

Sermon – Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21, John 16: 12-15, Psalm 104

May our meditations be pleasing to you, O Lord, as we sing praises and rejoice in you. Amen.

It's Pentecost! A day of celebration for Christians around the world! Have you noticed the glorious flowers? And that there is a lot of red in our church? We have red alter cloths, red vestments and I'm also noticing quite a few red jumpers, jackets and scarves among you today.

Yes, it's a special day today. As we heard in our first reading, it's the day that the Holy Spirit descended on the followers of Jesus, 50 days after his resurrection and ten days after his ascension into heaven.

Jesus' disciples had gathered together on this day because it was a harvest festival and the Jewish festival of Shavuot, which celebrates the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, way back in the Old Testament.

So, in one way, the Christian festival of Pentecost, celebrates the movement of our faith from that of the Jewish people in covenant with God, to a faith open to everyone, from wherever they come.

The writer of Acts, gives us a detailed and dramatic account of the events. There was wind, there was fire, and there was speaking in many languages, people understanding each other regardless of where they came from. Let's hear about these seemingly unusual things that happened on this day.

First of all, we have "a sound like the rush of a violent wind". Have you ever been outside, perhaps in a park, or at the beach, and a wind gust pushes you suddenly, in one way, and perhaps another? Imagine this in a room, filled with other people.

I wonder what it would be like? Scary, confusing, or perhaps exciting? The Holy Spirit is often described in terms of wind or breath, the life force within us.

And then, after the wind came tongues of fire “and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.” When we think of fire, we think of heat, energy, passion, something that can transform one thing into another. Something that can be creative or destructive. How do you use your energies, your passion, your God given gifts?

And lastly, Jesus’ followers began to speak in other languages. And at this sound, the crowd was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in their own native language. Well that’s unusual! We live in a multicultural city here in Melbourne. How many times have you been in a café, or a restaurant, or in the park, and you heard the sound of other people talking in their language? A language different to yours, and you couldn’t understand it.

In our story today, the Holy Spirit fills the disciples with the gift to be able to speak and be understood in other languages, regardless of race, culture or ethnicity. Perhaps this is the way we should be living in our world today? Together in community, understanding and accepting of each other and our differences.

What are we to make of our reading today? Perhaps we all together make up the body of Christ here at Christ Church. And here, we each have our different gifts, united by and given through the Holy Spirit. How are you developing and using your gifts? How has the Holy Spirit empowered you to do good in our world? Let’s challenge each other today to ask what are my gifts and how can I take these and live the Gospel message of love, peace and reconciliation.