

SERMON NOTES

SUNDAY 19.05.24

PREACHER: PS NATHAN BEAN

“Empowered By The Spirit”

BECOMING CHRISTLIKE

BEING, THINKING & DOING

Conviction of a Disciple: We become increasingly resilient as we are filled with the Spirit

OVERVIEW

Prior to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples were filled with fear and confusion. From a Jewish perspective, God's presence was thought to be distant and unapproachable - something only accessible at the Temple and to the spiritual elite.

As the Holy Spirit fell on the upper room, an entirely new community was formed - a collective of people who became the true carriers of God's Spirit into the outer reaches of the world. The Spirit transformed fear and confusion into boldness and courage to proclaim the good news of God's Kingdom that had come in Jesus.

The Church is not a single place where we gather (as with the Temple). Instead the Church is the gathering together of God's people regardless of where we are. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we become the new temple and we are the carriers of God's powerful, life-giving presence in the world.

ACTION

Step 1: Reflect: What stood out to you in this message?

Step 2: Assess: How would viewing yourself as a mobile temple (a personal carrier of God's presence in the world) change how you live this week?

Step 3: Act: The Spirit brought boldness to the disciples. What areas in your life would you like to receive and live out that same boldness?

THOUGHT

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:1-18

The Holy Spirit's work on the day of Pentecost, which we read about in Acts 2, marked the beginning of the Church. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, it was a moment of divine ignition, transforming their fear into boldness and their mere information into the actions that took the Gospel of Jesus all throughout the earth.

But it wasn't only an act of New Creation, it was also intimately tied to the history of God's work in the world through his people, Israel. This pivotal event took place 50 days after Passover during the Jewish Festival of Shavuot or "Feast of Weeks", a festival celebrating the first fruits of the harvest. This symbolism speaks powerfully to us today: just as the first fruits signify the beginning of a bountiful harvest, Pentecost heralds the beginning of a spiritual harvest that started through the coming of the Spirit in the upper room and continues to multiply and fill the earth (Gen 1:28, 9:1) to this day.

However, the Festival of Shavuot wasn't only an agricultural festival. It commemorated the giving of the Torah/Law/Teaching to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It was on that mountain that we read that God's presence showed up powerfully in wind and cloud and fire.

For 10 days after Jesus' ascension, the disciples gathered together in a small room, hearts pounding with a mixture of fear and hope, waiting expectantly for God to move. But without the Spirit, their gathering was nothing more than a meeting.

But just as Jesus told them, his life-giving Holy Spirit came into that room with power. As at Mt Sinai and in the Tabernacle, we read that a rushing wind entered the room, and fire descended on each person there. This is so fascinating because prior to this moment in scripture, no matter where you were in the world, to encounter God's presence, you had to go to "the sacred place", which was the Temple in Jerusalem.

But here, the writers point to something profound. At this moment, God creates a new Sinai moment, the giving of a new covenant and law - not one written in stone, but one that the Holy Spirit wrote on the hearts of the disciples (Ezek 11:19; 2 Cor 3:3).

So, this imagery of fire represents God's purifying and empowering presence. As tongues of fire rested on each disciple, it signified the birth of a new kind of temple—the people of God themselves. The church is not a building, and it is not a place to simply get more information; it is the dynamic, Spirit-filled gathering of God's people. Pentecost reminds us that as carriers of God's presence, every place we go becomes a sacred space and an opportunity for divine encounter and transformation.

DISCUSSION

1. Today, we read about this powerful move of the Spirit and the birth of the Church. Can you remember when you experienced the Holy Spirit's touch in your life in a powerful way?
2. If we are the carriers of God's presence in the world, what are some ways that we can create environments in our homes, workplaces, and relationships that more readily reveal and invite the presence of the Holy Spirit?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Just as the disciples waited with anticipation, fill our hearts with expectation and openness to Your presence. Ignite within us a passion for Your Kingdom. Inscribe Your wisdom and commands on our hearts, empowering us to be Your witnesses in a world in need of Your love. May we come to recognise more each day that we are Your living temple, and we invite you to invade every aspect of our lives with your sacred presence so we might live boldly for you and carry your Good News to all those we encounter.

Amen.