

Blackburn Baptist Church Virtual Service, 31 May 2020



Welcome

Hello and welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church for our 'virtual' service for today, Pentecost Sunday. Whether it's your first time with us, or whether you've been with us for a very, very long time, it's great to have you with us. Without more ado, let's join in our first song together today.

Song: *Lord I Lift Your Name on High*

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

Lord I lift your name on high
Lord I love to sing your praises
I'm so glad you are in my life
I'm so glad you came to save us
You came from heaven to earth
To show the way

From the earth to the cross
My debt to pay
From the cross to the grave
From the grave to the sky
Lord I lift your name on high

"Lord I Lift You Name on High" words & music by Rick Founds
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Opening Prayer

Let's join together in this prayer for Pentecost Sunday: Come, Holy Spirit, to help us worship and glorify Jesus. Come, Holy Spirit, to guide us into all truth. Come, Holy Spirit, to help us pray. Come, Holy Spirit, to set our hearts on fire with love again. Come, Holy Spirit, to send us out to share the good news of Jesus. Come, Holy Spirit, to fill us once again. Come, Holy Spirit, Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.

Song: *May the Mind of Christ My Saviour*

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

May the mind of Christ, my Saviour
Live in me from day to day
By his love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour
So that all may see I triumph
Only through his power

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing

May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea
Him exalting, self abasing
This is victory

May I run the race before me
Strong and brave to face the foe
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go

May his beauty rest upon me
As I seek the lost to win
And may they forget the channel
Seeing only him.

Bible Reading: *Acts 2:1-13*

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the

whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and 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 - we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

Message: *Christ in You, the Hope of Glory*

Introduction

I wonder if there's someone you really admire? Maybe a skilful artist, a great sports player, a talented TV presenter, a brilliant author, or an inspired musician? So much so that you wish you could be as good as they are at what they do? But does admiring them and wishing you could be like them actually make you just like they are? Of course not!

I'm just about old enough to remember (with fondness) watching Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's TV puppet show creations, the most well-known of which was 'Thunderbirds', but just now I'm thinking of another one which was entitled 'Joe 90'. The hero of this series was nine-year-old Joe McClaine. His father was a brilliant inventor and had developed a device which could capture the brain patterns of knowledgeable or skilled people and temporarily transfer them to someone else, in this case his son Joe. In each episode, Joe would acquire the brain patterns of a racing driver, pianist, surgeon, spy, or whatever was required for him to carry out secret or dangerous missions where his age and appearance would make enemies overlook him. Joe couldn't naturally do the amazing things he did, but he could do them in the series, because something of the life of the skilled people whose brain patterns had been captured by his father had entered into him.

If you've been with us at BBC over the past few weeks, we've been looking at the most amazing person who ever lived – Jesus Christ, and the miraculous things that he did in showing his control over nature, sickness, demonic forces – and even death. We've learned how these events show us that Jesus really was who he claimed to be – God's Son, the promised Messiah. We've learned that there's no situation in our world, or our lives, that he can't handle. We've learned that we can, and should, confidently place our trust in him, and share the news about him without other people.

But could we dare to imagine that we could actually be like Jesus? Our natural reaction is, “Of course not”, yet, as we read the pages of the New Testament, this is exactly what we are called to be, time and time again. For example:

- Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. (1 John 2:6)
- To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2: 21)
- Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5)
- For those God foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son. (Romans 8:29)
- And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness. (2 Corinthians 3: 18)

This would be impossible, unless, somehow, the life of Jesus could enter into ours and make us different from what we are naturally. The good news is that this is exactly what God intends for us and what he started to enable through his Holy Spirit in the passage we read from Acts chapter 2. Please turn with me again to those verses, where we’ll see that the Spirit came, the Spirit filled and the Spirit spoke.

