

## **Pentecost St Johns 9am and Christ the King 10.30 Morning Worship.**

Acts 2:1-21

Romans 8:22-27

John 15:26-27 & 16:4b - 15

*May these words I preach, and the thoughts of all of us gathered here today be acceptable in your sight on this day of the Holy spirits arrival in our lives. Amen*

One of my most vivid memories at the age of about 6-7 years of age was being at a parade where there was a fire eater who spewed out of her mouth a long burning flame, she also ran the flames along her arms which for a very split second were on fire. She terrified me as I was sure she had burned herself. Also with her were two males with long spears on fire spinning them around and over their heads and under their legs all the while twirling them around, bits of hot ash bits falling to the ground. I just couldn't get my head round the fact that these fire performers didn't seem to be hurt or burnt, but It always even now today as a very scary memory for me.

Then a few years ago my cousin did a fire walk for charity. This is where you walk over hot coals in bare feet, which she did and wasn't burnt, something to do with the way the coals are laid down and this means you can safely walk over the coals but give the optical illusion that you are walking on hot coals which you can feel the heat, but walk like they tell you and its perfectly safe and no blisters occur.

So the idea of flames descending upon people fills me with horror and the thoughts of running for a bucket of water to throw over them or as we are taught get them down on the floor and roll them to put the flames out.

Now as there was 12 disciples gathered there, I think I favour the bucket of water.

The bible tells us that a great noise like a violent wind came into the upper room where they were all sitting and appeared as flames upon their heads, these flames were the Holy Spirit filling them up and giving them the power to speak to other languages so as to be able to tell everyone about Jesus in the language they understood. I wonder how they reacted seeing these flames upon each other. Did it scare them like the fire eater had scared me? These flames must have been somehow different maybe there was no heat to them or was the experience of the holy spirit a very strong spiritual experience that it took the heat out of the flames? I don't know but it seems the disciples didn't go running for water to throw over each other.

The holy spirit at Pentecost is seen as a flame a statement about a baptism of fire given to the disciples to go out with the holy spirit it illuminates them, it warms them it helps to refine them into all that Jesus wanted them to be. A very powerful illustration of the power that the holy spirit can be a helper, given over to us not for destruction but as a guide and helper alongside

Jesus and starting here after Jesus ascended into heaven just as Jesus promised us, that he would send us a helper.

But of course the first sighting of the holy spirit is when Jesus gets baptised by John and the spirit in the form of a Dove descends on Jesus as the clouds part and we also hear the voice of God, telling us this is his son with whom he is well pleased. The Dove also represents peace, purity, and beauty as we know doves are white and very graceful they are often used at weddings to celebrate the love of the newly married couple. The Holy spirit is full of love and grace.

Then there is the oil that is used in baptisms and confirmations, also to anoint Kings and Queens as they take up office, a sign of the Holy spirit has descended upon them. We also anoint the sick and the dying. Oil was also used to light lamps that bring light in all kinds of places and the light always overcomes the darkness, this Holy Oil not only empowers everyone for divine service, but also illuminates and lubricates us and eliminates friction in our lives.

Wind is seen as the holy spirit coming in just when we need spiritual guidance, like a breath of fresh air, this wind came into the upper room as a very powerful wind, the holy spirit bringing new life, reminding us that God breathed new life into us at the very moment of our birth, here this wind is giving us the chance of a new life again after the death of Jesus upon the cross.

Water is seen as a sign of living, who ever is thirsty shall take a drink, but here that thirst is seen as a spiritual thirst to get to know God. Only this kind of water can quench our spiritual need, satisfy all our longings to get to have a deeper understanding and know that this holy spirit is our helper.

Just like God and Jesus the Holy Spirit is part of the trinity, Father Son and the holy spirit, three in one and one in three.

The Holy spirit is the presence of God in the life of a believer, when we pray the spirit takes our petitions to God, he helps to intercede for us, especially at times when we are struggling to find the right words, the holy spirit hears us in the darkest hours of our lives, he is so close to us, he binds us together with God and Jesus, he is the spirit within us, he is deep within us and our hearts.

