

## Pentecost: The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-12, John 7:37-39 [MW17-16]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday 04 June 2017

You know those “before” and “after” pictures?

- there are lots of them on TV at the moment with all the renovation and makeover programmes of rooms, houses, gardens, barns even ...
- “before” things look pretty tired and sad, worn out even “after” everything is totally transformed
- that is part of what we celebrate today the 'before' and 'after' pictures of Jesus' followers

John chapter 7 tells us that the Spirit had not yet been given

- but when it is, oh boy!, you're going to know it more than an overflowing waterfall
- Acts 2 tells us about the disciples huddled away upstairs then it was like a rocket went off in the middle of them and they literally exploded out ...

It's all to do with the coming of the Holy Spirit

- it has been recorded in our New Testament we have heard it read
- we know what happened, but it was only the beginning and it is still going on today ...
- in a very real sense we are here now because of what happened then

Pentecost means people being absolutely, stunningly, overpoweringly

- affected, infected even! becoming aware of God in a way that cannot be ignored that cannot leave them unchanged
- something amazing happened, or began happening and it has continued on ever since then
- and we have rightly wondered ever since too just like the huge crowd that Acts 2 records ...

I really like the way 'The Message' translation puts it – this is Acts 2:12

*Their heads were spinning; they couldn't make head or tail of it.*

*They talked back and forth, confused: “What's going on here?”*

What's going on here?

- what does all this ... all we are doing today all we read in our Bible readings, sing in our songs, pray in our prayers
- what does all this mean?

Please feel free to answer for yourselves

- take it home with you think about it, talk about it pray about it over the coming week

I have been thinking about this “Pentecost event” in a new way  
- and I would like to share these thoughts with you  
it involves a young guy named Edwin  
and a game of rugby

Story: “Edwin”  
[Power Point Slide of “unusual light”]

(after story)

Pentecost is the breath of God saying to you  
- just relax  
use your gifts  
be strong with the strength you have been given  
relax, believe, take your steps firmly  
and you will find the way

Pentecost is the day of strange wind and unusual light  
- the day of recharging  
the day of celebrating that God is with us in an amazing way

[Power Point slide]  
- Holy Spirit,  
come and recharge us.  
Refresh us, renew us today.

## EDWIN

Edwin was an unlikely name for a rugby player. But then Edwin was an unlikely rugby player. He would rather have played soccer. He would much rather have sat and watched. In fact the truth were known Edwin would have been much happier with his sketchbook and pencils and brushes and paints. He would have preferred to be out in the countryside. But here he was, in a too-big striped jersey, warming up on a rugby field.

Edwin's father was a keen rugby man. He had been a provincial rep. Some say he could have worn the silver fern, if it had not been for that unfortunate incident. He was a good father to Edwin. Encouraged him all the way. Never shouted. Always had a word of praise. Had great faith in his son. Which is why Edwin continued with rugby, week after week; season after season.

Edwin's was a proud club with a long and glorious history. He did his best to live up to the tradition - played his little heart out. They had tried him everywhere: in the scrum, at halfback, on the wing, even fullback. But it was no use. Edwin did not seem to fit in any position. The club had a policy of giving everybody a game. However in Edwin's case they had decided to quietly overlook this.

Edwin did not really mind. And if his father was disappointed, he never showed it. "Maybe next week, eh?" he would say, clapping an arm round Edwin's shoulder. Next week would find Edwin, reserve, sitting on the sideline; praying that nobody would get hurt, running on with the oranges at half time, trying not to trip over his boots.

That's how it was right through this particular season. Until the very last game. The final of the competition.

Although Edwin's was a great club, with a glorious history, they had never won this grade before. Never reached the final even ... in all their years. Now here they were, lining up against a team who had won for the past three years. And they looked mean. Edwin was glad he was not playing.

The first half was a tough, bruising encounter. They survived, just. Nil all. But the other team was wearing them down. Spirits were low. Heads were bowed. They sat quietly, sucking oranges, nursing injuries. Very tired young men - all they wanted was for it to be over. Even the coach did not know quite what to say.

Five minutes into the second half there was yet another crunching tackle. The centre was carried off. There was nothing else for it - Edwin would have to go on. His heart was thumping, his knees were knocking, he broke out in goose bumps. Edwin doubted he could even walk out into the middle, let alone play ....

... but as he stood, as he stood and made his way on to the field, the light seemed to change. The light deepened, reddened, for an instant. And no one failed to notice the strange wind that blew across the park and seemed to surround him, and the odd shadow he seemed to cast - just for a moment. Edwin felt something, someone saying: just relax, use your gifts, be strong with the strength that you have been given; relax, believe, take your steps firmly and you will find the way ...

Play started up again. Their forwards started to get a roll on. Edwin's team was tired, worn down. Tackles were easily broken. He felt something like a push in the back. His legs began to move. He found himself running towards the corner. A maul was breaking up with their number eight bursting through. Loose forwards close behind.

Suddenly Edwin was flying through the air, straight at the huge number eight - shoulder dropped, arms curled, then: oof! The big guy stumbled and spilled the ball. A shrill whistle brought Edwin back to earth.

"Knock on. Scrum it here fellas."

Edwin stood up. Amazed that he still could. Amazed that everything still moved, that nothing stuck out at right angles. Someone pushed him into place in the backline. The ball came to him. His legs moved, then his hands. He passed the ball ... waiting for the whistle to signal a forward pass - nothing! The ball came

back to him ... stayed in his hands, not the greasy jumping bean he remembered.

The forwards swallowed him up, and a maul developed. This time as the ball came out along the backline it tucked itself under Edwin's arm. His legs glided over the ground. His body weaved. His right arm fended. It was like he was following a well marked path. Straight towards the goal line. As he felt arms reaching for him and a press of bodies behind him, he left the ground again. Arms stretched out. Ball grounded firmly. Try! Shrill whistle. Cheers. Shouts. Team mates helping him up. Amazement!

The result of the game? Ah well, that's another story ...

But because of what happened in that one game, rugby had one of the best centres it has ever known. Seventeen stone forwards thought twice about facing this average-looking guy. Opposition backs never knew just where he was going to go. But that's not all, it is as if this one experience gave him confidence to be himself.

Which is why in some of the most famous rugby clubs of the world - bastions of maleness, macho and power - and in some of the best known dressing rooms even, you will find some of the most delicate and graceful watercolours ever painted. They capture an unusual quality of light. There's something alluring, uplifting, inspiring. Sometimes even the meanest front row forward can sense a gentle wind in them.

And all bear a simple signature.

Edwin.