**Cranmer Group Sermon, Worship & Prayers**

**May 31th - Pentecost**

**‘No Gin!’ (Acts 2:1-21)**

*Dear Friends,*

*It’s very good to be with you today to celebrate what’s often referred to as The Church’s Birthday – Pentecost; the day on which God poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit on the first followers of Jesus. We celebrate not only that day in Jerusalem almost two thousand years ago, but also the continuing presence and power of the Spirit in the world today, bringing in the Kingdom of God and transforming people’s lives, as they know the love of Jesus Christ in their lives.*

*We’re again following our virtual service on Sunday mornings with an opportunity to catch-up with our friends across the Benefice. The service will be available online on Sunday from 9.30AM. It’ll last about 30 minutes, and then, at 10.15AM, we’re able to join together in a video conference, using a service called Zoom. But for those of you without internet access, you can still join our chat on Zoom, by phone. Call 0131 460 1196. Then key into your phone the meeting ID (864 0083 1074 #) and password (549794 #). Do join us!*

*May you know the presence of the Holy Spirit at work in you today.*

*With love and prayers from Clare, Esther and me (& Ella our Lab!),*



**Rev. Tim Chambers
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Alleluia! Christ Is Risen! **He Is Risen indeed!
Alleluia!**

**The Collect for Pentecost
(Common Worship)**

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
ignite in us your holy fire;
strengthen your children with faith
and revive your church,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
**Amen.**

**Come Down, O Love Divine**

**Played by Deborah Davies**

Come down, O Love divine!
Seek thou this soul of mine
And visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
Within my heart appear,
And kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.

O let it freely burn
Till earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
And let your glorious light
Shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
Mine outward vesture be,
And lowliness become mine inner clothing;
True lowliness of heart,
Which takes the humbler part,
And o’er its own shortcomings weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong,
With which the soul will long,
Shall far outpass the power of human telling;
For none can guess its grace,
Till we become the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

Bianco da Siena, trans. R.F. Littledale

**Bible Reading: Acts 2:1-21 (New International Version)**

**Read by Clare Chambers**

***The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost***

*2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

*5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?

9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’ 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’*

*13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’*

***Peter addresses the crowd***

*14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

*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.
18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
19 I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.
20 The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.
21 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

**Sermon: ‘No Gin’ – Rev. Tim Chambers**
When was the last time you were amazed?
Not just everyday “Hey, that’s a bit special!” But really, truly, jaw-droppingly amazed.

If you’re like me, I think I get a bit used to being bombarded with so many sights and sounds. We’re all exposed to so many images across all of the various media we interact with; we have so many opportunities to try new things or see new places, that there’s a real danger our palates – both literally, taste-wise, and in a broader sense - become dulled to new and extraordinary things. We stop for a moment; acknowledge briefly; and move on to where we may encounter the next new experience.

I’m not sure that it was the last time I was truly amazed, but I do have a very clear memory indeed of my mouth absolutely hanging open, watching the trapeze artists of the Cirque du Soleil, what must now be more than twenty years ago, in the huge space of London’s Albert Hall. I still remember like it was yesterday thinking to myself at the time, now I know why it’s called jaw-dropping, as I gazed, astonished, at the male acrobat snatching his partner from the air, after she’d launched herself yet again out into the void.

When was the last time your jaw really hit the floor?

It’s clear from St Luke’s account (the same Luke wrote both the Gospel that bears his name, and also the Book of Acts) / it’s clear from Luke’s account, what the reaction of the people of Jerusalem is, that first Pentecost. As the Holy Spirit descends from God upon the first followers of Jesus all gathered in the same house, and as this collection of rather rustic Galileans, spontaneously and improbably all start to speak in the multiple languages of the Eastern Mediterranean, Luke recounts how the people around them react. They are “utterly amazed” (verse 7); “Amazed and perplexed” (verse 12); or “amazed and astonished”, as another of my Bible translations has it. They can’t believe what’s happened to these men and women – you can’t explain, other than through supernatural means, how they could be speaking in all of these different tongues.

What God’s doing, through the Holy Spirit descending upon these first Christians, is truly extraordinary. It is the power of the Spirit that is doing this; the power that Luke says shows itself in the sound like the blowing of a violent wind coming from heaven, and what seems to be tongues of fire that come and settle upon each one of Jesus’s followers. This power, and this fire and this wind, is just one way in which the Holy Spirit reveals himself. We also see, at the start of each of the Gospel accounts of the life of Christ, how then the Spirit took the form of a dove, descending onto Jesus from Heaven as John baptised him in the Jordan; the Holy Spirit as bringer, and symbol, of peace.

