Home Service Sheet for Sunday 5th June 2022 (Pentecost)

Call To Worship:                Psalm 102:24-30

O Lord, how manifold are your works!
    In wisdom have you made them all;
    the earth is full of your creatures.
Here is the sea, great and wide,
    which teems with creatures innumerable,
    living things both small and great.
There go the ships,
    and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.
These all look to you,
    to give them their food in due season.
When you give it to them, they gather it up;
    when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.
When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
    when you take away their breath, they die
    and return to their dust.
When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
    and you renew the face of the ground.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, make Your presence known to us today, through our worship, our prayer, and the reading of your Word. Almighty God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, within whose unity lies all that is You: perfect love, grace, justice, peace, mercy and power. As we take this time today, may we know that we are part of Your body, Your Church throughout this world. Fill us afresh with Your Holy Spirit and infuse us with Your love. Empower us today, O Lord, to walk in holiness and strength to proclaim the wondrous truth of Your Word. This we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

Hymn                            Eternal Spirit by Isaac Watts
<https://youtu.be/wazTrKEen1I>

Eternal Spirit! how we bless and sing the wonders of Thy grace:
Thy power conveys Thy blessings down from God the Father and the Son.

Enlightened by Thy heavenly ray, our spiritual darkness turns to day;
Thine inward teachings make us know, our danger and our refuge too.

Thy power and glory work within, to break the chains of reigning sin,
Our dominating lusts subdue, and form our fallen hearts anew.

The troubled conscience knows Thy voice, Thy pardoning words awake our joys,
Thy work illuminates the mind, and lets the soul assurance find.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

First Bible Reading:    John 14:8-17

8 Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” 9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Second Bible Reading:   Acts 2:1-8

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested[a] on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?

Reflection

Pentecost is when we normally think about God the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church in Jerusalem, as is recorded for us in Acts chapter 2. We shall be spending some time in that chapter, but before we do that I’d like us to spend a little time looking at what Jesus said about the coming of the Spirit, as recorded in John’s Gospel. In our first reading Jesus said that the Father “will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.” (John 14:16) Prior to this, Jesus has been speaking about how the Father is seen in Him. We might go on to say then, that Jesus is seen in the Holy Spirit as He goes on to dwell within the people of God.

In a very real sense Jesus has been the disciples’ advocate, or helper, throughout His earthly ministry. When He says that God the Father will send another advocate, or helper, He is specifically saying that this will be a helper of the same kind as He. In other words there is a continuity between Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They are both God, being two of the three Persons of the Trinity. As Jesus has taught the disciples the truth, and has helped them to grow and develop in their calling, so the Holy Spirit will do this and more. These words that Jesus speaks are also a promise that will be fulfilled before very long, on the day of Pentecost.

Note what Jesus says about the promised Spirit in verse 17. He is the “Spirit of truth” who will “abide with you” and “will be in you”. The emphasis here is on the way in which the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth to those who follow Jesus. Clearly the truth is very important, and we mustn’t forget that. What truth is most important, though? Well later in John chapter 14 Jesus goes on to speak about how the Spirit will help the disciples to remember the words of Jesus. This strongly suggests that the truth is the Word of God. More than any other facts or truth we might come across in life, the truth we need is the Word of God, and specifically the Gospel.

It is also important to note that the Holy Spirit will progress from being with the disciples, as He was when Jesus spoke to them, to dwelling within them. In the Old Testament the Spirit is often seen to be resting upon, or with, someone, be it a prophet, a judge or a king. These were special individuals who God called and used for a specific purpose, but a time was soon to come at Pentecost when God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28), or perhaps more accurately all those who have faith in Christ. There is so much more we could say about our passage from John’s Gospel but let us now move on to Acts chapter 2.

When we begin to read this familiar chapter of Scripture we are hit by the descriptive language of how the Spirit came. He is described as sounding like wind, and appearing like tongues of fire. We can get some idea what this might have been like, but as is often the case we human beings struggle to describe our experience of God using human language. What is more important here is to look at what the Holy Spirit causes to happen through the disciples. We are told in verse 4 that they were “filled with the Holy Spirit”. Since this day it has been the experience of all Christians that we are filled with the Spirit when we place our faith in Jesus. This is not an optional extra for the select few as some seem to think.

In this chapter Peter goes on to preach the Gospel to the huge crowds of people gathered together in Jerusalem. Ultimately the filling of the Spirit is to empower and equip people to proclaim the Good News of Jesus so that others will hear and believe. Our reading speaks about something else first, though, and that is the disciples speaking “in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (v.4) I believe that it is important that we understand what this is actually is. These ‘tongues’ are in fact known human languages, as the passage goes on to make clear when people from different places hear them speaking in their own languages and dialects so they can understand.

The reality is that although most English translations use the word ‘tongues’ to translate the Greek word GLOSSA it is not the most obvious or helpful translation. Normally this word literally means known languages such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin or English. Even when Paul speaks about the gift of languages in his first letter to the Corinthians it is the same word with the same meaning (1 Corinthians 14:1-25). What some Christians today call ‘tongues’ is not the Biblical gift of the Holy Spirit, but rather a made up language found in various Eastern religions. Anyone can learn to speak this nonsense, but only God’s Spirit could enable someone to speak in an unknown foreign language fluently.

The gift of languages drew people from the crowd so that they were intrigued and ready to listen to the preaching of the Gospel. That is the purpose of the gifts that the Holy Spirit gave to the disciples – proclaiming the Good News of Jesus so that many were added to the Church. So also today the Holy Spirit first and foremost empowers us to share the Gospel of Jesus with people. He also helps us  to live in obedience to God’s laws and live in holiness. To God be the glory! Amen!

Pastoral Prayer

Heavenly Father we thank You for the fullness of Your blessing towards us. Lord, we want to know and understand more and more of what it means to simply rest in You. May we each abide in You, in sweet union with our Saviour and remain in blessed communion with You in ever closer intimacy. Teach us, Lord, and train us to rest in Your love. Guard us and guide us under the shelter of Your canopy and reveal more and more of Yourself to us we pray. Thank You Father for sending Your Holy Spirit to be with us always and to live within us. Make us willing vessels to be used by Him. Guide us into all truth, for we ask this to Your praise and glory, amen.

Benediction (St Anthony of Padua)

O God, send forth Your Holy Spirit into my heart that I may perceive, into my mind that I may remember, and into my soul that I may meditate. Inspire me to speak with piety, holiness, tenderness and mercy. Teach, guide and direct my thoughts and senses from beginning to end. May your grace ever help and correct me, and may I be strengthened now with wisdom from on high, for the sake of your infinite mercy. Amen.