

23rd May 2021 - 6pm Pentecost + Retreat in Daily Life
Leader and Speaker: Val Whiteman;
Readers + Intercessions: Andrew Mayfield and Karen Archer

Transcript by YouTube

[Val:]
hello andrew hello karen
[Andrew:]
hello
[Karen:]
hello good evening
[Val:]
how are you
[Andrew:]
we're all right we're okay thank you
[Val:]
good enjoying the rain
[Andrew:]
yes it's the uh isn't it the coldest and wettest may since 1860s or something
[Val:]
it feels like it anyway this is the last of our solely um zoomed youtube
services so it's quite exciting um so i'll say goodbye to you and we'll start
our service now if that's okay
[Karen:]
yes see you later
[Val:]
see you later

so welcome to our saint john's kenilworth 6 p.m service um tonight because it's
pentecost
we're thinking about the holy spirit
andrew and karen will be reading and leading our prayers
and it's a sort of a cross between long teaching and evening prayer
you know we've already said we'll be in church next week and chris and andrew
haines will be leading communion there
there's more information on the weekly update and we look forward to being there
to meeting together even with masks social distancing and no singing
and the youtube service just for this next week will be the taize service from
churches together
and there's also an advanced notice that gillian and john robinson who are our
link missionaries from thailand will be with us on the evening of the 20th of
june so that's something we look forward to

so a moment of quiet before we begin as we remember that we're in god's presence
and we're worshipping him

thank you lord for your love for us for your gift of the holy spirit to the
church at pentecost
thank you for all of us who know you worshipping in our homes but still one in
your spirit
help us now as we come before you

and before we start our worship let's think about the things that we may have
done or not done that are displeasing to god and so we pray

almighty father
we enter your presence confessing the things we try to conceal from you
and the things we try to conceal from others
we can fret confess the heartbreak worry and sorrow we have caused that make it
difficult for others to forgive us
the times we have made it easy for others to do wrong
the harm we have done makes it hard for us to forgive ourselves
lord have mercy on us and forgive us

through jesus christ our lord
amen

so we are god's forgiven people let's sing his praise in our first hymn o breath
of life come sweeping through us after which andrew will read to us

[Music: O Breath Of Life]

[Andrew:]

our first reading is taken from acts chapter 2 verses 1 to 21.

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 they 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 meads
and elamites residents of mesopotamia judea and cappadocia pontus and asia
phrygia and pamphilia egypt and the parts of libya libya neo 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 prospects they ask one another what does this mean
some however made fun of them and said they've had too much wine
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
these people are not drunk as you suppose
it's only nine in the morning
no this is what was spoken about by the prophet joel
in the last days god says i will pour out my spirit on all people
your sons and daughters will be prophecy your young men will see visions
your old men will dream dreams
even on my servants both men and women i will pour out my spirit in those days
and they will prophesy
i will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below
blood and fire and billows of smoke
the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of
the great and glorious day of the lord
and everyone who calls on the name of the lord will be saved

this is the word of the lord
thanks be to god

we will now sing our second hymn and then karen will will then present the
second reading

[Music]

[Karen:]

the second reading is taken from john 15 verse 26 to 27 and chapter 16 verse 4b
to 15

when the advocate comes whom i will send to you from the father the spirit of
truth who goes out from the father
he will testify about me and you also must testify for you have been with me

from the beginning
i did not tell you this from the beginning because i was with you but now i am
going to him who sent me
none of you ask me where are you going rather you are filled with grief because
i have said these things
but very truly i tell you it is for your good that i am going away
unless i go away the advocate will not come to you
but if i go i will send him to you
when he comes he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and
righteousness and judgment
about sin because people do not believe in me
about righteousness because i am going to the father
where you can see me no longer
and about judgment because the prince of this world now stands condemned
i have much more to say to you more than you can now bear
but when he the spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all the truth
he will not speak on his own
he will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come
he will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make
known to you
all that belongs to the father is mine
that is why i said the spirit will receive from me what he will make known to
you

this is the word of the lord
thanks be to god

and val will now give us her talk on the holy spirit

[Val:]

so my talk will be in two parts separated by a hymn
the first is about the holy spirit
and the second about the retreat in daily life which is starting on the 30th of
may
and there is a link

