis we are living through, come to know Jesus and have their lives changed forever. Amen to that!

Thank you for all you are doing during these difficult days. Many of you will never have spent so much time on the phone – yet I am sure every call is important to someone – so bless you all for your continued ministry – remembering that God will go before you – walk beside you – stand behind you – and be with you always.

Blessings to you all – stay safe - and I hope that we shall meet again very soon.

Heather Thomas



Worship

Introduction:

One moment confusion – and the next certainty; one moment doubt – and the next faith; one moment despair and the next hope; one moment fear and the next confidence. You might well wonder if I am describing the raft of emotions we have all been experiencing in the past couple of months – when all our lives have been turned completely upside down because of coronavirus.

That paragraph was actually referring to what happened on that extraordinary day of Pentecost - where in Acts 2. It says:

“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”.

But what exactly was going on there?

And how did those people directly affected make sense of their experience?

In this service, I'd like us to look at someone whose life was transformed by the gift of the Holy Spirit – and prompt us to remember that the same Spirit is equally able to transform our lives in turn.

With our hymns – I will give you links to follow if you can and wish to listen to them on YouTube – but if not, please use the words on the hymn sheet at the end – which can be just as effective and inspiring when read if you prefer as when sung

Hymn: STF 309 See what a morning

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xM-fpXayUg>

Let us pray together

Living God

As we consider today some of those first people touched by your Spirit –

Help us to recognise the way you come to us – the gifts you give to us

And the way you are able to use us in a multitude of different way – and have done so particularly at this difficult time in the lives of us all.

And today hear our praise and thanksgiving for those gifts which are bestowed on us all

And help us to bathe in your Spirit just as earnestly as did your followers thousands of years ago.

Amen

Let us reflect together

If only I could have been alive when Jesus was! If only I could have been there when he healed the sick, fed the multitude, preached to the crowds on the hillside!

How often have you heard that said – or perhaps even said it to yourself? It's easy to imagine that if we could have been there then faith would come so much easier to us. Yet to think like that is to ignore the promise of the Holy Spirit – a promise which those in the early days of the Christian Church so clearly saw fulfilled.

For them, although Jesus was no longer physically with them – he was as much present as he had ever been during his earthly ministry. In fact more so – for his Spirit dwelt within each one of them.

Today we hear just a couple of reflections from people who may not be at the forefront of your thoughts when Pentecost is mentioned – yet whose stories remind us that the Holy Spirit is equally Christ's gift to us here and now – as it was to them.

Reading: Acts 4: 32-37

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul – and no-one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person amongst them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

There was a Levite – a native of Cyprus – Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”). He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Barnabas tells his story:

It wasn't much of a gift – at least I didn't think so. In fact, I didn't feel that I had a gift at all – not like the rest of them with all their stunning signs and wonders. I envied them sometimes – so often in the limelight – stealing all the headlines – prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, speakers of tongues. They were the ones who drew the crowds – the ones people noticed – whilst all I did really was plod quietly along, living the faith in my own simple way, speaking and doing, caring and sharing – as I believed Christ would have me do. And then they gave me this name – Barnabas – “Son of Encouragement”.

It was all so unexpected – a complete surprise – for what had I done to deserve such an honour? But they told me – one by one – that of all the gifts they valued – mine was chief among them. A generous gesture – a word of praise – and expression of trust – and act of love. Not causing gasps or making heads turn. Yet these, they told me – although I'd never dreamt it nor even realised they'd been done – these had stirred their hearts and cheered their spirits as signs and wonders could never do.

It doesn't seem much does it – encouraging people?

Not a gift you'll find in any of the textbooks – not one people will ever fight over – yet, don't let that fool you as it did me – don't waste time thirsting for those showy gifts you do not have – for its often when you're least aware of it – through things you count unimportant – that Jesus chooses to use you.

So if you're wondering – as I did – why you've been left out, if you're feeling down – or doubting your experience – or waiting for the Spirit and perplexed he hasn't come – let me offer you some simple words of encouragement –

Follow Jesus – faithfully – and simply

And maybe – just maybe – you'll find his Spirit has been there all along.

