

Welcome

Welcome everyone to the worship of Tyndale Baptist Church on this Pentecost Sunday. It's the day when we celebrate the coming of God's Spirit and it's a good day for remembering that though we – like so many - can't be together physically, we *are* together in spirit; and that means *all* of us – Tyndale regulars, occasional visitors - anyone who wants, for a short time this morning, to pause and reflect on great, mysterious things, and, however haltingly, to worship God.

The opening song is called..

'We are waiting'

All Sons and Daughters

Call to Worship

We are waiting, longing, trusting – in long, tedious days, with our lives reduced to more or less what we can see around us – we are waiting, longing, trusting that soon we will be free again to travel, meet loved ones, find out what the 'new normal' will be; but most of all we are waiting, longing, trusting that the God whose world this is will come to us, meet us, and show us once again his endless love in Christ...we are waiting, longing, trusting – and in the meantime in Christ's name we worship

'Come down, O love divine' (BPW 283)

Opening Prayer

Lord God on this day we celebrate that the waiting and longing are over – that you have sent your Holy Spirit, but the trusting continues – the everyday *trusting* that ties our spirit to yours like a child holds a parent's hand - the everyday *rejoicing* that you hold us and all the world in your hand, by your Spirit's power.

And in days when what we can't see changes everything, we worship you; for what we can't see changes our world – we can't see your Spirit at work and He changes our lives; we can't see your eternal love, but in Christ it challenges even today's dire circumstances; we can't see your endless power, but it defines the relationship of every particle, every force in the universe; makes the world what it is, and as more and more is discovered our wonder grows ever deeper; and as more and more is understood our thanks grows ever greater and as more and more is made our appreciation of your greatness grows ever more profound

And we see your Spirit wherever we look by faith; and we *savour* your love whenever we turn to serve and we *sing* in our hearts whenever our lives seem overwhelmed by circumstances– this is our worship; this is the heart of the good news that we proclaim; this is the scope of the Christ who came, who lived and died and rose again – and lives for ever – this is at the heart of today's celebration – the Spirit of God at work in our world – the Spirit who, this day, comes to us – and we worship

'Enemy of Apathy'

Sung by Mike Garnier

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Godly Play: Knowing Jesus – known by the Spirit

Readings

Acts 2:1-13

Genesis 11:1-9

The Grace is said:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

Address

There's a difference between merely following the letter, of a rule, law, piece of advice, presentation – and following the spirit. Following the spirit doesn't need every 'i' to be dotted and every 't' crossed – the words associated with following the letter are words such as obedience, resentment, force; words associated with following the spirit are words like trust, consent, agreement. They're Pentecost words, in a way. Today the Church celebrates, but it's presenting to the world not so much a factual, watertight account of something that happened in Jerusalem after Jesus had disappeared from sight, but a wonderful story – and asking us all to follow the spirit.

See, it's the inevitable outcome of the whole Jesus story, the whole God story, really. There would have to come a day when Jesus' closest followers found that the power that had moved Jesus through his ministry of healing and teaching and coming alongside people and *dying*..

Had come upon them, was now *their* power – a great circle had come 'full circle', if you like; the power that the ancients had described as 'sweeping over the face of the waters' to create the world, the same power that had swept through the Genesis stories of the flood, of the tower of Babel, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the rest; the power that had coursed through the veins of Elijah And Isaiah and Deborah and Micah and Esther and Daniel; the power that had driven Jesus into the desert and held him while he died on the cross, the power that had rolled away the stone and wrenched Jesus from the grave and taken him from the disciples' sight

Was now the power that alighted on them each like tongues of flame and made the great mix of humanity in Jerusalem hear them in their own tongues and *brought them together*.

That's been the greatest challenge of this lockdown, for us all, we cannot be together. We used to take it for granted that we could be in the same room as friends and loved ones, jostle with others for attention at a bar, stand close by in a queue, squeeze into a packed carriage on a train or bus. Maybe, sometimes, we dreamed of getting away from it all into wide open spaces, far from the madding crowds, but..only for a time; now we're having to cope with football stadiums with no crowds, spaced out queues that stretch for hundred of metres, crossing the road to avoid others. I remember, sometime back in the 70s, a Sunday supplement magazine illustrated an article about the world population with a made up picture under the headline 'you could stand the whole population of the world on the Isle of Wight but it would be like a crowded party'; probably you couldn't anymore, but there are parts of the world where the population is *very* crowded – in Mumbai, Mexico City, other cities – places where coronavirus spread is a real problem.