so today pentecost is the church's birthday pentecost the feast of weeks
when the jews came to celebrate the first fruits of harvest grain and oil was
instituted by moses
it's 50 days after passover so on the jewish harvest festival jesus sent the
holy spirit on the church
a sign of new growth new beginnings
it's a celebration of new beginnings of ongoing gifts from god
that acts readings amazing story with which we're all familiar
the holy spirit coming in tongues of fire on the disciples
the separation of languages which happened at the tower of babel is sort of
being reversed so all can hear the good news in their own languages their own
tongues
peter preaching the sermon of his life going public on jesus the messiah to
everyone in jerusalem who cared to listen
so happy so joyful the disciples were accused of being drunk at nine in the
morning
three thousand people found jesus as messiah on that day
the holy spirit wasn't a new phenomenon on that first pentecost in jerusalem
if you look at genesis chapter 1 verse 2 there you'll find the spirit of god was
hovering over the waters
in the old testament god's spirit is also described as his breath ruach
now nowadays we all long for a pentecost experience
and indeed it's accessible to all of us
god's holy spirit comes in the same way maybe not with tongues of fire but
certainly with power to heal each person who believes

think back over your own life
how different are you from the person who first accepted jesus as lord

how have you changed
i can't imagine anyone will say not at all
but if you feel you have to say that then go back to the beginning and ask god
to show you how different you are as a child of god
when i just left university in the mid 70s it was a very long time ago i was
doing research in london
i came across an organization called the fountain trust
it was a time of charismatic renewal in all the churches
i'd grown up in a very conservative evangelical church strong on the gospel and
on judgment but not so strong on who the holy spirit was
we said the creed every sunday so of course we are theologically sound but a bit
hazy about what the spirit actually did
certainly no gifts that was long gone and the emphasis was on character
development the fruit of the spirit which you'll find in galatians and of course
that's really vital to the spirit's work within us

we need to listen to god and to develop the fruits
what makes us more like jesus as we live
when jesus says the spirit will lead us into all truth it implies that we have
to listen and take note of what the spirit of god says to us
and then there are also the gifts that are needed for the church teachers
administrators prophets
which paul mentions in romans 12 ephesians 4 11 and in one corinthians 12 28-38
and then there are what you might call more exciting spiritual gifts also in one
corinthians 12 8-10
and while i'm on the subject you'll find this fruits of the spirit in galatians
5 nine of them for us to develop
but let's not get too hung up on slight differences between various giftings
do we honestly think that the spirit of the living god has changed so much over
the centuries that all these gifts are no longer available to us
that's a question expecting the answer no
the fountain trust encouraged people to ask and receive spiritual gifts among
others
there were huge meetings in the methodist central hall in london where thousands
of people came together to worship
i went to a charismatic anglican church where the best thing in my week was the
prayer meeting after
the service on sunday night
it went on for a very long time
there was a rewrite at the time of that well-known nursery rhyme
mary had a little lamb
she had a little sheep
she took it to the fountain trust
where it died from lack of sleep
but it was so exciting
people were singing in tongues
it was like listening to a cathedral
which i know sounds a bit odd but that was what it was like
sort of building blocks of song
in my narrow background i'd always been taught that roman catholics and high
church people weren't quite nice to know
they didn't have the truth like we did
imagine my surprise then when virtually all the people i met at the fountain
trust were catholics rejoicing in the spirit just like normal people
i learned then about being judgmental and stopping it
and i have to say i heard the angels laughing at me in heaven as i learned it

one thing we all learned then was that salvation was not simply for an
individual
we are saved to be church
and we do not and should not live in christ on our own under normal
circumstances
the gifts and the fruit tell us that
whatever gift you have it's not for you alone

it isn't so you can be a super christian with healing hands or a wonderful prophetic voice and feel superior that god has given you such a gift
god's gifts are god's gifts not ours and the gifts are there to grow the church
so healing is wonderful and we need to see people healed
but they are healed to glorify god not to make the church feel better about itself
if we don't point to jesus with the gifts we might as well not have them

