

Dear Friends,

Jesus said "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit". Jesus compares the wind to the Holy Spirit. The same Greek word can mean both "wind" and "spirit". As the wind comes and goes, sometimes in a calm, gentle breeze and sometimes a powerful, rushing gale, so it is with the Spirit.

To us the Spirit is a mystery. We cannot easily sum up who the Spirit is or what the Spirit does. We might want to put a tidy box around or nail down the truth of the Spirit. But the Spirit always breaks through our boxes and reveals new truths beyond what we have tried to impose. We certainly cannot control the Spirit. There isn't a specific recipe that we can follow that will produce the Spirit. Neither are there a series of steps to be followed to lead us to the Spirit.

Those who wrote the scriptures have given us different stories which show the Spirit coming in a variety of ways. The Spirit does not have a strict routine. We are shown the Spirit, like the wind, sometimes coming in one way and sometimes in another.

A few weeks ago, we looked at the account in John's gospel of the Spirit being given on the evening of Easter day. On that occasion Jesus came to his friends, breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit". That's a gentle picture of the Spirit being given in a quiet way. Sometimes the Spirit comes like that.

By contrast this coming Sunday is the day to remember Pentecost. This is a dramatic story of the Spirit coming in a noisy way. The bystanders who witness these events are left feeling "amazed and perplexed". Some mock the followers of Jesus by suggesting that they look as though they've been engaged in a bit of serious drinking. Sometimes the Spirit comes like that.

This week is an opportunity to look at that second example of the coming of the Spirit. The story of Pentecost which in the Bible is in The Acts of The Apostles.

Last week we looked at the ascension of Jesus. Before he was carried up to heaven, he told his friends to wait until they were "clothed with power from on high". They did as he asked. On the day of Pentecost "they were all together in one place". It was then that the Spirit was poured out upon them and they were filled with the power from on high.

God bless you,

Tony