The Spirit Came (verses 1 to 3)

The followers of Jesus, around 120 of them (Acts 1 v 15) had obeyed what the risen Jesus, who had by now ascended back into heaven, had told them in Acts 1 verse 4, and they were waiting in Jerusalem. It was now the day of the Pentecost festival and they were all together (verse 1). The name ‘Pentecost’ means ‘fifty’, because its date was set by counting on seven weeks from the Passover festival (so it was also called the ‘Feast of Weeks’) and it thus came on the fiftieth day from the Passover. It was one of the festivals that God had commanded the Jews to celebrate (look it up in Leviticus 23) and all those who possibly could were to come to Jerusalem to take part.

Suddenly something very unusual started to happen. They heard a sound like a very strong wind – we’ve all heard (and felt) something like that, but they didn’t feel a wind, they just heard the sound. The sound was a sign to them about what was happening – since in both of the main languages of the Bible, the words for ‘wind’, ‘breath’ and ‘spirit’ are all the same - in Hebrew ‘ruwach’ and in Greek ‘pneuma’. Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would be sent to them (Acts 1 v 5), and now it was happening. They also saw something like flames or tongues of fire, separating out to settle on each person, but not harming them. This too, was a pointer to what was going on. Fire had often been a sign of God’s presence, as when Moses had seen a bush on fire, but not being burned up, in the desert (Exodus 3), or when God gave the Law on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19 v 18). The message was clear – God’s Holy Spirit was at work amongst them, as a group, but also individually, as the tongues of flame settled on each of them personally. And when wind and fire come together, the results are dramatic!

This was something completely new. Paul, in his New Testament letters, often speaks of things that are a 'mystery' – and he doesn't mean by this what we usually mean, a puzzle to be untangled, but rather something that hadn't been understood or explained before. In Colossians chapter 1 verse 27, Paul says, talking about the Church: 'To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory'. In Old Testament times, believers in God had sometimes had experiences of the Holy Spirit coming upon them to help them in some particular task, but it was generally temporary and only experienced by a few. But now, God was doing something unprecedented – his Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, was permanently coming to live in the lives of all of those who believed in Jesus... this was 'Christ in you'! And what a difference it made! Now they had the power available to live like Jesus himself, because his life was in them, now they had the certainty and guarantee of an eternal future with God that put the experiences of this life (even things like Covid-19) into proper perspective – this was the 'hope of glory'! And God had created a whole new group of humanity – his Church. Wow! We can lose sight of the wonder and magnitude of this because maybe we are so familiar with the idea – but this was an earth-shaking change – one that Jesus himself had told his disciples would be better for them than his staying with them physically (John 16 v 7).

Those gathered there in Jerusalem, those 120 or so Jewish men and women, were the first to experience it, but more were to follow, including non-Jews, as Peter was to find out (and as he described later in Acts chapter 11), when those gathered in the house of a Roman centurion, Cornelius, experienced something very similar. And the promise of the Holy Spirit of God, the very life of Jesus, coming to live within us, stands and is still the promise to everyone who puts their trust in Jesus today, even if not accompanied by the dramatic visible and audible signs that took place on the day we've been reading about. The question is, have you experienced this for yourself? If not, you are living without the power and the hope that is available to you, and Jesus is calling you to recognise what he did for you when he came to this world and died on a cross to settle your debt with God, and to receive him into your life. Christ in you... So the Spirit came, and...

The Spirit Filled (verse 4)

Verse 4 goes on to tell us that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. This day of Pentecost was a unique event, an act of God that was the start of something quite new, as we have seen. But the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit was not unique. As we read on in the book of Acts about how the Church that started at Pentecost developed and grew, we frequently read of the believers being filled with the Spirit again. We could list many examples, but let's quote one from Acts 4 verse 31, when the Church met under threat from the Jewish authorities and they prayed for boldness to continue God's mission: 'After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.' You see,

it was an act of their will to choose to follow God's direction for their lives rather than yield to the pressure they were under, and it was when they did this that they were filled again with God's Spirit.