paul says earnestly seek the gift of the spirit in one corinthians 14
so please do
not only for you but for all of us
and that's a really important lesson for all churches all the time which we need to learn and then relearn
i don't think that many of us feel spiritually superior at least not most of the time
and most of us know that we need to acknowledge jesus as lord and savior
and then spend our lives working out with him what that might mean
but and it's the huge but
wonderful though it is to be saved by god
amazing and exciting as it is to be filled with a spirit
we aren't simply saved so that we can gaze at ourselves in awe and wonder at the new people we've become
or even spend our time panicking that we haven't been forgiven truly or we haven't grown
no we are saved given new life so that we can become church
and i obviously don't mean anglican baptist or whatever else
we are a household of faith in kenilworth
different ages different races different abilities
we don't become clones of one another
but by the spirit's power we grow slowly maybe but inexorably if we continue to believe into the people we are meant to be
and just as god is three persons father son and spirit and expresses himself within the trinity as love so we are supposed to express ourselves in love to one another
and to the world
that's partly what we're for
to worship god usually in community
jesus said a new commandment i give you that you love one another
the spirit expresses the love of god in us when humanly we can't
you can't know how to love people if you don't actually know them
so it's important that we talk and meet and have fellowship with god and our brothers and sisters

as i finish this part of my talk which i know is only a brief gallop through what the holy spirit is and does
but i want you to ask you to imagine that you are in a first century church
one may be that paul has just recently founded
to understand how radical what it is we are asked to do is
so you're seated in this house where people come
and you watch with interest as a new and excited convert comes in
he's just found christ
he's given his life to christ
you recognize him
he's the town treasurer an important roman official
he enters the church and there to greet him as a brother is a man he doesn't recognize at first
and then you see he does the man is one of his slaves he owns this man
welcome brother says the slave here is your sister too and there is the treasurer's kitchen slave
he wouldn't even know her if he hadn't been told
so how does he react what does he do
christianity turned the world upside down
and it still should
through the spirit we have power to disturb rulers

not by might but by love

so during this coming week let us seek more of the spirit of unity and truth and above all love as we seek in the coming weeks to grow together in spirit and in prayer
amen

so we now sing or listen to our third hymn breathe on us breath of god

[Music: Breathe on us breath of God]

[Val:]

so i want to talk now about the retreat in daily life
and this part is shorter you'll be relieved to know

from next week we as a church are starting what's called a retreat in daily life for about six weeks until july

so what is it

i know we we did one a couple of years ago and we're doing it in a similar way this time if you join you'll agree to pray listening to god for between 20 to 30 minutes each day

this isn't intercessory prayer where we ask god for things but listening reflecting and silence

if you let us know you want to join we'll find you a partner whom you should meet by face-to-face meeting zoom or phone call whatever you feel best with about once a week to see how you're getting on and this ensures that you're encouraged to keep going

in addition you'll have someone we've called a supervisor for want of a better term

if you find that you or your partner pray and listen and it raises things you find disturbing or you're not sure what to do about

you can contact the supervisor to talk things through with them

and that's a sort of safety net rather than a necessity to use

we're going to be looking at breakfast on the beach john 21 1-21

and different people have looked at different parts of the story and suggested different and i hope new for you ways of praying through this part of the bible if you feel it's a bit daunting don't

it isn't something you get punished for if you duck out for a week

but i hope it enables us all to grow experiment and listen to god

and it's part of the vision that andrew and others have had for the church particularly for the 10 o'clock

where they want to listen to god to see what he is saying about how the church may go forward

and it's also part of actually my vision that we might become church more closely and worship together as family in a way i suggested in my talk

so i want to do a brief stilling exercise now before andrew and karen come to pray for us

which you might use to focus on god

we've got a very extensive handout for the retreat in daily life which goes into a lot more detail

so if you'd like to do this with me it will be brief because um you'd normally spend about 10 minutes doing this and i'm not sure that we can

so first of all if you sit comfortably with both both feet firmly on the floor and hands unclenched

so the first thing you do in a stilling exercise is you try to relax all of you um you've probably done this before

you do it by successively tensing muscles and letting them go

so you start with your feet if you tense and then relax

and then the same with the muscles in your legs tense and relax

and so on your shoulders your arms and your hands your neck and your face

so as you settle yourself into your chair

and be aware of where your head is on your shoulders
you should feel that you have less tension and that should help you the focus

that's the easy bit the difficult bit for everybody is trying to still your mind
and you will know if you've ever tried to do this
it's a bit like trying not to think of the word hippopotamus when somebody's
asked you not to
it's very difficult to do and there are various techniques
the one i'm suggesting at the moment is to focus on something else
so you might find a phrase which suits you to say
you might use the jesus prayer which is
lord jesus christ have mercy on me a sinner
or actually i prefer a simpler word or phrase
something like saying jesus or peace
to myself

