

Pentecost Sermon May 23rd, 2021

SLIDE 1 When the landscape changes?

Point – The Holy Spirit is given so that we can be witnesses in the world.

We need to pray, ask and go

Acts 2:1-21

1. This last year we have been through some of the most difficult times many of us will ever have lived through.

The landscape of our lives changed beyond recognition as an unseen virus came to live among us.

And since that time last March the landscape has changed many many times. With rules, regulations and guidelines becoming part of our daily life.

Let's think of some of the things we have been told we couldn't do:

1. Meet our friends and family.
2. Hug
3. Sing
4. Travel
5. Go outside for as long as we wanted.
6. Have a holiday.

What about the things we learnt to do for the first time?

Zoom calls.

Gardening

Craft????

- So, the landscape of our life has changed an awful lot over the last year and even over the last week there has been things that have changed which give us a little more freedom.
- Hug
- Restaurants open
- Signs of hope and the landscape of our lives looking a little more like they used to.

In a way its similar to what the apostles went through over 2000 years ago but before we think about today's reading, I want to quickly pick up on Acts 1:8 when Jesus tells the apostles to wait for the Holy Spirit who will give them power to be witnesses.

Power in this statement of is the word dunamis which we get our word dynamite from.

- **Dynamite is no little** thing to play around with. It holds great power to change the landscape forever.

That is exactly what it's like to have the Holy spirit living within us it is having a power that is not of our own making but is Gods own spirit that helps us to change not only the landscape of our own lives- those bits which are not how God wants us to live and also the landscape of the places around us.

The Holy Spirit is given to us to witness about Jesus.

2. Let's take a closer look at today's reading

Significance of the feast of Pentecost to the Jews

- Firstly it is significant that this happened on the feast of Pentecost. Pentecost was an agricultural festival but had a much deeper meaning too. It was the day when the Jews remembered how Moses went up to Mount Sinai to receive the law of God. The law that was to enable the Jewish community to live in a way that was pleasing to God and to show the nations around His holiness.

- The apostles and Jesus other followers including his mother were all together in the same room.
- Then we hear in verse 2 about the wind or breath coming through the house. It has echoes of the creation story how God breathes into man and brings life. The Holy Spirit brings new life into anything and everything that he touches. It speaks of reversing the curse of the fall of man and bringing ourselves and creation into a relationship that was intended from the beginning with our creator God.
- Next we read how what looked like **fire appearing** on the heads of the Apostles,(v3)
If we remember the story of Moses going up to Mount Sinai which had fire on top of it representing God presence on it. (Exodus 19:18) Today's reading would suggest that this is a reversal to how God no longer was to be a distant unapproachable God but was in fact coming to live within his people.
- We could think of it like this - In the Old Testament we saw how God was distant because of the sin of man from his people. Then Jesus in the NT comes to live alongside Gods people, teaching them about the Kingdom of God, now the Holy Spirit the 3rd person

of the trinity was going to indwell in all those who called on the name of Jesus as their personal saviour, to enable them to live their lives with the power of the Holy Spirit to help them.

- The whole events of Pentecost reads like something out of a sci fi movie and I often wonder why Luke who wrote the book of Acts felt it was necessary to write such a graphical description of the coming of the Spirit. I have concluded that if he hadn't then for those who do have dramatic fillings of the Holy Spirit, people witnessing might think they were just mad and crazy.
- Some resist the Holy Spirit worrying about what he may do. However it really is at our peril that we quench what the Spirit wants to do, as without the power we have no church of God we only have people trying to do a job without the power of God behind them.
- Acts 2:5-13 As the Spirit descends on the apostles the landscape changes for them dramatically. Both physically and spiritually.
- One of the first things that happens to them is that they begin to speak in tongues. Speaking in tongues

is given to the followers in order that they can proclaim the good news of the gospel. To witness

- The gift of tongues on Pentecost was for a very specific reason – so that the people who were gathered there could understand what the Apostles were saying in their own language.
- However I would say the gift of tongues for most people today is a way in which they feel helps in them praying to God. When words seem to run out it is a way to keep praying. The bible tells us the Spirit groans to help us pray when we don't know what or how to pray. (romans 8)
- People who witnessed the apostles and the followers speaking in tongues and being affected by the HS thoughts they were drunk.
- Peter goes onto to tell the crowd that they are not drunk but that it is a fulfilment of prophecy.

¹⁷“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.

¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

It is obvious that Peter is saying that things are not going to be the way they have in the past. The landscape has changed and will be changed forever. Where God had been distant and revealing himself to only a few he was now going to live within everyone who trusted in Jesus.

For us here today if we truly desire God to have his way in our lives and to affect the places we live and work we need to recognise that the Spirit always brings change.

We have in a way become quite used to change over the last year and maybe we need to embrace some of that mindset in order to help us to navigate the future of our own parish. There are many changes happening in the next few months, between live streaming next week and Revd Gemma leaving in June then Revd Leonard arriving in July.

With these changes there will always be a level of uncertainty of what the future may look like. However with the leading of the Holy Spirit I am very confident that our parish will come out of it stronger and more focused on the way ahead than we may have been without this last year I don't believe we will ever take life for granted

again – we won't take meeting together for granted or singing or fellowship and maybe the things that we used to think were so important will be less so as we begin to navigate the new landscape we find ourselves in.

So, while things may look and feel different in the landscape, we emerge into the message of the gospel never changes.

If we were to read church history, we would know that its often out of the most difficult times that people go through like pandemics, wars or a falling away of the faithful when prayer becomes more fervent that we actually see the church of God grow.

The welsh revivals are heart amazing stories of God grace and mercy being poured out on those who no longer were satisfied with the way the landscape looked in the towns and even their churches.

Maybe some of us feel like that today. We may feel that we are at the end of ourselves and are praying Lord have your way in my life.

We realise how important our faith has been over the last year or maybe have realised how we need to look with fresh eyes at what we used to understand of our faith.

Maybe the last years change of landscape has given us time to reflect on our lives and faith and what we are doing.

The lord hears our prayers: Throughout the bible and throughout church history the prayers of Gods people have brought change. Let snot grow weary in hard times but let's pray that God Holy Spirit will come and refresh us so we can go and change the landscape around us for the better.