Next time you pray, include him, pray to the father and to the son and to the holy spirit, he doesn't want to be left out, he helps us to stand firm in our faith, he is after all part of us, we sing about him, we read about him, we see people anointed with him, his gifts he imparts to us of wisdom understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the lord.

He helps us to hear God's words, to understand them, to bring us into new life by leading us to repent of our sins and to receive God's forgiveness for them.

Pentecost is celebrated on the seventh Sunday after Easter which is also 50 days after Easter as the greek word pentekoste means 50. Since its date depends on the date of Easter it is a moveable feast, that means the date is not fixed.

On the feast day of Pentecost Christians commemorate the descent of the holy spirit upon the apostles gathered around the mother of our lord, it is also a reminder to every Christian that even though Jesus died for our sins, that by baptism we accept the forgiveness of our sins, we

need to receive this holy spirit as it is a sign that we are aware of our lives were very sinful before, but after Jesus's death upon that cross we are being offered the chance to start a fresh or been born again into faith. We need to receive this Holy Spirit, give up all that holds you to your old life and become spiritually alive, and in this way we can have the promised eternal life.

We wear something red to remind us of the spirit seen as flames upon the apostles and also it is a reminder of the passion of Christ on Palm Sunday. Lots of people get baptised and confirmed also on this day, making this a day of celebration also called Whit Sunday or Whitsun possibly as the apostles and everyone around them heard them talking in different languages, people amazed but a little shocked to at being able to understand them in their own native language. This was the helper everyone had been waiting for, the one Jesus said he would send, we need to receive this holy spirit, so that we can do the work that awaits each one of us. We all have something to offer and we all need each other, in some way or another and filled with the holy spirit that becomes possible.

The power of the Holy spirit will help you find the right words to say when you are talking about your faith, as he filled the apostles to go out and preach the good news, he also filled us. We are probably far more equipped now to talk about our faith as we have the bible and lots of other materials to help us, but of course this in itself takes a faith to believe in what was written down and of course the apostles were there at the time they witnessed these events right in front of them. The Holy spirit keeps you strong in that faith.

I am still frightened by fire as it destroys so much, we have seen the wild fires in different countries like Australia and Greece and Spain, we see it burns down homes and lots of wild life suffer too. But of course most of these fires are the facts that the ground and grasses are parched by hot dry spells and lack of rain, but any human activity of a tiny spark from a discarded cigarette, or a disposable barbeque can start a fire even a glass bottle that can act as a magnifying glass and cause it to smoulder into a fire.

But although the Spirit of the Holy spirit is predicted as a flame, a spark in your very being, it's the way God is always in direct contact with us, it his gift to us, our helper when ever we need him, he intercedes for us, he pleads for us, he is our guide and of course he strengthens us but more than this he is part of the trinity.

He unlike the wild fires is not to be feared, he is the promised helper, left here on Earth for us after Jesus ascended into heaven.

As you know 25 of us have just been away together on a holiday to weymouth, so in the evening when everyone came together it was very interesting learning about how everyone had spent their day, even though we had all gone to the same coach outings we had all experienced different things, saw sites others hadn't seen. This reminded me of the disciples gathered together in the upper room and how very excited they must have been when the holy spirit came in like the wind and settled upon them, I should imagine they were all talking at once and were even more animated when they came out with a new language that the spirit had given them. Now I am not saying we all talked in tongues, but it seemed the holy spirit was there, we were sharing our day's events, we helped each other off and on the coach, shared the pushing

of those in wheel chairs, opening doors wide so the mobility scooter riders could also join us,  
This was the Holy spirit at work in us all, our helper just as Jesus had promised us.

So let us pray a prayer for strength.. ..

You give strength to the weary and power to the weak. Holy Spirit help us to feel your presence  
and fill us with the power to walk away from the things that are trying to pull us all away from  
the path of righteousness. We need to feel your presence and we need your power to say no.  
Holy Spirit guide and lead us along the straight path and through the narrow gate.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen