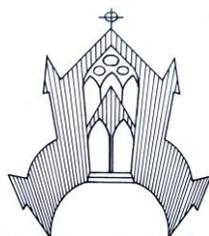


Stokesley Methodist Church



Sunday 5th June 2022



A Gathering Prayer from the Roots resources

Generous God, as we gather in this place,
give us open hearts and minds to receive all you have for us.
Renew us with your life and warm us with your love, fill us with the
power and presence of your Spirit. May the glory of the Lord endure for
ever.

Let us praise our marvellous God as long as we live.

May our meditations be pleasing to him
as we rejoice in the Lord and all he gives us.

Let us praise the Lord.

Amen

Lectionary Readings:

Acts 2 v1-21 (p1093) The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost

Psalm 104 v24-34, 35b (p607) When you send your Spirit ...

Romans 8 v14-17 (p1134) Life Through the Spirit

John 14 v8-17, (25-27) (p1082) Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

Taking It All In

This week our focus explores being filled and fulfilled.

All of Jesus' disciples were gathered together during the festival of Pentecost. The city of Jerusalem was alive with people, Jews who had settled there from all over the empire. It was a special day, but Jesus' followers were separate from the festivities. Then the Holy Spirit came, filling them and breaking down boundaries of fear and difference between the disciples and the crowds.

It is a familiar story, one in which the curtain rose on an astonishing new act in the great drama of God's purposes – the book might have been called 'The Acts of the Holy Spirit'! Today we explore the significance of that day and discover how we too might be filled and fulfilled by the same Spirit.

The risen Jesus 'opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures', affirming his disciples as 'witnesses' to his suffering and resurrection, and telling them 'to stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high' (Luke 24 v44-49).

This hope gave them the courage to stay in the city whose Temple the boy Jesus described as 'my Father's house' (Luke 2 v49), and where he had said he must die (Luke 13 v33). The importance of Jerusalem meant there were 'devout Jews' settled there, who had grown up elsewhere in the Roman Empire. This is confirmed by inscriptions and literature, often written in the Greek they spoke as their first language. Pilgrims, from as far away as Rome, had arrived for Pentecost, the 'Feast of weeks with the first fruits of the wheat harvest' (Exodus 34 v22). The preaching of the Gospel to this international audience of Jews

begins the disciples' work as 'my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1 v8).

That everyone was enabled to listen in their own language fulfils the generous and inclusive prophecy of pouring out, creating a community that is to embrace the different dreams and visions, insights and testimonies of men and women, young and old, slave and free. This anticipates the many gifts of the one Spirit given to the members of the one church who are to care for one another.

By Jesus' time, Pentecost was also a celebration of God's descending in the thunder and lightning that shook Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 v16-19) to give the Law to Israel. There is fulfilment here too, as again God comes to his people who are once more 'all together in one place'. God comes with a power such as that of wind and fire, but now not with tablets of stone but with the Holy Spirit as prophesied by Ezekiel, 'I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws' (Ezekiel 36 v27).

Psalms 104 celebrates creation as the unending activity of God. The Lord has created 'in wisdom' and rejoices in humanity and in the world. So, rejoicing in the Lord should be central to our 'meditation' (see also Psalm 19 v14 'May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight ...'). This intimacy of joyful relationship is expressed above all in the language of the spirit, the very breath of God, creating, renewing, and filling all that lives with good things.

In Romans Paul urges the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome, who maintain different customs and traditions, to 'accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you' (15 v7). Some pray to God as 'Abba', using the Aramaic of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane (Mark 14 v36).

Others say 'Pater', using the Greek that Jesus may also have spoken. But in whatever language, it is this same cry to God as 'Father', praying as Jesus taught us to pray (Matthew 6 v9-13; Luke 11 v2-4), which means the one Spirit is praying in us all and witnessing that together we are the children of God and heirs with Christ.

Jesus has made the Father known, shaping his human life by the divine love that gives itself for the life of the world (John 6 v51 'This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.'; John 3 v16 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son ...'). And so, here in John 14 v10, he says to Philip, 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me.' Those who love Jesus, who keep his commandment by shaping their lives by his love for them, continue his work when he has gone to his Father. Our prayers in his name join his prayers to the Father, who responds with the gift of 'another Advocate' who, like the Father and like Jesus, is on our side. 'The Spirit of truth' will teach us everything, above all how Jesus' words and works speak to the present. A world without God offers peace only by silencing the oppressed by fear. Jesus gives us the untroubled peace of those on whom he breathes the Holy Spirit and sends into that world.

The transformation of Jesus' disciples on that particular Day of Pentecost signified the offer of transformation for all people, as Joel had prophesied. And as all creation inches towards its final fulfilment, with 'the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day', we are invited both to be transformed ourselves and to be agents of transformation for others. This is God's great purpose for us: our 'fullest fulfilment' involves saying 'Yes' to the love and the power of his Holy Spirit.

Sending Out Prayer:

Holy Spirit, fire of God, warm us with your love;

Holy Spirit, fire of God, burn up the rubbish in our lives;

Holy Spirit, fire of God, set us on fire with love for the world.

Holy Spirit, wind of God, blow on us gently;

Holy Spirit, wind of God, blow on us powerfully;

Holy Spirit, wind of God, send us out to live for others.

Amen