

Theme: - The gift of the Spirit.

Today is Pentecost so today I want to talk about the best friend we could possibly have, a friend who is always with us and ready to help us, I am of course talking about the Holy Spirit which St John speaks of in our gospel reading this morning, which started with the words, “When the Advocate comes,” But the original word, which my Jerusalem Bible uses is, ‘Paraclete’, and Paraclete is the Greek word for the Holy Spirit, and in Greek Paraclete can mean Advocate, Counsellor, Comforter, or Helper, all four descriptions point to the supporting and enabling role of the Holy Spirit. So, when we use the phrase ‘Holy Spirit,’ we mean all those things, because the Holy Spirit is our Advocate, standing up for us and pleading our case before God when we are in trouble through sin; he is our Counsellor giving us good advice when we need it; he is our Comforter giving us encouragement when we feel inadequate or lost; and he is our Helper when things get on top of us, and we don’t know which way to turn. When we need him, day, or night, he is always there dedicated to our needs, and indeed protecting us even when we do not realise that we need protection.

On Easter Sunday, according to Mark’s Gospel: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome took spices to Jesus’ tomb to anoint Jesus, but Jesus wasn’t there, he had risen from the dead. Now if Jesus had not been raised from the dead, nobody today would ever have heard of him, and there wouldn’t be a Christian faith, he would have been just a very lovely man who had died and been forgotten like many lovely men. In the same way had Christ not sent the Holy Spirit to us, which we celebrate on this day of Pentecost, the Christian church would have stalled, because the disciples would just have extraordinary memories of a lovely man who would gradually fade away in the hustle and bustle of living. Indeed, after Jesus’ death we are told in chapter 21 following our reading that Peter and some other disciples went fishing and it was only after they had seen the risen Christ and had been anointed by the Holy Spirit, as described in the Synoptic Gospels, that they stopped their everyday jobs to concentrate on spreading the Gospel.

So, our Christian faith is rooted in Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, and the Christian church is rooted in and supported by the power of the Holy Spirit, both events, the resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit represents the very foundation of our faith and of the future of the church. But there is yet a third and vital element in the scheme of things which Jesus made very clear in the second verse of our Gospel reading which is, “You are also to testify,” now in using the word ‘You’ he was speaking to all of us, Jesus was speaking to you and me.

The number of people in church here today and those listening at home are probably more than Jesus was speaking to when he said, “You are also to testify.” Our faith our church was passed on to us by previous generations through the power of the Holy Spirit and we in our generation are to pass it on to the next generation, again through the power of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus said, “You are also to testify.”

Pentecost should not only be thought of as an historical event, because everyday someone somewhere receives the Holy Spirit, so for someone today is Pentecost; so today is the day to go out and talk about our salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. On the Sunday that

John talked about St Patrick he said that the majority of Christians today were Christians from childhood. Therefore, I say today to parents and grandparents of young children; today is the day of Pentecost, now is the time to talk to your children or grandchildren about Jesus and the Christian faith.

In verses 4b and 5 Jesus tells his disciples that he is now going to him who sent me, and adds, "Yet none of you asks me, 'where are you going?'" Just before our reading, in chapter 13 verse 36, we have Peter asking Jesus, in response to Jesus telling him that he is going away, "Lord where are you going." Jesus responds by saying, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now," and they had the sense not to ask him again. But of course, in telling them that he is going away they become sad, which isn't surprising because they have been together for a long time and have done such miraculous things together, and who wouldn't be sad when such a bonded team is threatened to be broken up.

In verses 5 to 7 Jesus explains why it is important for him to go away so that he can send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit to us, who can recruit many more people to spread the message even further. The Holy Spirit is not subject to the limitations of humanity that Jesus took upon himself. Jesus could only be in one place at a time, while the Holy Spirit can be present with believers everywhere, and the Holy Spirit can also teach other things which Jesus just didn't have the time to teach.

Due to the Holy Spirit, we've had hundreds of people who have explained and expanded our understanding of the Gospel of Christ here at St Michael's, people such as Alan Wilson Bishop of Buckingham previous rector of this parish who has sadly died, and many other people, the list is on the wall at the back of the church.

Verse 8 reads, when he comes, that is the Holy Spirit, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement, and just to clarify Jesus talked about the world as those who do not believe in him. The setting that Jesus has created is of a courtroom and the prosecutor is the Advocate who is convicting the world that is opposed to God and he will prove the world wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgement. In verse 9 Jesus says, "about sin because they don't believe in me." Here Jesus says that not believing in him is in itself a sin, our moments of unbelief is a sin, and there have been times that I have been convicted of unbelief, because like many people I have moments of unbelief. In verse 10 Jesus says, "about righteousness because I am going to the Father." The world judged Jesus and condemned him to a sinners death on the cross, but God overturned the world's judgement by Christ's resurrection and ascension and in so doing declared Christ as righteous. In verse 11 he says, "about judgement" because the ruler of the world, the devil, who is opposed to God has himself been condemned. Although God has condemned the ruler of the world, God still loves the world. We, however, cannot be saved as we are, but must be redeemed, we must accept Christ as our redeemer that the world has rejected. Otherwise, we can expect to suffer the same judgment as those who follow Satan, the ruler of the world, whom it has chosen to follow.

Verse 12 starts, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." Jesus was probably speaking of his imminent crucifixion his rising from the dead on the third day and his ascension into heaven. Had Jesus mentioned any of those things before

they happened then no one would believe him, virtually everyone around him were expecting him to be a great warrior leader who would drive the Romans out of their land, they were not expecting a suffering servant who would die a humiliating death on a cross. The disciples must experience for themselves the overwhelming reality, the darkness of the crucifixion, to realise what it would be like not to have Jesus in their lives ever again, and then to experience the almost inexpressible joy of seeing the risen Christ risen from the dead. Jesus on the cross experienced a devastating moment when he shouted from the cross, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me.” And between Good Friday and Easter Sunday the disciples would be feeling a dreadful sadness that we cannot feel, but can only imagine, because we are fully aware of the miracle of Easter Sunday.

In chapter 12 verses 49 and 50, before our reading, Jesus tells us that he did not speak for himself, but only what God commanded him to speak. Now in verse 13 of our reading Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will do the same. The Holy Spirit will be our guide and will also only speak what he hears from Christ and Christ will only tell the Holy Spirit what he has heard from God, so continuity is assured which may be why Jesus called the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth,” because it is still God speaking to us. I previously spoke about the four things the Holy Spirit does, now we can add a fifth because the Holy Spirit is also our Guide, verse 13, guiding us into all truth.

Verse 14 starts, “He (that is the Holy Spirit) will glorify me.” In John chapter 7 verse 18 before our reading, “Jesus said, “Those who speak on their own seek their own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing false in him.” God sent Jesus to us to speak on his behalf, and Jesus glorified God, now the Holy Spirit, who was sent by Christ to speak to us will glorify Christ.

The important message this morning is that we are not alone, the Holy Spirit who speaks the words Christ gives him is always at our side, walking with us wherever we go, and will speak to us as our Advocate, our Counsellor, our comforter, our Helper, and our Guide whenever we need him day or night, whether we realise it or not.

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