



Prayers & Readings for this week

- ▶ We remember Jean Carney and grieve with her; we also give thanks for Albert who served the Lord alongside us at Brooklands for so many years
- ▶ We pray for everyone we reach out to in our ministry, especially the sick
- ▶ We pray that God's Word and Spirit may work through our faith that we may do that which is pleasing in his sight; may love and mercy abound!
- ▶ We ask that our leaders may once again call a national day of prayer, as we humble ourselves, seeking justice, truth and respect for one another
- ▶ May God's Holy Spirit revive and lead us all this coming week
- ▶ We give thanks for answered prayer for John B with very positive news from recent scans.

Monday Reading: John 9:1-12
Pray for Colin Dunbar and family

Tuesday Reading: John 9:13-34
Pray for Bill and Sue Ellis

Wednesday Reading: John 9:35-41
Pray for Phil Evans and family

Thursday Reading: John 10:1-21
Pray for Peter Evans and family

Friday Reading: John 10:22-42
Pray for Jon Fisher and family

Saturday Reading: Catch up
Pray for Jamie, Maida, Jimson and Jewell Filoteo

Sunday 31 May Reading: John 11:1-16
Pray for Sylvia Findlay

The coming of the month of June brings with it the promises of warm summery weather. As I mentioned last week, it is one of the loveliest seasons

of the year with colours of all kinds in gardens - courtesy of God's good and fruitful beauty of nature. There is another 'nature' that is meant to be fruitful, beautiful and good too. Sometimes we meet someone who seems to be the nicest person in the whole world. And sometimes we hear people say nice things about us and we think, if only they knew everything about me! Friends, we are 'mere mortals'. Many of us aspire to be 'better' day by day. I think this is good. We are all human beings in the making; there is never a decade (or perhaps even a day!) of our lives that we don't learn something new about life and its challenges.

Fifty days after 'Passover' the Jews celebrated a feast call Pentecost which was one of many harvests they enjoyed. The Jewish feast of Pentecost (Shavuot) was primarily a thanksgiving for the first-fruits of the wheat harvest. Later it was associated with a remembrance of the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Pentecost is also called 'Whitsunday'. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and other disciples following the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ, and it marks the beginning of the Christian church's mission to the world.

While the Jews used it to celebrate God giving them the 'Mosaic' Law, Christians use it to celebrate God giving them the Holy spirit – i.e. the Spirit of the holy Law. I guess what we may regard as 'right' and 'wrong' is often very much related to our present context in the twenty-first century. While we are always going to need laws and rules, many laws (of the State) that we understood as children are now very different fifty years later. Our earnest prayer is the 'Christian spirit' of these laws may still remain today. We give thanks that in our day God gives His Spirit without measure to believers so that we might have a new and warmed heart, sensitive to always wanting to do 'the right thing [before God]' (righteousness). I find that is it in consultation with other believers (as in our church life) that we can often gauge what the right thing is for our generation. It is this very reliance and need of one another that reminds us of this valuable requisite of humility and the incredible resource of the "inner witness" of the Holy Spirit upon believers.

'The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.' (Isaiah 11: 2) Grace and peace to all!

Reading: Acts 2: 1-13

Message: by Rev Michael Kane

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Today is Pentecost Sunday. It is traditionally the day where we celebrate and remember God's gift of His presence to the believers in a new and miraculous way. God gifts his Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus that results in an explosion of growth in the believers that we often mark as the birth of the church itself. That's right, today is our birthday and we want to celebrate that!

I wonder if like me any of you have had a lockdown birthday. My birthday is in early May and I had one during lockdown this year. Ad birthdays during lockdown have been a little bit different, a little bit subdued, a little bit muted. I received many messages on social media wishing me a happy birthday but many of them went like this: "I know this is not what you may have planned for your birthday but hopefully later in the year you'll be able to celebrate it fully." It's been a different birthday season; certainly subdued, and certainly a little bit muted. And I wonder if we might feel the same about Pentecost, the church's birthday? Is it subdued? Is it muted this year? Perhaps in previous years we have got together and we've celebrated the fact that 2000 years later Jesus is still building his church. The power of the Holy Spirit is still evident. We would sing those wonderful hymns that speak of the saving power of Jesus and that speak of the power of the Holy Spirit. But of course this year we can't do so in the same way. So maybe things are a little subdued? Maybe we are tempted to be discouraged by that? We might even be tempted to ask questions like: "Is God still at work among us in the same way?" it might not feel like it at times.

Well this morning I want to push back on that a little as we reflect on the story of that first Pentecost. And I wonder, and I suggest that that first Pentecost might be more relevant to us this year than it has been any other year. It might something new to say to us this year because of the situation and circumstances that we find ourselves in.

In Acts chapter 2 verse 1 it tells us that when the day of Pentecost came the disciples were together in one place. We can't be together in one place but if you go back in the story you understand that disciples found themselves together in that room because they were following a command given to them by Jesus. A command he gave to them before he ascended into Heaven. He said to them, "after I am gone I want you to go into Jerusalem and when you get there here is what I want you to do: Nothing! I don't want you to do anything. In fact I want you to go to a room and I want you to stay indoors." Does that sound familiar? Stay indoors. Don't do anything, and wait.

And here is the amazing thing. It's whilst they were in that indoor space, that room, whilst they were following that command to stay indoors, whilst they were waiting, whilst they were doing nothing, the Holy Spirit broke in! Now I think that is a wonderful reminder to us this year that no matter the circumstances we find ourselves in. Whether we are staying indoors, whether we are in lockdown, whether we are facing a global pandemic, and as a result of these things fear, isolation, loneliness, anxiety, stress, here is what that first Pentecost reminds us: God presence has not abandoned us! No matter where we find ourselves the Holy Spirit can and does break in! I wonder if that is an encouragement to anyone. It certainly is to me. God's Holy Spirit presence is not locked out! But it can and does break in and that first Pentecost reminds us of this!

And when the Holy Spirit breaks in, here's what happens as a result: the Church breaks out! The disciples are found in that room locked in under the command of Jesus and then the Holy Spirit breaks in. It blows like a wind through the place and over them as tongues of fire. And with that power they go out from that room and start to proclaim the Gospel in a miraculous way. When they speak people from all different places, speaking all different languages, can understand them. When the Holy Spirit breaks in, the Church breaks out, and finds new and creative and miraculous ways to reach people with the Gospel.

And so here we find ourselves in these unusual days. We find ourselves indoors. We find ourselves subdued. People may ask questions as to what the church has been up to. We have been very flexible in the way that we have moved our worship gatherings to online platforms. But how is the church breaking out (and I'm not talking about breaking the rules of lockdown)? How is the church reaching people? How do we navigate these lockdown and social distancing rules to reach people with the Gospel?

You see, I don't know! I don't have the answers to these questions. But when I read the account of that first Pentecost I see some parallels. I see how we, like the disciples were locked in, but I'm reminded that God's presence can still break through and break in. And when he does, more often than not, the church breaks out. He can and he will come in power to give us new and creative and miraculous ways to break out.

And so it is my prayer this year that the spirit and story of that first Pentecost would be alive in his church like never before!