so all you do is you say the word or phrase over to yourself as you hear
yourself breathe
so you might say the jesus on the in-breath and peace on the out-breath
and you focus on this until you can't focus on anything else
so you forget the world outside you
forget what you haven't done
you simply focus on the words
and then the exciting bit once you've done that a few times and you're sure that
you you're not going to be thinking about anything else
you stop saying the word and you simply launch into silence

at this point you should be able to stop absolutely everything and just be aware
of being still
for me it never lasts for very long and i have to go back to saying the word
again round again until i'm silent again in my head
sometimes god speaks to you sometimes it is simply silence but it focuses you in
a wonderful way
i really enjoy doing it when i do do it

okay so let us have a try find yourself a word or phrase
shut your eyes if that helps because it shuts out the world a little bit
and simply say the word over to yourself
it'll be a very short time but try to get yourself to a point of silence

[pause for one minute]

when you're ready come out of the silence
and think about how that felt
sometimes as i say it's really hard to do
other times it's a delight
so try it again in your own time

now i want to hand over to karen and to andrew for our prayers

[Andrew:]
let us pray
we begin with the collect for pentecost sunday and whit sunday

almighty god
on this day you open the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the
promised gift of your holy spirit
shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the gospel
that it may reach to the ends of the earth
through jesus christ our lord
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the holy spirit one god forever
and ever
amen

and now moving to our prayers

almighty god as we commence
retreat in daily life

we pray that we will be reminded that in returning and resting in you quietness
and confidence shall be our strength
by the might of your holy spirit lift us we pray to your presence where we may
be still and know that you are god
through jesus christ our lord
amen

empowering god you gave the church the abiding presence of your holy spirit
look upon your church today and hear our petitions
with all our hearts and all our minds let us pray to the lord saying hear our
prayer and afterwards the refrain lord in your mercy

we pray for your church throughout the world and that all ministers of god's
word and sacraments may be blessed and inspired
so that they may fulfill their high calling in the faith
we especially pray for our bishop christopher our clergy and people in our
diocese
guide and govern us by your holy spirit
that we may be led into the way of truth
and hold the faith in unity of spirit
lord in your mercy
hear our prayer

we pray for the peace and welfare of our world
at this time we especially pray for the israel-palestinian conflict
and that the truth will continue to be upheld
we also pray for the democratic republic of congo
and saint vincent with their recent volcanic eruptions and where mass
evacuations are occurring
we ask that help may be given to them speedily
and that these and other national emergencies may be turned into an opportunity
to strengthen the bonds of love and service between all people and nations
lord in your mercy
hear our prayer

we pray that you will teach us to use the resources of the earth to your glory
and that all may share in your goodness
and praise you for your loving kindness
in particular we pray about the coronavirus vaccine shortage in the poorer
nations
and that the leaders around the world will be guided by the holy spirit
regarding vaccine distribution
the well-being of all people and the promotion of justice and peace on this
earth
lord in your mercy
hear our prayer

[Karen:]

we pray for our own community and for this power
we especially pray for our young people the poor the unemployed the lonely the
overworked and the bereaved
bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours
and grant that we may serve christ in them
and love one another as he loves us
lord in your mercy
hear our prayer

we pray for comfort and healing for all those who are suffering in body mind or
spirit
give them courage and hope and sustain all who remember and care for them

we remember those who have requested our prayers
and all who seek the prayers of the church at this time
please feel free to name these people in your hearts now at this time
lord in your mercy hear our prayer

we commend your mercy all who have died
that your will for them may be fulfilled
and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom
lord in your mercy
hear our prayer

finally let us pray for our own needs for a few seconds

gathering our prayers into one we conclude with the prayer our savior taught us
and so we pray

our father who art in heaven
hallowed be thy name
thy kingdom come
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
give us today our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil
for thine is the kingdom the power and the glory
forever and ever
amen

[Val:]
thank you
we thought we would end by saying the grace together
so let us say the grace in our homes and here
the grace of the lord jesus christ
and the love of god
and the fellowship of the holy spirit
be with us all ever more
amen

so thank you very much for joining us tonight
next week we hope to see everyone in church though a reminder that the youtube
service will be churches together taize
so as we end and thanks also for charlie for doing the tech
we end with our song o for a thousand tongues to sing

[Music: O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing]

[That was a YouTube transcript with line breaks inserted by Hamish Blair]