



Peters Green News Sheet Issue No: 64

Sunday 23rd May 2021

Pentecost

Just imagine you were there! Fifty days after the Passover, you've travelled to Jerusalem for the harvest festival of Pentecost. The city is heaving with people from all over the known world – from every corner of the Roman Empire – 'Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, , Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs' (Acts 2: 9-11)

Imagine the crush of people, the noise, the smells! The holiday atmosphere! Suddenly, there's a different noise – a shuffling of the crowd – an anticipation – and from a house comes a group of people speaking in languages which everyone, no matter where they come from, understands. 'Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking, Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?"' (Acts 2:7,8)

We read in Acts 2 that at the feast of Pentecost, the twelve apostles (now including Mathias), Jesus' mother and family and many other of his disciples were gathered in Jerusalem. While they were indoors, praying, there was a sound like a violent, rushing wind which filled the house and they saw something which seemed like tongues of fire which separated and came to rest on each of their heads. This must have seemed terrifying and empowering in equal measure. Luke, when writing about the Acts of the Apostles is describing an event which he didn't see, so he says 'it sounded like...' and 'what seemed to be...', using powerful descriptions for this unprecedented event.

The apostles and disciples spilled out onto the street, preaching 'with boldness and vigour'. If you had been there, what would you have thought at this point? A huge crowd had gathered. Would you have pressed closer to listen to the message – miraculously in your own language? Or would you have dismissed them with – 'They're drunk'?

Peter, though, seized the moment. This ordinary fisherman from Galilee, who not so long ago had denied that he knew Jesus, preached to the crowd about Jesus' death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. The result, we are told, was that about three thousand converts were baptised that day! Amazing!

So, what can we learn from this? Pentecost was a one – off event in history, but it heralded the birth of the Christian church. People from all over the known world were there and they took their experience back to their home country. It was in Antioch that that the followers of Christ were first called 'Christians' (Acts 11: 26).

The purpose of the church is to communicate the love and the message of God, establishing a fellowship among its members. We are all part of that fellowship and will remain that way. It's a place we can go for spiritual sustenance. The church ministers to its people and the world without rejection or discrimination.

The gift of the Holy Spirit, freely given at Pentecost empowers our lives to be witnesses for Christ. Our faith in God cannot live on human wisdom alone. It sustains our faith and empowers us to be disciples of Christ.

During the past year we have needed this support probably more than ever before. Churches have developed innovative ways of supporting their congregations and communities. Many of us have had to think 'out of the box' and been taken out of our comfort zones into uncharted territory. We pray that, like those first believers, we may be filled with the energy and excitement of the message we share.

With love and blessings,

Gill Short

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.

And so, the yearning strong,
With which the soul will long,
Shall far outpass the pow'r of human telling;
Nor can we guess its grace,
Till we become the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes its dwelling



Recordings of Services
are available on the web:



www.facebook.com/lutonbaptist/



www.kimptonchurch.co.uk

