

Pentecost Sermon, St Nicholas' Rockingham

Readings: Numbers 11:24-30 & Acts 2:1-14

Greetings everyone. Even though I can't be with you in person, it's still a privilege to be with you at ST Nicks in this virtual way. It's especially exciting for me, because this is Pentecost – which is in the birthday of the Christian church, and the birthday of God's mission.

Introduction

As I was preparing this talk I was reflecting on when we had been accepted as CMS missionaries to go to Namibia. It was the most exciting time of my life. But I also remember feeling the gravity of what I was doing... In fact at times I was feeling hopelessly inadequate. You see, in my mind was Acts 1:8,

Acts 1: 8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

You see the truth was, I was not feeling much power at all. Was I someone who has slipped through the cracks? I was not expecting tongues of fire, But I was expecting some experience of feeling capable of being a missionary.

Have you ever felt incapable of doing anything in God's name, or speaking about God?

I think what had happened was that I had missed the point of Acts chapter 2, which is the part of the Bible that we are going to be looking at today. We'll consider briefly the amazing things that happened on the day of Pentecost, and how they apply to us.

Prayer

Thank you God so much that we have these times in the year when we can remember and meditate and celebrate important events at key points in the year. We ask that you would guide us understand what Pentecost means, and therefore how it applies to us as individuals and as the church. We pray this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

What actually happened that day?

The occasion was the Jewish feast of Pentecost – Pentecost means 50 in Greek – because it occurred 50 days after the Passover. It was also called in Hebrew the festival of weeks. It was one of the 3 festivals where all the Jews came to Jerusalem. The other 2 feasts were Passover, and the feast of tabernacles. At these festivals, all the Jews from all over the world descended on Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was bursting at the seams. At this time Jesus' followers were doing one thing: From chapter 1 – they were gathered in a room praying. Why? Because of Jesus' promise. He had told them a number of times, that they were to expect the coming of the Spirit who would clothe them with power from on high. Then, on the day of Pentecost, as they were praying, 3 things happened:

1. There was the sound of a wind
2. There were tongues of fire
3. Then Jesus' followers began to speak to all the cosmopolitan Jews in their own local languages.

Those 3 things were carefully chosen by God because they were signs.

1. Consider of the violent wind. On Monday as I preparing this, I could hear bursts of violent wind. It didn't surprise me – I could see the trees through the window. Imagine louder wind, and constant sound of the wind. With no actual wind. That would be scary!

If you knew your Bible what would you be thinking? You should be reminded of Ezekiel who had prophesied about the wind as the breath of God blowing over the dry bones in the valley of his vision and filling them with new life (Ezek, 37:9-14). So you should have been persuaded about the **presence of the spirit of God**.

2. Secondly: The believers also saw what appeared to be flames descending on each of them.

If you had seen that and knew your Bible what would you be thinking? You are also likely to be thinking the presence of God in the burning bush, and how by in a pillar of fire, God led the nation of Israel through the desert. Or how Mount Sinai burned when the law was given to them. So if you knew your Bible you would know that **fire represents the power of God**. Now the fire was just seen by those in the house, but it seems the sound of the wind attracted a crowd outside.

3. So the third and climactic event is what the followers of Jesus did as they went outside. They started speaking with people in the crowd in an utterly amazing way. They spoke courageously about Jesus, and they spoke in languages that they did not know, and had never learned.

I don't know if you have ever tried to learn a language? I have. More than once. Its really hard work – and you can have varying degrees of success. But instantaneously having a an education about God in home language, and with everyone else saying the same thing! So we are told that they were Utterly amazed (vs 7). They were GOBSMACKED! And in verse 12 they asked they key question: "What does this mean?"

There's our question. What does this mean!? And when Peter stand's up to speak, his aim is to answer that question.

Meaning of the Events

Here the main points of Peter's sermon. There is lots of detail and lots quoting form the Old Testament. But here are the main points.

1. Prophecy has reappeared in Israel, amongst **all** of God's people
This is the rational behind his quoting Joel 2. Joel 2 is all about the appearance of prophecy amongst all of Gods people, which would happen in 'the last days'. This is Peter's first point – he's saying – "what you see is prophecy"!

That's also what the first reading was all about – when Eldad and Medad were prophesying in Numbers 11, and Joshua was distressed – but Moses said "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" This had actually happened. All of Jesus' followers were prophesying.

