

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

23 May 2021 - Pentecost

Dear Friends,

It is a curious thing that we refer to the events surrounding the fulfilled promise of Jesus to send his Spirit as 'Pentecost', because Pentecost is the name of another festival all together. Pentecost is the Greek name for the early Jewish harvest festival known in the Old Testament as the Feast of Weeks, and refers to the fifty days since the wave offering of Passover and the end of the barley or grain harvest for the year. This timescale also fits in with the timing of Holy Week and the Last Supper. It was while people were gathered in Jerusalem from all over the known world to celebrate Pentecost, that the events we celebrate today as Pentecost took place.

It is quite possible that our ancestors might not understand what we are talking about, because traditionally the day was known as Whitsun or Whit Sunday. Why this should be is even more curious. In church history there came to be several times of year set aside for baptisms. The most popular time of year was at Easter. The powerful imagery of believers' baptism, lowering into and rising from the water, directly relate to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost was another such time, and the traditional white clothing worn by baptismal candidates gave rise to White or Whit Sunday.

How Pentecost, or Whitsun, has been celebrated by different churches through the ages has also varied greatly. From times of baptism, to parades with the women and girls wearing floral bonnets, special services, and so on. Back at the beginning of

the present millennium, Pentecost 2000 was a great time of celebration, marking the start of a new era. When I was in Cheltenham the churches of Gloucestershire hired the Race Course that weekend for a church family festival, graced by the presence of the Princess Royal. It was a significant occasion.

What we are both commemorating and celebrating, of course, is the Birthday of the Church. Up to this point the Apostles and the other first Disciples were waiting for what Jesus had promised to come about. Now, on the Day of Pentecost while they were all gathered in one place, evidently not far from a public gathering place where the festival crowds were assembled from around the world of the diaspora Jewish world, the promised sending of the Spirit was fulfilled. As a result the previously dis-empowered group of Jesus followers became the Church, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Three thousand or so people were baptised and added to their number on that day.

Harvest and Baptism are both themes associated with the coming of the Spirit. Christian disciples are chosen and called to bear lasting fruit (*John 15:16*). We do not do that in our own strength or on our own volition. We can only fully worship and witness in the power of God's Spirit:

'When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.' [*John 15:26-27*]

Our Sunday worship service is just one small part of the spiritual life of Ryde Baptist Church. We are still not all able to safely gather in our building, so Zoom is the securest way for most people to meet at this time. It is not the same, but it fulfils an important purpose for the duration. Our Zoom Sunday Service is at 10.30am today. Services take a variety of forms and contents, and on the second Sunday of the month usually includes communion. On the fourth Sunday at 7pm we join with other Ryde churches. Our main weekly prayer meeting takes place on Monday evenings from 7pm, which is a really powerful and meaningful time in our life together. If you want to spend time praying with brothers and sisters in fellowship, this is the place to come. Regular Home Groups and other Courses - such as 'The Bible Course' that we are running at the moment - are very important for growing in discipleship and fellowship together. Of course, at the moment all these things take place using Zoom. The Zoom links will be sent to those who have signed up to receive them. If you'd like us to send you the links, please let us know. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can click on the the readings and songs. There is more information on our website at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 104:24-34](#)

[John 15:26-27](#)

[Acts 2:1-21](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream

dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy." [Acts 2:17-18]

SONGS

[The Power Of Your Love](#)

[What A Beautiful Name](#)

FOR REFLECTION

*Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire
And lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the anointing Spirit art,
Who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.*

This old hymn was surprisingly not written for Pentecost but based on an old Latin hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and written in 1625 by Bishop John Cosin for the Coronation of Charles I, and used at every British Coronation since. These sevenfold gifts should not be confused with the Spiritual Gifts written about by the Apostle Paul [e.g. *1 Corinthians 12:4-11*, etc.] nor with the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23. These are themselves well worth reflecting on, praying for, and developing in our lives. The sevenfold gifts relate to the teaching of the Church Fathers and can be found in the Messianic prophesy as recorded in Isaiah 11:1-5. Traditionally they are listed as 'wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord'. Read Isaiah 11:1-5 and spend some time reflecting on how Jesus fulfils this prophesy; then ask the Spirit of God to work in your life, nurturing and developing his gifts to bring forth growth in mature discipleship active in his service.

PRAYER

Spirit of the Living Christ, come upon us in the glory of your risen power; Spirit of the Living Christ, come upon us in the humility

of your wondrous love; Spirit of the Living Christ, come upon us that new life may course within our veins, new love bind us together in one family, a new vision of the kingdom of God spur us on to serve you with fearless passion. [Anon]

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.

Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me.

Spirit of the Living God,

Fall afresh on me. [Daniel Iverson]

SONGS

[Agnus Dei \(Worthy Is The Lamb\)](#)

[Breathe On Me Breath Of God](#)

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

‘When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.’ [John 15:26-27]

Introduction. When Jesus shared with his disciples that he was going to leave them but that he would send the Advocate, the Paraclete, the one who would come along side them, they could hardly begin to comprehend the future crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, let alone what the coming of the Holy Spirit would be like when it happened. Yet when it happened it was unmistakable, both in its manner (wind and fire) and in its consequences. Every one of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and were immediately able to speak about Jesus, in different languages that the people gathered for Pentecost could understand, just as Jesus had promised. You must and will testify about me, as the Holy Spirit enables you.

The Imperative To Testify. When something so amazing has happened it is natural to want to share it. For good reason, until the time was right, Jesus spent a lot of time urging those he had healed not to tell anyone. Not to share the good news is counter-intuitive. When good things have happened to us we want to share them. At a basic level there is something about this in the Pentecost story, but there is a whole lot more too. If it were so simple we would be sharing the good news all the time!

Knowing Jesus. The disciples had been with Jesus from the very beginning and they knew a lot about him. They had heard his teaching. They had witnessed his miracles. They had personal experience of how he had met them in their own individual and personal needs. They confessed that he was the Messiah, the chosen One of God; even as so much of what Jesus said didn’t quite make sense to them yet. All this was to change at Pentecost, as all the teaching and experiences and promises came together in one place. We too can get to know about Jesus by reading the Gospels, learning about him in different ways, hearing other people’s experiences of him, but without the Holy Spirit at Pentecost we find that we don’t really get to know him at all.

The Testimony Of The Spirit. It was difficult enough for those disciples who had met him first-hand, but it is much more difficult for those of us living so many years later. So the promise of Jesus that when the Spirit comes from the Father ‘he will testify about me’ is really very important. It is the Holy Spirit who turns what we know, have learnt, or experienced in some way about Jesus into a living relationship. Indeed it is only by the Spirit that we have anything meaningful to say about Jesus.

The Imperative To Testify. The presence of the Holy Spirit turns our reluctance to share the good news, which should be natural, into something that is possible. Because we can know Jesus fully by the Spirit that is in us, because the Spirit testifies within us about him, because we have a vital relationship with him, we can fulfil the expectation that follows on from the promise: 'And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.' Perhaps not from the beginning, as in around 30AD, but certainly from that moment that Jesus came into our lives. The words 'you must' are an order, a commandment, just as much as they are a description of the fact we can do little else.

Disciples From The Beginning. One of the reasons that *The Chosen* is becoming such a popular TV programme about Jesus around the world (and if you've not yet seen it, it comes highly recommended - although you will need a smart phone or tablet, and a smart TV to view it) is that the disciples are given back stories and characters that are accessible to modern viewers and make sense of their relationship with Jesus. They were disciples from the beginning. But when you think about it, every encounter with Jesus is new and fresh. Because the Holy Spirit is at the start of every new discipleship journey every one of us can say that we have been with Jesus from the start. This was true of the Apostle Paul on the Damascus road when he met with the risen Lord. Through the Holy Spirit our knowledge and love of the Lord Jesus is first hand and personal.

Today A New Beginning. Of course every day is a new opportunity to renew our relationship with God in Christ, who himself renews his relationship with us fresh and new every morning. Yet this Pentecost

season gives us a special opportunity to renew our commitment by praying for a fresh filling (or first time filling) of the Holy Spirit to commission and empower us to be loving faithful disciples being built into a powerful fruitful church. Jesus said that he will build his church - that is foundational, it is not our church but his. There are things we must do like fulfilling the Great Commission, making and baptising disciples, obedient to the will and way of Christ. Then there is what Jesus does, sending the Holy Spirit from the Father to turn his disciples into his living breathing church, testifying to the love of God.

SONG

[Build Your Kingdom Here](#)

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
ignite in us your holy fire;
strengthen your children with the gift of
faith,
revive your Church with the breath of
love,
and renew the face of the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. [CofE]

BLESSING

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
may the LORD rejoice in his works— he
who looks at the earth, and it trembles,
who touches the mountains, and they
smoke. I will sing to the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
May my meditation be pleasing to him, as
I rejoice in the LORD. [Psalm 104:31-34]

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God, and the fellowship of
the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and al-
ways. Amen.

<https://rydebaptist.xy>