

Dear Friends,

Acts 1: 12-14 / Acts 2: 1-21

The friends of Jesus are waiting. They are together in the upstairs room, perhaps the same spacious room where they had been for The Last Supper. The women and men are there. Some of them are older, some younger. Mary, the mother of Jesus is there. While they wait, they devote themselves to prayer.

When the day of Pentecost comes, they are together in one place. The word "together" is strong. It suggests more than just being in the same physical space. It means that they are united, unanimous, of one heart and mind with each other.

Perhaps they remember the vision of the valley of dry bones. They are like the bones which had fallen apart but had then been put back together. In that vision, there had been a rattling and the bones had each connected one with the other. The toe bone connected to the foot bone, the foot bone connected to the heel bone, the heel bone connected to the ankle bone. You know how it goes. They developed sinews and were then covered in flesh and skin. But there was still no life, not until God breathed into them. When God did that then the bones became human beings who walked around.

In the same way, the friends are now all together, but they are still waiting for the breath of God to be breathed into them. They are waiting to be clothed with power from on high.

And then the Spirit comes. From heaven there comes the sound like the rush of a violent wind which fills the entire house. I love that, the Spirit fills the entire house. The Spirit fills everywhere, fills everything, fills everyone. When Peter spoke later about what had happened, he saw it as being like the vision of the prophet Joel. Behind Joel's words you can hear the sound of the falling down of all of the barriers that divide people. Joel hears God say this, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy". Listen and you can hear the barrier between men and women falling. "Your young shall see visions and your old shall dream dreams". There goes the barrier between people of different ages. "Even on the slaves both male and female will I pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy". And that demolishes the barrier between classes, between those on the different rungs of society's ladder, those at the top and bottom of the world. At this moment, the barrier between races is not yet brought down, but it is only a few more chapters in the Acts of the Apostles before that too tumbles to the ground. There is no partiality, no favouritism with God. The Spirit fills the entire house. The Spirit is given to all.

The Spirit comes not only like wind, but also like fire. And as the Spirit moves in this group of friends, they are transformed. Those who had recently been confused and frightened become illuminated and confident. They turn out towards the crowds who have gathered in Jerusalem and they begin the work they have been given of turning the world upside down.

God bless you,

Tony