

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. May 15th 2005

God's Gifts - the Gift of His Presence

The gift of the Holy Spirit - signs and wonders!

Acts 2.1-21



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Pentecost marks the birthday of the Church, the most extraordinary collection of people that the world has ever seen. A collection of people who have had more influence on the world over the past 2000 years than any other, a collection of people who are the most extraordinarily ordinary people in the whole world! Twelve people 2,000 years ago, 2 billion people today! The Church has been the means by which God's purposes for his world have been worked out; belonging to the Church is to be called to participate in God's divine adventure, an adventure that colours every relationship, every situation, in every country, in every age all over the world. An adventure of a life time! Back to the first Pentecost the context of which was one of surprise and shock as the presence of God's Holy Spirit turned up and turned everything and everyone upside down! Three dynamics of the Spirit's presence that day were: power at work, promise fulfilled and people changed:

Power at Work - v 2 -4. Grasping for language to express the inexpressible Luke describes the Holy Spirit's presence as being like violent wind and tongues of fire, with the Spirit filling everyone and people speaking in tongues as the Spirit enabled i.e. God's Spirit actually there in the room and in the disciples in such a way that they could not help but express this new power and presence; it poured out in a heavenly Spirit filled language of prayer and praise.

Promise Fulfilled Before his death Jesus had promised his disciples that he would send 'another Counsellor' to be with them for ever, the Spirit of truth who would guide them into all truth and bring glory to Jesus (John 16.13). This promise of Jesus echoed the promises of God as expressed in Joel 2.28 -32 - the passage of Scripture chosen by Peter for the Church's first ever sermon. In it Joel describes the heart of what was happening on that first day of Pentecost, the how, the what, the who, and the why of the Church's first experience of the Holy Spirit.

the how - 'I will **pour out** my Spirit' v17. no miserly trickle but an overflowing of God's Spirit.

the what - 'I will pour out **my** Spirit' v17. Not something impersonal but the personal presence of God at work

the who - who will experience the Holy Spirit? '**all people**, all ages (read v 17 and 18).

the why - Joel speaks of prophecy, dreams and visions, the HS is poured out for God's people to impact on the world, to share his love and reveal his will.

People Changed When the Church was born peoples lives were changed, beginning with the disciples in the upper room then breaking out across the world. It wasn't easy going! The initial reaction was of bewilderment (v 6), amazement (v 7), being perplexed (v 12) and accusations of drunkenness (v13)! However people were cut to the heart (v 37) and 3,000 were saved (v 41).

Power at work, promise fulfilled and people changed. The first day of Pentecost gave birth to the Church and paved the way for God to work in us and in the world through his Holy Spirit.



Witness: Questions to discuss

1. Have you experienced the power of the Holy Spirit at work in your life/the lives of others over this last week?
2. Why do you think some people believe the Holy Spirit is only for the 'super spiritual'?
3. Do you think you may have limited the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?
4. How does the Holy Spirit work in the lives of our young people?
5. Are you open to God giving new gifts and experiences of his Holy Spirit?
6. What reactions do people have to your life of faith and witness?
7. Belonging to the Church is to be called to participate in God's divine adventure for his world. Does it feel like this for you?