This implies that Christians have a day to day responsibility to co-operate with the work of God's Spirit in our lives, so that we continue to be filled with the Spirit. Jesus said to his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to be a counsellor (John 14 v 16, John 15 v 26 and John 16 v 7) and a guide (John 16 v 13) for them. I'm reminded of a mountain guide, taking inexperienced climbers through dangerous and rough terrain, helping them avoid pitfalls and find the right way. That guide is of no use to the climbers unless they follow them and listen to their instructions. The Holy Spirit is our guide to the rough and dangerous terrain of life and the main way that the Spirit guides us is through the Word of God. As Christians, we must follow his leading and, as Paul wrote to the Galatians, keep in step with him (Galatians 5 v 25). It's really a question of who is in control. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus (Ephesians 5 v 18), telling them not to be under the control of alcohol (interesting in the light of our passage in Acts 2, as that is what some people suspected the believers of being – verse 13), but rather being continually filled with the Spirit, that is, under his control and submitting to his influence and direction on our lives.

If we have believed in Jesus, we have all of the Holy Spirit – he lives within our lives. But the question is how much does he have of us? Are we controlled by the Holy Spirit and co-operating with him, or are we resisting his work, thwarting his plans for us and pulling in our own direction? The blessing for the believers on the day of Pentecost came about because they had obeyed Jesus' instruction to stay in Jerusalem and wait. So the Spirit came, and the Spirit filled and...

The Spirit Spoke (verses 4 to 13)

The power of the Holy Spirit was immediately apparent in the believers' lives as they were supernaturally enabled to speak in languages that they had not learned (verse 4). And what did the Spirit speak through them? We are told in verse 11 that they were 'declaring the wonders of God'. No doubt the praise of God and what Jesus had done were at the forefront. Jesus had told his disciples that the work of the Holy Spirit was to testify to and bring glory to him (John 15 v 26 and John 16 v 14).

The languages being spoken were known languages, because we are told in verses 5 to 11 that the many visitors from the different parts of the scattered Jewish population around the Roman world, who were gathered in Jerusalem for the Pentecost celebrations, could each hear their own native languages, as they came to investigate the sounds coming from the believers. (It seems likely that the 'house' in which the believers were may well have been somewhere in the Temple, the house of God, where these visitors would naturally have congregated.)

This was a wonderful indication of God's plan – that the message of the good news about Jesus was to go out to all nations – and, again, it reflects the role of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had explained to his disciples that one of the Holy Spirit's roles was to convict the world of guilt (John 16 v 8). When God's Spirit speaks, people from all nations are challenged, and God had arranged the timing of this event perfectly so people from many nations could witness it.

If we went back to the beginning of the Bible, we would find there in Genesis chapter 11 the account of the tower of Babel, where mankind tried to bring glory to themselves through an enormous building project, but which resulted in God's confusing of the languages spoken. Here, we see a kind of reverse, as God is the one being given glory and the result is understanding and a clear message to all. God's Spirit brings clarity, not confusion. How ironic that this came about through Galileans, as the crowd commented in verse 7, who were seemingly not renowned linguists and whose northern accents stuck out in Jerusalem. (Matthew 26 v 73).

In the same way as these first, perhaps unlikely, Galilean members of the Church were enabled by the Holy Spirit to declare the wonders of God in the place where they were, the Spirit of God also equips and calls us to speak where we are. You and I will encounter people as we go about our ordinary day to day lives that nobody else in the church will, and that gives us a unique opportunity to 'declare the wonders of God' – just letting them know what wonderful things God has done for us. We may not stand up to preach like Peter was about to do, but the Holy Spirit can still use us to impact others' lives. Are we ready to be used like that? "But how would people respond if I did that?" we may say. Here, there were different response to what had happened, from utter amazement, to questioning, to ridicule from some. But amongst others, there was a readiness to hear and receive the message gladly, as we see at the end of chapter 2. The good news is that the response is not our responsibility, but the Holy Spirit's – we're just called to be the messengers.

