

PENTECOST: Lord Energise Me

Acts 2:1-12 [MW21-19]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton, Sunday 23 May 2021

What does “Pentecost” mean to you?

- what does “Pentecost” mean for you?

Today in the church calendar is “Pentecost”

- and it is a big deal!
it is to do with the Holy Spirit and the beginning of church as we know it
and for me it has something to do with this poster/slide
[“Lord Energise Me!” - “Energise Your Life”]

Pentecost

- a celebration of the church's birthday
a wake up call for those who have fallen asleep
a recharge for lethargic Christians
a BUZZ for those who love the Lord!
- Pentecost
Lord, energise me, energise us!

Pentecost is the beginning of our church

- because at that moment Jesus' followers, the believers received the Holy Spirit
the power from above that makes all kind of wonderful, amazing
unbelievable, impossible and exciting things happen

Let's have a look at how it was for Jesus' closest followers

- these are the ones who had been with Jesus
they had been through the end of everything when Jesus died
they had been part of the new beginning when Jesus rose
- life has been full of surprises, ups and downs
joy and wonder and amazement at what God is doing

Jesus gave his followers the “Great Commission”

- told them to go through out the world and make disciples
to preach the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations
- to perform miracles and heal the sick
to baptise in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
to teach people to obey everything Jesus had commanded

No small task for a tiny group of people

- in an insignificant corner of the mighty Roman Empire
how on earth are the believers going to manage that?

Jesus had told them to go to the city – Jerusalem – and wait

- wait for the “power from above”
so they waited, together, in the city
with all that on their minds
- the believers, Jesus' rag-tag bunch of followers
have probably the most difficult mission in the world
so overwhelming they don't even know where to begin
- and here they are, just waiting around ...

Then it comes!

- Zap!! Kapowee!!!
this is real instant, immediate, in your face stuff

Think about the scene ... imagine being there

- hear that overpowering noise, feel the rushing wind
the warmth, the light, the dancing tongues of fire
- then they begin to speak
they were so overcome by the power from above
so full of the Holy Spirit
- they did not have time to think, no time to worry
it just overflowed ... and reached out to the crowd beyond the walls

Then Peter speaks powerfully and boldly

- people are stopped in their tracks
and many of them believed his message and were baptised
about 3000 were added to the group that day
- three thousand!!!
Jesus' group was on the way!
- thanks to the Holy Spirit

What about that crowd though, how was it for them?

- think about it, people from all over the known world
had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Harvest Festival
(that's what "Pentecost" originally was)
- there were heaps of people milling around
at least three thousand, probably more!
- just imagine that market scene with its own noise and colourful chaos
stalls, street vendors, crying children, barking dogs
laughing, shouting, arguing, singing ...

In the middle of all this an unusual noise stops all the normal goings on

- attracting a large, excited crowd
people begin to rush over to see what is happening ...

What did Pentecost mean for them?

- it was at the very least a powerful demonstration of the reality of God
some of those who were there first would have heard the noise
- some may even have caught a glimpse of the tongues of fire
while all those near the front would have heard the babble of voices

Then notice this huge crowd quieten down as the realisation begins to dawn on them

- they could understand what the believers, Jesus' group, were saying
these people were talking their language – all of their languages!
and they could hear and understand ...

It was a witness to God's awesome power

- and a witness to God's closeness and love
it was like being called by name
- as people in that huge crowd heard their language being spoken
it was as if God was addressing them individually
- they heard of God's wonderful deeds and their lives were changed

Now some missed it ... may be they came late or were at the back

- or were that skeptical element in any crowd which says:
don't kid yourself, nothing out of the ordinary is happening here
- but they were wrong!

Through the Holy Spirit people from all over the world

- were in one instant switched on to God
some would have taken home with them what they had witnessed
and been part of
- the Good News was on the move!
thanks to the Holy Spirit ...

So how is it for us?

- what does Pentecost mean for us?
seems to me at the very least it means God's power is real, exciting
and energising
- this same power of the Holy Spirit that was at work in Jesus' group
those first believers
and among the crowd
- is able to energise and inspire us today!
this very morning!!!

But may be for it to do that we need to hear it again

- described as it might have happened today?
so here is my version of Acts 2:1-13
"The Thornton Paraphrase"

1.It was the day of the big shindig. All Jesus' gang were hanging out together in their one room. 2.Nothing much was going down; but then all at once it was like a dozen Mac and Kenworth trucks racing past the window - loud enough to blow the doors off and shake the foundations. 3.And then it was like lasers and strobe lights dancing around the room and shining on everyone. 4.Then they all went ga-ga. Totally off their heads. Out of their trees. Something came over them and every single one of Jesus' gang started talking. Just babbling away as this power from above surrounded them. And like they weren't even all saying the same things. It was as if they were speaking different languages...

5.People from all over the place were in the city for the huge Harvest Thanksgiving Rage. 6.Well, you can't keep something like this secret - not even in a big city. Everyone came over to see what was going on. There were heaps and heaps of them, and they just kept on coming. Then they started to go off their heads too. Jumping up and down. Yelling and screaming at the people next to them. It was really wild. Like being at a rock concert. Then they started on about how they heard Jesus' gang talking their language. 7.Of course this freaked everybody out. "How could they do this?" they asked one another. Most of the guys in Jesus' gang are just yobboes from the country! 8-10.They have enough trouble with ordinary plain English. There's no way anybody in Jesus' gang could possibly speak another language. Especially not something exotic like Japanese, or Hindu, or Russian." Yet everyone in the crowd, even with all the noise and confusion, heard them speaking in their own tongue; the language dearest to their heart. 11.As one body the huge crowd cheered, shook hands, gave high fives, hugged each other with smiles and tears; because every single one of them heard Jesus' gang speaking in their own language about the great things God had done. 12.It was too much. They kept saying to each other: "Hey! Where's it all at? Check this out! What's going down here?"

13. Well, not quite everybody said that. Someone was overheard saying, "Man those guys are away with the fairies! Really out of it! I don't know what they're on, but I wouldn't mind trying some!" Others nodded in agreement - but you, you make up your own mind.

Just what were Jesus' gang, his followers, the believers "on"?

- they were *on* fire for the Lord!
- they were *on* the Holy Spirit

If God through the Holy Spirit enabled a believer to speak another language

- if God through the Holy Spirit enabled one voice to be heard above the babble
- surely God can give you the words
- surely God can give you the courage
- surely God can give you the ability
- to witness powerfully to the Good News of Jesus Christ!

So let's affirm that in a kind of traditional way, with what is called a "Litany" [PP Slides]

- I'll read the words in plain type, we all say the words in bold type:

Holy Spirit, you are the Lord, the giver of life;
with the Father and the Son we worship and glorify you:

Come to us now, Spirit of God.

Holy Spirit, you were there at creation before time began;
your presence fills the whole universe:

Come to us now, Spirit of life.

Holy Spirit, you have spoken through the prophets of old;
by their witness the Word of God has never been silent:

Come to us now, Spirit of wisdom.

Holy Spirit, you surround the waiting church with the wind of Pentecost;
you gave life and breath to announce Christ's gospel:

Come to us now, Spirit of power.

Holy Spirit, you came upon the first Christians as a holy fire;
you set their hearts ablaze with devotion to their risen Lord:

Come to us now, Spirit of love.

Holy Spirit, you pour out your rich and varied gifts;
you call us to bring forth your fruits in our lives:

Come to us now, Spirit of grace.

Holy Spirit, you are the Spirit of truth, the Counselor;
you lead us to the truth that sets us free:

Come to us now, Spirit of God, and renew Christ's holy church

Amen!