

Sunday 20th May 2018 – Pentecost.

Reading – **Acts 2:1-21 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. **2** And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. **6** And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. **7** Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" **8** And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? **9** Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, **11** Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." **12** All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" **13** But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. **15** Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. **16** No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

19 And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

20 The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

It's quite a picture we get from our reading from Acts this morning.

It took me right back to the week right after Jesus has been crucified and the disciples were all huddled together in one room. Scared and confused and worried that what happened to Jesus would happen to them.

That week Jesus had appeared to them (through locked doors) and then to Thomas. He walked with them, he ate on the beach with them.

40 days from his Resurrection the disciples stood amazed as their friend was taken up in to the skies to be with his Father. And as he ascends he tells them that he will come back in time but that time is not for them to know now. But that the Holy Spirit will come down and bring them power – power which will give them the confidence and the strength to go out and tell people all about him – in Jerusalem and Judea and to the ends of the earth.

And so now we are back in a room with the confused, frightened, huddled together men – wondering what on earth it was all about – their friend and leader, their inspirer had gone, come back and gone again and now they were to go and spread the word!

And suddenly there was a rush of wind from heaven which went through the house – papers flying, clothes swirling around their faces, sand in their eyes and what could only look like tongues of fire resting on each of their heads. And they were each filled with the Holy Spirit - filled to the brim and overflowing with the power and grace and love and wonder-making energy of the Holy Spirit.

And at the same point as the disciples had been huddled in that room there were Jews staying in Jerusalem from all the corners of the earth. They heard this amazing sound and felt the power surge of the wind soaking through the area. They were absolutely astonished. For each one of them heard their own language being spoken and they understood what was being said. You can only imagine the conversation amongst the crowds – are they drunk, they can't be drunk – it's only 9 in the morning! But Peter explained it – he stood up with the 11 and tells them that its as was promised – God would pour out his spirit on all people – and they would speak in tongues and prophecy and be given gifts and talents as yet unimagined. What a turn around. To have the confidence to do that having been huddled in that room. And what is even more amazing is what those disciples went on to achieve throughout the world.

The thing about all this is that Pentecost and the Holy Spirit is all pretty amazing. As we said at Collective Worship in school during the week when we were talking about it we agreed it was “weird but wonderful”.

We could be tempted to see Pentecost as a one-off event – something that happened – the wind blew over them and it was gone! The disciples were equipped and it was all over. But actually what happened was just one moment in a whole ongoing and rolling and energetic movement. All powered by God and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit washed over the disciples that day and fired them up ready to go and spread the word of God's love for all. But it was just the start of it all.

We have to trust that the Holy Spirit is at move all the time. Alive in the dramatic moments and in the quiet moments too. Alive in the good and the not so good times in our lives. Our job is to be open to the whispers or nudges or even crashing cymbals of the Holy Spirit at work. Open to the gently blowing of the breeze nudging us to go and do something or be there for someone. Alert to

the times when God has clearly been on the move before us. And prayerful about what our response to it should be.

Open too to the possibility that with the Holy Spirit moving and roaming amongst us we could be in for some excitement. To newer and even more amazing things.

Pentecost was the start of God's mission to send people out and to proclaim the gospel. They were to go out there and go literally where the spirit led them and to use the God-given talents and gifts which they were all given. They were to be pilgrim Easter people proclaiming God's love for all. And so it should be for us here today at St Mary's and beyond those doors. We're at the start of a new season here in the Benefice and at St Mary's. It's exciting times. Times of listening and talking and praying and sharing with each other and with God and trying to discern where the Holy Spirit is calling us as a church and the body of Christ and as individuals each with a calling and with a whole bank of gifts and talents (some of which may well be as yet undiscovered). We are at a time in our lives and as a congregation and community where we want to be moving forward. We need to be alert to what we believe the Holy Spirit is doing then pray that we will have the strength and bravery to go forward in faith with it. We have no idea where that will lead personally or as a church but we have to trust that God is walking every step of the way with us leading the way.

Pentecost also reminds us that we are not alone. In fact we are far from alone. We are entwined in the bigger picture and plan of God's love for the world. People who are deeply loved by God, but people who are called to show that love to all in all sorts of ways. People whom God walks alongside and indeed carries, and people who can do the same with others.

And so, I guess our challenge today is are we brave enough to be the people God desires us to be – that is people of encouragement and love and challenge, people with fire and love for each other, for God and for those whom we struggle to love. Are we brave enough to listen for the whispers or the nudges and having done that respond accordingly?

Pentecost is really exciting – because to be fired up with enthusiasm and love for God and for all in this world is exciting. But we do have to take that responsibility seriously, because the world needs it, the world desperately needs people of prayer, of love, of optimism, of challenge, of hope, of spark, of life, of encouragement, of gentle words, of kind hearts, people willing to add God into their plans, people willing to embrace the power of the HS and to go for it.

And so this Pentecost time and beyond, may we be those people.

Amen.