Conclusion

So, at Pentecost:

- The Spirit came – has he come into your life and made the change that nothing else could?
- The Spirit filled – if you're a Christian and have the Spirit of God, are you keeping in step with him and letting him be in control of your actions, words and thoughts?
- The Spirit spoke – are you willing for God's Spirit to speak to others through you, declaring the wonders of what God has done for you?

Christ in you – the hope of glory – that's the story of Pentecost. Let's sing another song as we reflect more on that.

Song: *Yet Not I, but Through Christ in Me*

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy my righteousness and freedom
My steadfast love
My deep and boundless peace

To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to his
Oh how strange and divine
I can sing: all is mine
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side the Saviour he will stay
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need his power is displayed

To this I hold: my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley he will lead
Oh the night has been won
And I shall overcome
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And he was raised to overthrow the grave

To this I hold: my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released
I can sing: I am free
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For he has said that he will bring me home
And day by day I know he will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne

To this I hold: my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to him
When the race is complete
Still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

"Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me" words & music by Jonny Robinson, Michael Farren and Rich Thompson.
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Solidarity Sunday

Pray especially today for the work of BMS World Mission amongst our global neighbours who are being badly affected by the coronavirus outbreak, particularly in Afghanistan, Chad, Mozambique, Nepal, Thailand and Sri Lanka, and for those who are seeking to serve and help them. See www.bmsworldmission.org/coronavirus for more details if you are online.

Song: *Holy Spirit*

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

Holy Spirit, from before the dawn of time
You have always been
The Father's breath divine
Brooding on the waters
Bringing forth new life

Teaching, guiding, shining out your light
Making known the mysteries of Christ
And we long to feel you here
Holy Spirit, please draw near

Chorus:

Come, holy fire, burn so free
Your presence purifying me
You glorify the risen one
Sweet Holy Spirit, flow through me
This glimpse of power, this guarantee
A foretaste of the age to come

Holy Spirit, you're our counsellor and friend
Helper, uniter, you're the one who Jesus sent
Make me more like Jesus
Spirit, have free rein

Abba Father, your voice within us cries
We're loved and precious
In our Father's eyes
As we give ourselves to you
Holy Spirit, fill this room

Chorus

Fill me up each day
Fill me up each hour

Fill me with Your love
Fill me with Your power
And we long to feel you here
Holy Spirit, please draw near

Chorus

"Holy Spirit" words & music by Michael Sanderman and Nathan Fellingham
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Prayers for Others

We thank God for the work of Jesus and for sending the Holy Spirit to us.

We pray for:

- Our world in this time of crisis, for carers and governments and those who seek to find cures and treatment for coronavirus
- The Holy Spirit to convince people of their need for Jesus as their only hope of security and rescue
- The work of BMS World Mission, helping the poorest and most vulnerable around the world
- Brian and Jackie Chilvers as they continue to prepare to go out to work for the Lord in Chad
- Those we know who are ill and in need of God's special help and protection
- All of us to be open to the Holy Spirit's leading and guidance in our own lives

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Song: *We Want to See Jesus Lifted High*

(If you're online, click [here](#) to listen, or just read the words)

We want to see Jesus lifted high
A banner that flies across this land
That all men might see the truth and know
He is the way to heaven

We want to see, we want to see
We want to see Jesus lifted high
We want to see, we want to see
We want to see Jesus lifted high

Step by step we're moving forward
Little by little we're taking ground

Every prayer a powerful weapon
Strongholds come tumbling down
And down and down and down

We're gonna see, we're gonna see
We're gonna see Jesus lifted high
We're gonna see, we're gonna see
We're gonna see Jesus lifted high

"We Want to See Jesus Lifted High" words & music by Doug Horley
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The Grace

'May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all and forever more. Amen.'