So the presence of the Holy Spirit - God’s presence - here on earth amongst us, has the capacity to bring about true amazement and astonishment. But whilst the way in which the Spirit is manifest at Pentecost, in wind and fire, is extraordinary in itself, it is the consequence of the Spirit in Jesus’s followers that is the thing that causes the onlookers to be amazed.

Of course Luke famously tells us that these onlookers, so astonished were they at the proliferation of languages, thought that this group of Christians were all drunk. But Peter rebukes them for thinking this – they most certainly haven’t had too much wine, it being only nine o’clock in the morning. Nor, indeed, have they had any other alcoholic drink – hence the title of my podcast. I’m just doing a slightly cheeky experiment with names of sermons on the podcast website. I entitled one of my sermons at the end of April “G-I-N”, standing for “God Is Near”, and that’s had the highest number of downloads of all our services. So I thought I’d see this time too whether having a similarly unusual and slightly provocative name this week - “No gin” - attracts more listeners again!

Anyway, the group of believers moves out from being inside the house –although it’s not explicit, they must have done so, if the onlookers are to hear them. And as they do this, it’s their speaking in multiple tongues that causes astonishment in others: the outward sign, pointing to the inward, spiritual new reality, of the presence of the descended Holy Spirit poured into these men and women.

It’s an outward sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit, which echoes Paul’s famous account of the Fruit of the Spirit in chapter 5 of his letter to the Galatians. As St. Paul says, living by the Spirit, keeping in step with the Spirit, and in doing so “belonging to Christ Jesus”, this reality of the Spirit within us will take the outward form of the Spirit’s Fruits: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Just as the crowds were astonished at the fruit of the Spirit coming to dwell within the first Christians, as they spoke in this extraordinary range of different tongues, so, too, it’s the presence of the Holy Spirit within us that has the capacity through these outward spiritual fruit, to make others sit up and take notice.

One of the fundamental messages of Pentecost for us, as followers of Jesus Christ, is that these Fruits of the Holy Spirit are all available to each one of us, here, today – as, indeed, they are available to every man, woman and child should they invite Jesus Christ into their lives. If we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, as we establish a pattern in our lives - of prayer and of worship; of becoming closer to the person of Jesus through reading our Bibles; of building up one another in our faith as we journey together in fellowship with our Christian sisters and brothers; / if we allow the Holy Spirit to work within us in this way, not only will we amaze ourselves at the Spirit’s transformative power, but we will astonish others through the ways in which we change, and are distinctively, attractively different from those around us.

“What is it that you have, that I don’t?” they’ll maybe ask. Perhaps particularly at this uniquely difficult time for us all, “How do you manage to have a peace in the midst of this pandemic?” “How are you able to be so calm about the future, when everything’s so uncertain?”

It seems that commentators are now talking in terms of a new “BC” and “AD” – “Before Coronavirus” and “After the Disease”, and that we can expect significant changes to how we live our lives, even once the immediate threat from the virus has receded. Life won’t be the same.

Peter’s speech to the assembled crowds in the last part of our reading this morning reflects a not dissimilar shift. That first Pentecost morning, the descent of the Holy Spirit meant that nothing would ever be the same again either. A new era had begun; an era that fulfils the prophecies of the Old Testament prophet, Joel, which Peter recounts. God’s Kingdom has broken through into the present in the person of the Holy Spirit, in order that - through him working in us – each and every one of us may enter into a relationship with Jesus, and in so doing, be reconciled to our loving Heavenly Father.

Many people around us today are reflecting on how life has been up to this point for them, and what – post-Covid – they would like it to become. The changes that they hope to see in themselves, in our society, and in our wider world. Deeper questions around the meaning or the purpose of their life that they’ve maybe been pondering whilst we have all been in lockdown. In fact I had a conversation earlier this week with an older individual in one of our villages, who said they hadn’t been part of a church in a long time, but had been prompted by our Coronavius hardships to want to return to their local church when we’re once again open.

What an opportunity for us as Christians this time presents! Of course we want to see our existing church families thrive when we return to being able to meet in person once again. But we also have a passion to see people turning to Jesus, whether for the first time, or coming back into relationship with Christ.

