

This short act of worship has been produced for you by Revd Dr Valentin Dedji. If you are well enough and able, why not spend a few moments with God, perhaps at a time when you would normally be sharing with others in church - pray for them as they pray for you.

Welcome & Invocation:

Hymn: Welcome Holy Spirit

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/ch-b1VkttgQ>

Welcome Holy Spirit
We are in Your presence
Fill us with Your power
Live inside of me

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You're the Living Water
Never drying Fountain
Comforter and Counsellor
Take complete control

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Prayers of Adoration: (adapted from H & P 327)

O Heavenly Father, as we gather today to celebrate Pentecost,
We pray that you may send Your Spirit divine to attend our prayers,
And make our bodies, minds and souls your home;
Descend with all your gracious powers:
O come, great Spirit, come!

Come as the wind, with rushing sound
And Pentecostal grace,
That all of woman born may see
The glory of your face.

Come as the dove; and spread your wings,
The wings of peaceful love
And let your church on earth become
Blest as the church above.

Spirit divine, attend our prayers;
Make this lost world your home;
Descend with all your gracious powers;
O come, Great Spirit, come!
And make your Glory shine on us. AMEN!

Bible Reading: Acts 2: 1-21 (by Syntiche Dedji, Local Preacher)

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: ‘LIVING BY PENTECOST SPIRIT’

Bible reading: Acts 2: 1-21

Dear friends: It is a great privilege, doubled up by God’s Grace and Mercy that today, we are able to join the Christian community world-wide as we celebrate Pentecost.

It has been exactly 50 days now since we celebrated Easter on the 4th April this year. You may remember that then, I shared with you on the theme: ‘Living as Easter People’. Likewise today, I would like to reflect with you on the theme: ***‘Living by Pentecost Spirit’***.

Setting the Context

First, let me set the context within which the events described in our Bible reading in Acts 2: 1-21 took place.

Pente is the Greek word for five or fifty. So, the expression Pentecost was only used in the New Testament by Greek speakers to refer to the religious celebration that took place on the fiftieth day after the festival of 'First Fruits' or the festival of the Passover. That's why today, we celebrate Pentecost fifty days after Easter.

The celebration of Pentecost was an opportunity for a gigantic religious pilgrimage during which Jews and non-Jews from nearly every corner of the world used to flock to Jerusalem (verse 6). More precisely, verses 9-11 of our reading in Acts 2 give an account of an impressive human gathering of people who came from Africa (Ethiopia, Egypt and Libya) from Asia, Arabia, Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq); also from all the Middle-East and Europe (Rome).

A Call to Unity and Harmony

It is crucial to point out that after His resurrection, Jesus Christ clearly instructed His disciples that, for them to truly be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit that would be given to them at Pentecost, they needed to remain

together in prayer. For example, in Acts 1: 8 we read: ***'...when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.'*** Let us take note here that the expression 'All together' is from the Greek root *homou* which gives the English word homogeny or harmony. In some Bible versions it is translated as 'one accord' like in Acts 1:14. Literally, it may mean 'together in a group,' but spiritually it refers to many individuals working together in harmony.

Fostering a Genuine Togetherness

The choking reality was that, while the Risen Christ had wanted His disciples to break from their old way of life in order to extend genuine hands of fellowship to non-Jews believers including Africans, Arabs, Asians, Samaritans, and other Europeans who were around them, the group of disciples rather chose a political correctness strategy of segregated togetherness, instead of a genuine togetherness. In the first two verses of Acts 2 we read:

'When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there

came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.'

The crucial observation here is that: despite all the clear instructions from Jesus, the group of disciples still found it difficult to get out from their closed doors in order to join together with other believers who were different from them. They misunderstood Jesus' instruction to them to foster a genuine togetherness. Their attitude, as they gathered among themselves in one room, behind locked doors could be interpreted as that of: 'us vs them'. 'Jews vs non-Jews'. 'First class-believers vs second-class believers'. For them, it was 'business as usual'. It was about maintaining the status quo. No change. Therefore, the sound like 'the rush of a violent wind' through which the Holy Spirit descended upon them, was interpreted by some theologians as '*a divine protest*' against that sort of establishment mentality.