Prayer:

Loving God

When we read the pages of Scripture and hear the dramatic stories of testimony;

when we meet 'sparkling' Christians

It's sometimes hard not to feel a little daunted

We don't have stunning gifts – make the headlines – or have exciting stories to tell

Yet you remind us through people like Barnabas

That those behind the scenes with the unsung gifts

Can make just as great a contribution to your kingdom as any other.

Hymn: STF 395 / H&P 295 Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BagH-zTfnsQ>

Let us continue in Prayer for others and ourselves:

Living God

We are here this morning just as we are

At a time when we might feel lonely – anxious – ill or weary – at a challenging time in life..

We have heard today that your Holy Spirit brings life-giving qualities to us all – those of love, care and compassion.

And despite our woes Lord – we know that at this time there are others worse off than us.

Some may be at home – worrying about loved ones seriously ill in hospital and who they cannot be with.

Some are grieving for those lost and with whom they could not share final moments.

We lift them all before you now.....

We pray for the doctors, nurses and carers who have worked tirelessly through the past weeks and months to help those in need – and to comfort the dying. We remember that they too witness and have to deal with things which no-one can be prepared for and we ask that you will continue to give strength and guidance to them all at this time.

And we pray for our brothers and sisters of other races and faiths – many of whom seem to have been particularly affected by Covid 19. People who have reason to be even more anxious than many of us sharing this service today. May they feel the love and care of neighbours around them who make them feel welcome and part of their community.

We remember those involved in accidents – and afraid of going to hospital - those tortured, abused or suffering with mental illness, for whom this is an even more difficult time than usual. Those who have dementia or frailty and find it difficult to understand why life is so changed.

And think especially of those we love but cannot meet at the moment. Those who may rely on us – but who we cannot visit for at present.

We lift them all before you now.....

And finally Lord bless us. Here today to praise and worship you at Pentecost.

Hymn: STF 548 / H&P 668 Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDeiy9-t2GE>

Amen.

And we finish with a Blessing:

Spirit of life – fill our emptiness with your fullness

Spirit of power – stir our hearts afresh

Spirit of love – touch us, and through us, our neighbour

Spirit of creativity – enable the gifts that you have given

Spirit of eternity – draw us ever deeper into your Kingdom

Amen

Ministerial Contacts:

Rev Adrian Perry 01629 812195 / 07479968472

Rev Julie Letts 01433 650305

Deacon David Hunt 07375 304760

Rev Fran Johnson 07502448019

Website: www.peakmethodist.co.uk

Hymns:

See what a morning

See, what a morning, gloriously bright,
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;
Folded the grave-clothes, tomb filled with light,
As the angels announce, "Christ is risen!"
See God's salvation plan,
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man,
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

See Mary weeping, "Where is He laid?"
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb;
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name;
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again!
The voice that spans the years,
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to us,
Will sound till He appears,
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!

One with the Father, Ancient of Days,
Through the Spirit who clothes faith with certainty;
Honour and blessing, glory and power
To the King crowned with power and authority!
And we are raised with him,
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered
And we shall reign with him
For he lives: Christ is risen from the dead

Stuart Townend (b.1963)
and Keith Getty (b.1974)

Spirit of the Living God

Spirit of the Living God
Fall afresh on me
Spirit of the Living God
Fall afresh on me
Break me, melt me
Mould me, fill me
Spirit of the living God
Fall afresh on me

Daniel Iverson (1890-1977)

Blessed Assurance Jesus is mine

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine
O what a foretaste of glory divine
Heir of salvation, purchase of God
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

*This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long
This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long*

Perfect submission, perfect delight
Visions of rapture burst on my sight
Angels descending bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

*This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long
This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long*

Perfect submission, all is at rest
I in my Saviour am happy and blessed
Watching and waiting, looking above
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love

*This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long
This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long*

*Frances Jane van Alstyne
(Fanny Crosby) (1820-1915)*