Both for our own personal sakes, and also as a truly powerful witness with the capacity to amaze and astonish people - as they see what the Holy Spirit is doing in our personal lives, in our church families, and out into our village communities, let’s allow ourselves to bear extraordinary fruit of the Spirit. Let’s do so in order that all those around us can see the love, joy and peace - and all the other Fruit too - that the Spirit’s presence brings to our lives. I know that very many of you are already, especially in these pandemic times, showing these fruit of the Spirit through serving others in our communities, whether specifically through our church families or through broader community groups. Thank you all so much for everything that you do in this way.

However, I’d nevertheless like to leave you all with three challenges this morning, if I may, as follows:

• Firstly, given what we know of the Holy Spirit from this account of Pentecost, and from other Biblical stories, do we – do you and do I- really expect amazing things from God, through the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit?

• Secondly, for each one of us, which are the Fruits of the Spirit which we are already showing in our lives, and how might we open ourselves more to the work of the Holy Spirit in us, such that these fruit, and any of the others, may flourish in our lives.

• And finally, are we truly living our lives in the peace that comes from the knowledge of our ultimate resting place with our loving Heavenly Father

Let’s pray…

God who cannot be bound,
Flow into our hearts and minds.
Wear down our resistance to your love
And refresh us with the spirit of your compassion.

Today, as we commit ourselves once more to your work,
We ask you to show us how to hold the needs of your world
At the heart of our lives,
And to celebrate your many gifts with joy.

May your power transform our lives;
May your Spirit set us free;
And may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Be with us all now and for ever
Amen.

**Intercessions**

**Led by Jules Humpheson**

In the power of the Spirit, let us pray to God the Father, that through his dear Son, he would accomplish his will for the Church, the world, and all people for whom we pray….

We pray for all the people of our villages in these unprecedented times; may they keep safe and continue to show the generosity to others that has helped us all through the lockdown. We also give a prayer of thanks for living in a place that gives us plenty of opportunity to escape safely from the confines of our homes.

Lord, in your mercy
**hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Government, that they lead with integrity and honesty, and not the self-interest and arrogance we so often see in our society.

We pray that we may take this opportunity to re-shape our society to follow Jesus’ teachings, particularly in our treatment of the poor and vulnerable; may we all realise that the people who care for others should be valued and cherished, not dismissed and exploited.

We pray for all those facing uncertainty and isolation at this time; may we all try to help and comfort them.

Lord, in your mercy
**hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who are sick and who have died at this time, whatever the cause. May we bring solace and comfort to their loved ones who mourn them. We also pray for those who care for them, often putting their own lives at risk to help others. We thank you that there are people who, following the example Jesus showed us, put others before themselves.

Lord, in your mercy
**hear our prayer.**

Let us remember and pray for all of those across the world facing sickness, uncertainty and hardship, even more so at this time. May we all come together and unite, in common cause, to tackle the problems facing the world, be it war, illness, poverty, climate change or any of the issues that we have the power to change.

Lord, in your mercy
**hear our prayer.**

Father, we rejoice in your Spirit. Send it again into our hearts, into our lives, and into our world. Hear our prayers, and save us in your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
**Amen.**

 **The Lord’s Prayer**As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

**The Collect for Pentecost
(Book of Common Prayer)**

God, who at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end.
**Amen.**

**O For A Thousand Tongues to Sing**

**Played by Deb Hubbard**

Oh for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer’s praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
’Tis music in the sinner’s ears,
’Tis life and health and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood availed for me.

He speaks: and listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive,
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Saviour come;
And leap, ye lame, for joy!

My gracious Master and my God
Assist me to proclaim
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honours of Thy name

Charles Wesley

I also strongly commend to you a very moving contemporary worship song, ‘Come Holy Spirit’, written by some South African Christians, which I came across during a diocesan curates’ mission trip in 2019, to our sister Diocese of Natal. This recording was made at LIV, an extraordinary village for South African orphans, founded by a Christian couple. I find it so beautiful to see God at work amongst his people in this way, with worship at the heart of this community. It’s mostly in English, but the chorus is in Zulu – ‘Uthando lwakho luyaphila’ (meaning ‘Your love is alive’), and ‘Umbuso wakho uyaphila’ (‘Your Kingdom is alive’):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKAlsYb2V6o>

Do watch it – I’m sure you’ll enjoy it!

**A Closing Blessing**

The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,
give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
and strengthen you to proclaim the word and works of God;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you & remain with you always.
**Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**