But there are other parts where still the spread is very thin. We drove late into the night across the Mojave desert in California last year and stopped at a brightly lit gas station in the middle of nowhere, where one gentleman sat minding his shop in complete isolation..social distancing, or what?

It's a problem on this, the birthday of the Church, the coming of the Holy Spirit. Churches that have, in recent years, made the reality of the Holy Spirit central to their style of worship have used the laying on of hands extensively; their delightful informality has been reinforced by hugging and holding; in our own tradition baptisms of course involve physical contact – a Roman Catholic Priest recently conveyed the presence of God by spraying his congregation with Holy Water from a water pistol.

And the letter of Pentecost and the Spirit of Pentecost are displayed. Always we are tempted, we humans, to make visible and tangible the things we believe, of course we are, and we believe, don't we, that Pentecost demonstrated a great reversal – often, as today, the Acts 2 story is paired with the story of the tower of Babel; to show how that ancient story of scattering, confusing language, is reversed by the *coming together* of Pentecost - from every nation under heaven, they heard them speaking in their own tongue.

But the letter of Pentecost is harder to follow, in these days. We can't physically come together; we can't hold each other or lay hands on each other to convey the spirit's coming; but then – those gorgeous Bishop's mitres, meant to look like tongues of flame – the letter of Pentecost began to look less and less like the reality of the coming of the Holy Spirit as it came to seem more and more elitist and more and more distant from ordinary people –

Whereas, Joel is quoted in Acts 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on *all people*' and in the last three or four decades the holding, hand-waving, hand-laying churches have stopped worrying about the letter of Pentecost and followed the Spirit of Pentecost again – as they have rejoiced at the gift of the Holy Spirit for everyone..

We must do so again, in these difficult days, I think. Now physical closeness begins to look like letter-following while following the Spirit of Pentecost means as much while we are apart as ever it did – thanks be for software and on-line choirs and the Internet in all its forms (yes, I know all about its frailties and dangers as well) and thanks be for the variety of ways in which folk have found to express, while apart, that they are *together*.

It is of God, I think. Thanks be that this virus hit at a time when such I communication was possible. Imagine how much harder it would have been to self-isolate before TV, before e-mail, before the Internet. Imagine how much harder it would have been before the postal service, before road transport, before trains – can we not say that God's Holy Spirit which graciously scattered us all over the world in ancient times has been graciously, creatively calling us back together again for centuries, as we have travelled, explored, invented, developed, discovered, learnt, shared – across the airwaves, along the drove roads and motorways, down the phone lines, via the post-boxes and TV studios, the Internet Service Providers and software developers –

Maybe the spirit of Pentecost courses through the veins of all these things – and we are called to follow that spirit – as we commit to sharing and coming together in ways large and small in these times – maybe that's what Pentecost is all about this year – never mind following the letter; follow the spirit.

God's Spirit – brooding over the waters, breathing into our lives, creating new truthful things out of the chaos of our virus-damaged world, touching us when we can't be touched with the very closeness of God, sighing for us with sighs words can't express – follow the spirit..

Prayers

Though we cannot physically be together, on this day our prayers follow the spirit of Pentecost, as
we pray for our *belonging together*

Lord, we pray for each other and for all those we love (in a moment of quiet we name them before you) – we ask you to make the old clichés about absence making the heart grow fonder truer than ever they were – as we think about grandchildren, parents, siblings, offspring, friends we can't hold or touch, (though maybe we can see via video or camera)- we thank you for them and for what we mean to each other and trust that your Holy Spirit will strengthen the ties that bind us

Lord **Hear our prayer**

Lord, we pray for all those who are struggling though this time of isolation with feelings of loneliness, a desire to be with others, with mental health and physical frailty, striving to overcome reclusiveness, feeling resentment at what they have lost or what they see others taking to themselves – remind us that we belong together with them in a changed world and send your Holy Spirit to comfort them and sigh for them in ways beyond words.

