

Sittingbourne service for Pentecost 2020

Extracts from the lessons and hymns I might have selected for this service, including a “rambling” some thoughts jotted down that might have formed the basis of a more coherent sermon. Martin

For God has called us here today, And His Spirit gives us life

This is the day the Lord has made (*Singing The Faith 152*)

This is the day,
this is the day when the Spirit came,
when the Spirit came.

We will rejoice,
we will rejoice and be glad in it,
and be glad in it.

This is the day when the Spirit came;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day,
this is the day when the Spirit came.

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

³³ I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;

I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him,

for I rejoice in the LORD.

Bless the LORD, O my soul.

Praise the LORD!

Acts 2:1-21

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

O thou who camest from above (*Singing The Faith 564*)

O thou who camest from above
the pure celestial fire to impart,
kindle a flame of sacred love
on the mean altar of my heart!

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

There's a spirit in the air (*Singing The Faith 398*)

There's a spirit in the air,
telling Christians everywhere:
'Praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world!'

Still the Spirit gives us light,
seeing wrong and setting right:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today!

When a stranger's not alone,
where the homeless find a home,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, ³⁸and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water." ' ³⁹Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified

Breathe on me, breath of God (*Singing The Faith 370*)

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.

Pentecost rambling

“May the Force be with you.”

Now I am a great fan of the Star Wars films, but I give thanks daily (well I should) that the Holy Spirit is not a force. The Holy Spirit is personal. The Holy Spirit is a person. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of our Father, our comforter, our power -giver.

And this is the day when the Spirit came, Pentecost, Whit Sunday. And it is a day which gives us much to be glad for, to rejoice in.

Before this day, the disciples were hiding away, fearful, not meeting with other people, maintaining social distance, and then some. And then the Spirit came and in the memorable words of William Barclay rabbits are turned into ferrets.

The disciples stop being frightened of the world and go out and grab it by its throat. They stopped hiding away but went out hunting new followers for the Way. No longer paralysed by fear but emboldened by hope they forgot their nightmares and began to dream dreams of a wonderful future under God's love.

They spoke and were understood by people of all types. Now I wasn't there so I don't know if they were “speaking in tongues” or speaking in the commonly understood language of Greek but so powerfully that everybody understood them.

But I do know that the Spirit bears fruit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And that that the greatest gift the Spirit gives is Love.

There are people who seem to use the gifts of the Spirit in a kind of Spiritual Top Trumps and try to make others feel inadequate because they do not speak in tongues, prophesy, work miracles or whatever it might be, they try to divide the people of God. and that makes me incredibly sad.

Paul made it clear that there are many gifts and that nobody has them all he was also clear that without love all these gifts are nothing.

Love that is patient, love that is kind, and trusting and hopeful and all the rest of that marvellous list in 1 Corinthians 13

I know sometimes Christians worry that they haven't been given the same gift as others, but, as my parents used to say when I was squabbling with my sisters, "we love you all the same but that doesn't mean we always treat you the same". God loves us all and gives us the gifts He thinks are right for us, they are all gifts and not one of them matters if we don't have love.

I know many of us are disappointed at the moment because they have not been able to go on the trip of a lifetime to Oberammergau where they would have seen the story of Jesus told with accounts of acts of love and kindness.

But you don't need to travel to see Jesus at work. He is at work here and now

I see Him everywhere I look in this church and see acts of love and kindness and I am sure you won't have to think very hard to think of such acts yourself.

Acts of love and kindness, acts of the Spirit.

Many of us have fears which keep us hidden indoors. They're usually fears which we tend to keep to ourselves, like fears of what other people might think or do or say, fears of making fools of ourselves, fears of getting it wrong and making terrible mistakes, fears of sinning.

Fear turns hearing God's voice into a game of Chinese whispers. If I'm afraid, then I'm only able to hear God through a tiny window which I construct to accommodate my fear. But if I really want to find life, if I want to live the full and complete and exciting and enjoyable life which God has waiting for me, then I need to go beyond my fears and tap into the God within.

Tap into the gift Jesus gave us, tap into the Spirit.

And this is the day we remember the Spirit coming. The day some people call the birthday of the Church

Happy Birthday everybody.



Playing "Star Wars" with the Trinity was becoming a bit tiresome for Jesus

Flame-dancing Spirit, come

Flame-dancing Spirit, come,
sweep us off our feet and
dance us through our days.
Surprise us with your rhythms,
dare us to try new steps, explore
new patterns and new partnerships.
Release us from old routines,
to swing in abandoned joy
and fearful adventure.
And in the intervals,
rest us, in your still centre.

Prayer:

Holy Spirit,
thank you that you are living in us,
showing us God's love
and helping us share that love with others. **AMEN**

Come down, O love divine (*Singing The Faith 372*)

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 out-pass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace,
till he become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.

May the power of the Spirit challenge you.

May the peace of the Spirit comfort you.

*May the presence of the Spirit enable you to live in love and service in the name
of Christ. **AMEN***