One of the things this Pentecost language shows us is how translatable the Gospel is. You might take this for granted but Don't! If you want to become a Muslim, if you want to read the word of God in the Quran you have to learn Arabic. Because that is the only language that the word of God can be expressed in. Arabic. But in contrast

truth of the Gospel can be translated into ANY language. And that's why we have the Bible in English. And that's amazing!

2. This is going to be explained by understanding a certain man, Jesus: a man commended by God to the nation through the amazing things he did
3. He was put to death, unjustly according to God plan
4. God raised him from the dead, as the Bible foretold would happen to the Christ
5. He Peter is an eye witness, and so are the other followers of Jesus
6. Jesus has now been exalted to the right hand of God. He's been enthroned – the coronation has happened.
7. Having been given the glory and power that was his, he has received from God the Holy Spirit, and has poured out that same spirit on his followers

If we think about what Peter has explained – it's simply a Gospel outline!

8. Verse 34 and 35 are very interesting

³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

This is a little segue

What Peter is saying that NOW, that Jesus has ascended, God is in the process of making Jesus' enemies a footstool for his feet.

So point is : we are now in a the final act of the great drama of world history. The messiah is enthroned at the right hand of God. And his enemies are being defeated.

How are the enemies of Jesus being defeated? Not be a sword or lightning strikes of judgement – but by the spirit of God enabling God's people – people like you and me to prophesy to them – to declare the mighty works of God to them.

End of segue

9. Final point : **Acts 2:36** "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

There is no doubt at all that Jesus is the Messiah!

A 9 point sermon, answering the question – what do these strange events mean?

In Summary

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Application

So there are **many points** of application of his passage. I want to draw out 3:

Firstly: If there is any doubt in your mind: Jesus is the Lord, the ruler of the universe, seated at the right hand of God. The most basic and fundamental thing you should be doing is submitting your life to him! This is what these people do. En masse – about 3 thousand of them become Christians because Peter pleads with them to receive Jesus Gospel promised of forgiveness, and new life!

May you not leave this sermon without having done that!

Secondly: Second point, is if the Gospel can be translated, the Gospel **must be** translated!

And sadly, God doesn't repeat the language learning miracle. He has simply showed us how important it is, for people to hear the Gospel in their own language.

This is why one of the distinctives of CMS is Long-Term focus.

We as CMS value long-term mission. We mean send people to live and become part of the people they serve amongst. To know their language and know their culture take a **LONG TIME**. You can't do that in short term mission trips.

And because we have a long term focus, we need long term commitment. So if you are one of the regular givers to CMS, I want you to know that your giving a correct and appropriate response to the miracle of Pentecost. If you are not a regular giver, please can you become a regular giver? The website is easy: give.cms.org.au If the Gospel must be translated, then we need long term missionaries and missionaries need long term partners.

Thirdly I want to draw your attention back to my introduction. Do you remember my moment of crisis going out as a CMS missionary? I was thinking to myself - I am not capable of being a missionary! I have not experienced a miraculous event, and I don't feel an aura of power over me. How would you help me? What you should say is: The Pentecost event is a once for all historical event – its not supposed to be repeated individually. Perhaps like ANZAC day. We hope the actual events NEVER NEVER are repeated – but there is much to learn and reflect upon.

The miracle of Pentecost happened to provide us with proof that the Holy Spirit has been **poured out on the church** – to enable **all Christians** to be the witnesses of Christ to the ends of the earth.

If you are a believer in Jesus you are a partaker in the Holy Spirit! You DO have the power and ENABLING of the spirit to be witnesses of Christ. Don't trust your feelings or experience, but trust the word of God! Now there might be plenty things you need to do to facilitate your skill in speaking the Gospel:

- a. Learn a gospel outline
- b. Learn some Bible verses
- c. In these covid times, we may have to work harder at being hospitable.

You might have felt like me. You might not feel powerful. Maybe you've felt the opposite. But you and I need to trust God's word, and the fact that his Spirit HAS been poured out on us ONCE FOR ALL – we must NOT trust our feelings and experiences. But we trust in the power of God. Friends we are in the final drama of world history. There is nothing more exciting than being part of the means whereby Jesus enemies are being brought into submission to him.

The Pentecost events are the final proof, of the enthronement of Jesus at the right hand of God, and his certain victory through his people, who ARE empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Thank you God so much that Jesus been enthroned in heaven, seated at your right hand. Thank you that having all authority, he has poured out his spirit on the church, and has given irrefutable proof of that. And in pouring out his spirit, he has enabled his church to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. And that includes here in Rockingham – and in the places where we send our missionaries. Please be at work by your spirit in us, in Britt, and in the people we speak to. We Pray this in Jesus name. AMEN!