

When the Spirit Comes

Acts 2:1-13

Introduction

Today we come to Pentecost. 'At Pentecost the power of God made manifest at the resurrection and ascension of Christ, is bestowed upon the people of God' (Willimon 1988: 28). What happened then has had ramification down the years until the present day and will not abate until Jesus returns.

Finding your voice

The disciples were beaten after the death of Jesus. Then, after his resurrection they felt better but remained in hiding. They were undercover Christians, it took Pentecost to give them their voice again. Charis mentioned the TV series *The Voice* last week, the words emblazoned on the judges chair 'I want you'. The disciples already knew that Jesus wanted them but now it was time to be coached by his Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised 'And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth' (John 14:16-17 NIV). Or, 'I will ask the Father, and He will give you another ^[b]Helper, that He may be with you forever' (John 14:16 NASB).

At Pentecost all changed, 'the helper' the 'coach' came to the believers. What was the first thing the Holy Spirit gave the church? In spectacular and supernatural fashion, it's voice. 'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues^[a] as the Spirit enabled them' (Acts 2:4 NIV). There is a lot of discussion about exactly what is meant here by speaking in tongues, some offer a natural interpretation, when everybody saw what had happened, they began to praise God within their own language, and all heard God's praise within their own language. Scholar, James Dunn suggest that what happened then is like what has been recently recorded. The first century speaker spoke in an unknown language but miraculously the hearer understood it to be their language, the disciples were speaking in the tongues of men and angels.

A Sign

I believe the giving of tongues was an audible miracle that described what was happening spiritually. Notice Luke describes the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost 'like' wind and fire, but it was not wind and fire it was spiritual. Tongues was the audible manifestation of the outpouring of the Spirit. Even today tongues maybe experienced as a manifestation of what is going on within us spiritually. They are not the definitive sign of the filling of the Spirit, that is the fruit of the spirit. Which the Apostle Paul sates 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.' (Gal 5:22-23 NIV)

Yet what the disciples need most is what God gives them, their voice. They had been so embarrassed at their lack of faith and dedication to Jesus at his crucifixion, that they had been

silenced. But now God gives them back a voice, full of Good News for all people. They are also empowered by the Holy Spirit; we are not given a voice and a pat on the back we are given God's Holy Spirit who draw's the church together and guides into God's plan and ways. Charismatic Pastor Bill Johnson says 'Our assignment has never been about what we can do for God, but what God can do through us' (Johnson 2005: 41). His words are important, by faith, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit we can move mountains. By our own effort and will, we burn out. 'Cease striving, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:1.0 NASB) encourages the Paslamist

Built to last

We must be Holy Spirit people, not for the signs and wonders but so that we can last, so that we give ourselves to the things that God is leading us into. There is a lot to be done but God only wants us to do what he is calling us too. God has given us a voice to speak with and his Holy Spirit to strengthen us, but before we get too busy for the Lord allow the Holy Spirit to nourish the inner you. It is no accident that the disciples were in prayer when the Holy Spirit was given, its one of God's markers to us in the bible that we too ought to find time for prayer, ideally at times just becoming still in his presence.

Conclusion,

Pentecost is the beginning of the church, we have the privilege of living within this age, we are all Pentecostals. Let's not try to do too much but allow the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Questions

1. How might we experience the Holy Spirit as our helper?
2. How might we live, in the Spirit, to flourish rather than strive?
3. What ways have you learnt to recognise the Holy Spirit's guidance?