

PENTECOST: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai, Sunday 15 May 2016

Acts 2:1-21, John 14:25-27

[MW16-16]

[Slide 1 showing]

This morning I thought we would do some spelling and 'spelling out':

Let's start with "P" [Slide 2] - "P" for Peter

Can you quickly tell me three things about Peter?

Here's a quote from 'Leadership Journal'

Have you ever thought what a good joke it was when Christ gave Simon the nickname "Rocky"?

Peter – big, strong, stubborn

- Jesus called him "The Rock" [Slide 3], the foundation of the church which seems illogical, laughable when you consider he ran away when Jesus was arrested
- then three times denied even knowing Jesus

But look at him now – beginning at Acts 2:14 [Slide 4]

- Peter starts preaching the first recorded sermon in the Christian church
- Peter is bold, he speaks with power and authority
- 3,000 heard Peter's message and responded

What happened? What happened to "Rocky"? What happened to Peter?

- Pentecost happened [Slide 5]
- the Holy Spirit happened, and life was never the same!

Then we move on to ... "E" [Slide 6] - "E" for entry

3,000 heard the message Peter spoke

- and responded, came in, joined, entered, were baptised
- for this reason we include these words, first spoken by Peter at Pentecost in our Baptism liturgy (check out Acts 2:38-9 and page 384 in our Prayer Books)

[Slide 7]

Repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus the Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God may call.

God loves everybody – no questions, no matter what

- however it is up to every individual to respond
- in baptism people receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
- a gift that unfolds throughout life, a gift that is always there
- however a person has to chose to unwrap and use that gift

Pentecost reminds us of this gift

- the gift of a new life and a new beginning

Friedrech Rest describes it like this: [Slide 8]

In baptism, the Christian is born. His old self is buried and his new self emerges. Whether in the case of infants or adults, baptism signifies this more as a promise than as an actually fulfilled fact. The direction is indicated rather than the arrival.

Next there is ... “N” [Slide 9]

- “N” for nationalities
people from all over the known world had gathered in Jerusalem
- people from far and wide who together in that crowd on that day heard and saw amazing mind-blowing events
- and many responded

For me, that ‘Pentecost happening’

- is an image, a picture, a snapshot even of what “church” really is
no boundaries, borders or dividing lines [Slide 10]
- different people, different cultures, different races
different ways of speaking, of living, of doing
- yet all one family
all with one heavenly Father ... all one in Christ

Vinay Samuel, Christian leader and author wrote:

One sign and wonder, biblically speaking, that alone can prove the power of the gospel is that of reconciliation. ... Hindus can produce as many miracles as any Christian miracle worker. Islamic saints in India can produce and duplicate every miracle that has been produced by Christians. But they cannot duplicate the miracle of black and white together, of racial injustice being swept away by the power of the gospel.

And then there is ... “T” - “T” for talking [Slide 11]

There sure was a whole lot of talking going on that day!

- the Holy Spirit comes, the followers of Jesus talk
everyone hears and understands
- and ever since then, as one book describes it: “the preachers been yellin”

Talking the Good News – the message of God’s love and life through Jesus Christ

- it’s a scary thing to stand up and talk about your inmost beliefs
even with a group of people you know
- this comes from a recent survey:
among things people fear, 7th on the list: death
1st on the list: speaking before a group!

Pentecost is about the gift of the Holy Spirit overcoming all fear

- Jesus’ followers were afraid, hidden away
now they’re about as public as you can be [Slide 12]
- talking as if there’s no tomorrow

If you’d known me at high school, you wouldn’t believe what I’m doing right now

- speaking in front of people
wearing this gear without embarrassment
proud to call myself a follower of Jesus

That’s Pentecost – that’s the power of the Holy Spirit! [Slide 13]

And so to another “E” - “E” for Evangelism [Slide 14]

Are there 5 things you can quickly say about evangelism? [Slide 15]