Transforming Spirit: From Enemies to Friends

The amazing thing was that: despite the disciples' personal shortfalls, God has proven that He is a Covenant-Keeping God. He did pour His Holy Spirit in abundance on His

people at Pentecost as promised. God has proven that, as our Heavenly Father, He is the fountain of life and love, and His life and love fill the Son and overflows to us, and then through us, it keeps on flowing to a needy and broken world. What a transformation that brought onto the disciples at Pentecost! Not only, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the language barrier between them and the rest of crowd was suddenly broken, but also, Peter had the boldness to get out and face the crowd. However, the major transformation could be observed in Peter's attitude and language towards 'the others'. When he stood up in front of them, he addressed them as 'Friends' or as 'Fellow-citizens'. What a transformation that was! For Peter and his colleagues, the old way of looking down on others was replaced by a spirit-filled mental approach towards others who were also God's precious children, created in God's image! That's what it means to live by Pentecost Spirit.

No Longer the Same

A few days ago, on the 18th May, I had the privilege to attend a service that will be broadcast by BBC Radio 4 to mark the first anniversary of the killing of George Floyd in America. As we celebrate Pentecost, in the aftermaths of such terrible events, we can no longer be the same or

continue to live the same way as if nothing happened. We need to pray more fervently, invoking the power of the Holy Spirit to transform us inwardly, so that we may start seeing and relating to others, especially those who are different from us in a new way. Let us come to terms to the fact that, according to the principles of God's Kingdom, all human lives matter. More specifically, because for many decades now, thousands of Black people across the Western world have been suffocating and dying under very unjust and brutal socio-political systems, we Christians can no longer stand by as if nothing is happening or has ever happened. We should not be ashamed to proclaim that BLACK LIVES MATTER. We need to let the Spirit of Pentecost blow through our churches and communities so that people, created in God's image may start breathing again.

Embracing the Principles of the Kingdom of God

So, as we conclude, let's recap in three points what it means to live by Pentecost Spirit:

- It means letting the Power of the Holy Spirit genuinely transform us inwardly.
- It means that, in the same way that God does not discriminate against His people, we too are called to

extend genuine hands of fellowship to those around us.

Finally, living by Pentecost Spirit means embracing the principles of God's Kingdom as Justice, Joy, Mercy, Grace and Compassion. Pentecost Spirit gives strength to those who struggle to be functional in areas where historically they have been dysfunctional. For, through His Grace, God restores the heart and resolves the troubles of a tormented spirit. It is loving-kindness and forgiveness. It's the favour of God. And as He bestows it on us, we should extend it to those who need our compassion and love. We are all broken in certain areas, and we need to learn to accept that and help mend the brokenness in others. And let's not forget: Wherever Pentecost Spirit blows, there is healing, there is freedom, there is joy, there is justice, and there is growth. I fervently pray that this Pentecost, not only you would receive all the blessings that are associated with the power of the Holy Spirit, but also, that you would live by them. Amen!

Prayers of Intercession (by Syntiche Dedji, Local Preacher)

Lord Jesus Christ: We pray for peace, and not the evil peace defending unjust laws and nursing prejudice; But for

the real peace, inspired by Pentecost Spirit of justice, truth, brotherhood and sisterhood.

We pray for Holy Communion: Through the unifying power of the Holy Spirit, with Christ our risen Lord and all humanity; that God's will may be fulfilled on earth, and all his creatures reconciled.

O Heavenly Father: We pray for the healing of humankind: that old wounds and deep-seated prejudices may be healed. May we rediscover afresh that your divine Kingdom is justice and joy, mercy and grace: A place where all human lives matter!

We pray Lord that leaders of all nations at war may have the humility to sit around a negotiation table. We pray particularly for Palestinians and Israelis. Let there be Peace! Let there be love shared among nations! May we all, and for the sake of peace, look to the risen Christ, who gives the grace we need to serve the cause of peace and make our own self-sacrifice. And may God's Kingdom come among us. **Amen!**

Hymn: The Kingdom of God is Justice and Joy (Singing the Faith 255)

Sing/Read/pray/proclaim the words or listen to it here

<https://youtu.be/vqCOggQhFyo>

The kingdom of God is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores what sin would destroy;
God's power and glory in Jesus we know,
and here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God is mercy and grace,
the prisoners are freed, the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened in place of despair.

The kingdom of God is challenge and choice,
believe the good news, repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross,
our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come, the gift and the goal,
in Jesus begun, in heaven made whole;
the heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory to God all in all!

Bryn Rees (1911-1983)

Blessing

May the Lord bless you and make His face to shine upon you. May He grant you, His Peace. Let us rise from here, empowered to live by The Spirit of Pentecost. **Amen!**