Lord **Hear our prayer**

Lord, we pray for all those whose work keeps this world for us all; the health workers and carers who work hard at great personal risk; the key workers in council departments and utilities who keep essential services going; teachers who are preparing for the challenges that lie ahead (and those who have been meeting those challenges for weeks) and children and parents who live with a mix of excitement and anxiety; shopworkers and employees and business owners who must tread carefully into the next phase - assure them that we are all in this together and work by your Spirit's power to keep the common good to the fore..

Lord **Hear our prayer**

Offering

We give in the Spirit of Pentecost – to empower the work of God's Kingdom in the world

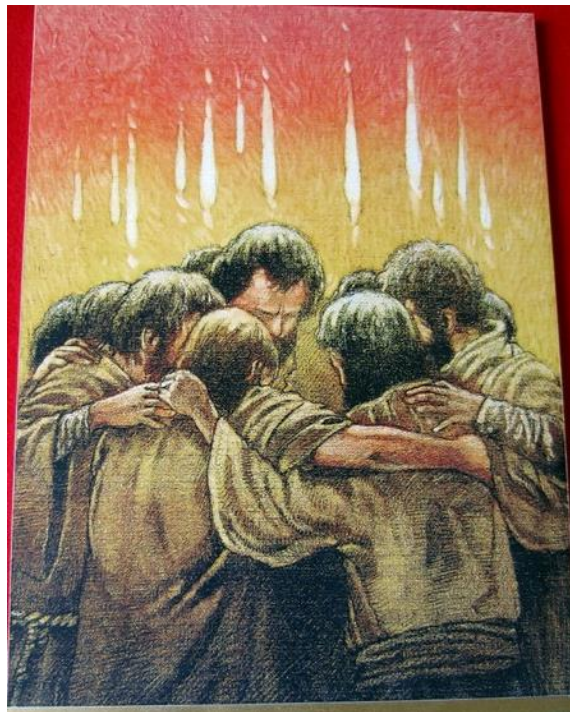
['How can I keep from singing'](#)

Blessing

So may the blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us
always..amen

Thank you for being a part of this service; thanks to Ians Holyer & Waddington, Rachels Haig & Molyneux – Mike Garnier and Brian and Eileen. As we continue to live through this time I trust that you will know the Spirit of Pentecost in your hearts and minds and take any opportunity to share it with one another.

A 'coffee together though apart' time follows, at 11.30 am



Knowing Jesus in a new way – Known by the Holy Spirit

Finally it was the day of Pentecost or Shavuot (Sha-voo-ot), as it is known in Hebrew.

It was a time of greening and blooming in the spring. The grain was ripe in the fields. The streets of Jerusalem were full of Jews from all over the Roman Empire going to the Temple to remember the legendary fifty days between the Passover and when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai.

The disciples remained in their room, a place some say was the very room where they shared the Last Supper with Jesus. They talked quietly and prayed.

Suddenly, they heard the sound of a mighty wind. It filled the whole house. Bits of fire began to dance around each one. The Holy Spirit had come. Even their tongues felt on fire. In their joy they rushed out into the streets to tell everyone!

The people passing by on their way to the Temple thought they were crazy. Maybe they had drunk too much wine. Still, what they said was understood by all – no matter what language they spoke.

Peter stepped into this chaos with a confidence and calm that the disciples had never seen before. “These people are not drunk, like you think. After all, it is only morning. What has happened is what the Prophet Joel wrote about. He said that God will pour out God’s Spirit on us so that our sons and daughters will prophesy, the young will see visions, and the old will dream dreams. This is what just happened!”

Many passed on by to keep their great traditions and live good lives. Others listened and became baptised.

So, this is why the colour of Pentecost is red. It is the colour of great joy and of fire.

Somewhere the dove that had descended from the heavens at Jesus’ baptism must have been smiling to see all of this. What was happening was like a baptism, but not one with water.

This was a baptism with fire!

I wonder where you find yourself in the story?

I wonder if you can see any parallels with today’s world?

I wonder what kinds of baptisms you have witnessed?