Evangelism is about sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ

- it's all there in Peter's sermon Acts 2:14-39
however it's not just talking – it's really living
how you treat people, react to situations
- people see something in happening in your life and they want to know about it
people see a change and they want to know what caused it

People see something in the lives of Jesus' people, and they want it too

- just like people saw the disciples were on to something
they wanted to know what it was, and how they could get it

Someone put it like this:

If we can convince people that we are on to something that's full of joy, they'll stampede one another to follow us

Pentecost is the power of changed lives - the witness of joyful living [Slide 16]

Next is ... "C" - "C" for Confusion [Slide 17]

Acts 2:12 says: Everyone was excited and confused

- a pretty fair description I'd say: "What the ____ is going on here?"
a bunch of uneducated blokes from the sticks
are speaking eruditely and eloquently in foreign languages
- languages some of them wouldn't even know existed!
on the other hand though, speaking we can cope with
but that wind ... and the fire ... [Slide 18]

Preacher Samuel Chadwick, in the real good old days (he died in 1917) described it like this: To the church, Pentecost brought light, power, joy. There came to each illumination of mind, assurance of heart, intensity of love, fullness of power, exuberance of joy. No one needed to ask if they had received the Holy Ghost. Fire is self-evident. So is power!

After "C" for Confusion comes "O" for "Ooooooh!" [Slide 19]

Oooooh it was just so amazing!

- it was a miracle really happening
- hands up those who think miracles happen today?
- a recent survey had this result:
percentage of those who mostly or completely agree with the statement
'Even today miracles are performed by the power of God' – 82

Pentecost is a reminder that God is active in amazing ways

- and also in ordinary ways
Pentecost says: God can do extraordinary things with ordinary people [Slide 20]
- like me, like you

And next there is "S" - "S" for Spirit [Slide 21]

God's spirit has been active in the world always

- right back in Genesis 1:2 the Bible records
the spirit of God was moving over the water
- however there was a new task, a new mission
and so God's spirit came in a new way

Sometimes God's spirit comes with more special effects than the latest Star Wars movie
- like at Pentecost [Slide 22]

A.W. Tozer writes about it like this:

God dwells in a state of perpetual enthusiasm. He is delighted with all that is good and lovingly concerned about all that is wrong. He pursues His labours always in a fullness of holy zeal. No wonder the Spirit came at Pentecost as a sound of a rushing mighty wind and sat in tongues of fire on every forehead. ... Whatever else happened at Pentecost, one thing that cannot be missed by the most casual observer was the sudden upsurging of moral enthusiasm. Those first disciples burned with a steady, inward fire. They were enthusiastic to the point of complete abandon.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit comes more gently, quietly [Slide 23]

- in our reading from John's Gospel

Jesus says the Holy Spirit will come to his followers as a helper and teacher as the one who will always be with them to give guidance and encouragement

At Pentecost we celebrate and give thanks for the gift of the Holy Spirit

- the Holy Spirit is the 'air in our balloon'

the Holy Spirit is in the wind, in the fire and in the still small voice of calm

the Holy Spirit is God's power in our lives [Slide 24]

And so finally we come to ... "T" - "T" for Tongues [Slide 25]

Tongues of fire

- tongues as in language

A family was visiting a church. The minister announced that Bibles were available in English and Spanish for use during the service. The youngest son tugged at his mother's sleeve: "Mummy I want one of those Spanish Bibles." "Don't be silly dear. You can't read Spanish," the mother replied. Holding out his own Bible the pre-schooler explained, "Mum, I can't read English either!"

You don't need to swot up, you don't need to learn another language

- because God speaks your language

that's what Pentecost tells us: God speaks your language! [Slide 26]

- if you are here today

then God is speaking your language

So to recap, sum up what I have been saying

- and to encourage you to reflect on what this all means for you today

here is a short video clip

[Slide 27]

God is revealing himself to you right now [Slide 28]

- God is inviting you to respond ...