

## SERMON for Sunday June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - The Day of Pentecost

Readings: Acts 2: 1-21; Psalm 104: 26-36; Romans 8: 14-17; John 14: 8-17

We all have stories to tell, stories which are pivotal in our lives, stories of things which have happened to us which have transformed us into the people we are.

What are some of your important stories?

They may be about things which have happened to you, things from your childhood, they may be about the journeys you have made, for some, moves from one country to the next, may be one state to another, or perhaps what brought you to live in this place. Or maybe it is of an encounter with God!

There are a lot of important stories in the Bible - well, of course, it is all about stories.

You may remember the story of Moses:

Moses saw the fire – a fire that did not consume the burning bush yet consumed the remainder of his life. Out of the fire, he heard the words, “Remove your sandals. You are standing on holy ground.” Out of the fire, he heard, “I AM GOD.”<sup>1</sup> or my favourite, “I am who I am!” “From that time on his life was never the same, it became a part of who he was, *his* story, it transformed him.

Just as the burning bush marked the ground as holy for Moses, the tongues of fire that separated and rested on each of the disciples on the day of Pentecost marked that very moment and place as holy ground. For those disciples, as it was for Moses, this was a fire that consumed the remainder of their lives. This was something that changed them, transformed them for the rest of their lives, it was a part of *their* story.

Jesus had told his friends to go back to Jerusalem and wait. Wait for something, or someone he had promised them.

There had been quite a group of them, a real hodgepodge, gathered in the room, - good yet stumbling disciples. There were those who had once admonished Jesus and denied him and those who had fled in fear after his crucifixion. There were doubters. Some had stood sobbing yet steadfast at the foot of the cross. Others had returned to their old world for a while. These were the men and women who had walked with Jesus, who had heard his words and who had witnessed miracles. Among those in this gathering were the very ones who first looked directly into the eyes of our Risen Lord. All had different pasts, made up of both bumbling and shining moments. All had their own personal encounter with Jesus.

They had been told by Jesus to wait in Jerusalem, and so they waited. How good at you at waiting, especially when you don't know what you are waiting for?! They came together in one place and waited in expectation, but for what? These disciples and followers would soon discover that this "place" where they waited was a place where the Holy Spirit would fill their whole being and where their Lord's own prayers for them would be answered. But first, they found themselves together - waiting and praying.

And during that time, as they waited and prayed, they were shaped, moulded and transformed by what happened - it became part of who they were, their story.

You remember in the readings last week Jesus had prayed for unity, well at last the disciples found themselves to be moving toward that unity. Then a sound like a violent wind filled the whole house and what seemed to be tongues of fire rested upon each of them. The fire consumed the very hearts of those who were present yet burned nothing around them. There was an immediate empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

The place where Jesus' prayers were and are answered is not to be found in the square footage of this gathering room. This "place" of answered prayers is to be found deep within each believer.

The gift of the Father is given, and the Church begins to take shape as a living, breathing entity in this world and those who gather are "birthed" into Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered and Spirit-led disciples.

This is the story of the birth and empowerment through the Holy Spirit of our own church and of our own lives as disciples. And so, we gather together here, in our church, just as Jesus commanded his disciples to gather together. We too are disciples with very different pasts.

We gather. We worship. We pray in earnest that we might be of ONE accord - free from attitudes of who is the greatest, free from trivial pettiness, free from prejudices, from fears and from apathy. Perhaps our greatest focus in renewal and revival is to be gathered together in worship and expectant prayer, to move toward the body of Christ that is truly with "one accord" and to prepare our own hearts so as to make a welcomed home for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us.

So then, when the doors of our church are flung open, and we, the gathered, the hodgepodge of disciples, will go out into the world as Spirit-led disciples of Jesus Christ with hearts consumed by this holy fire within us. <sup>1</sup>

It is then, as we return to our usual daily lives that **our** story comes to fruition. That is when other's can see that we are Christ's disciples, by the way we live our lives.

But do others know, can they see the fire of the Spirit which consumes our lives? Paul writes to the church in Rome that all who are led by the Spirit are children of God. Jesus says that if we love him, we will keep his commandments.

This fire of the Holy Spirit which burns within us, however brightly, needs to be fanned by our actions to burn brightly. You see, just like the disciples on that first Christian Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes for a reason. It comes to transform not for selfish reasons but to enable, empower, and embolden to do God's work.

Like Moses, after his encounter with the burning bush, the disciples were sent out to spread God's message. These 'ordinary folk' who even as recently as Jesus' Ascension, still didn't get it ... they were asking him about saving Judea from the Roman occupation ... and yet following this experience they had been transformed into men and women who understood Jesus' purpose and went boldly out to share the good news.

Through our baptism we are transformed into members of Christ's church, we are 'signed and sealed' as Christ's own for ever, and we are commissioned to God's service. Through our baptism we are drawn into a royal priesthood of service to God.

As at Pentecost, the Spirit is given to be used in the service of God and of people, not for personal glory or to remain unused. The Spirit comes to transform lives, to build up the people of God, to give witness to God's forgiveness and love and the coming of God's kingdom.

It transforms confusion into certainty; ignorance into knowledge; shyness into boldness and complacency into an awareness which is prepared to be active, something our world needs so desperately at the moment.

So I pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, giver of life, breathe on your Church and make us a living people, holy and free.  
Come Holy Spirit, bond of love, pour your love into our hearts that we may serve you with joy.  
Come, Holy Spirit, come. Amen. <sup>2</sup>

Revd Sally Buckley  
5 June, 2022

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

1. Anna Murdock's ponderings: *The fire that consumes us* as posted on *midrash*, May 20, 2010.
2. from the Litany for the Holy Spirit, *A Prayer Book for Australia*, p. 196.