### **28. May 2023 Acts 2:1-21 , John 21:19-23 Rev L.in Vawer Pentecost - Up to the job?**

I have been very fortunate in my career that I didn’t apply for many jobs, they just sort of came to me. Shortly before I left the world of (paid!) work I used to feel so sorry for colleagues applying for new jobs – the paperwork, form filling, observation, PowerPoints let alone the actual interview filled me with horror.

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I’m not up to the job. I recall a conversation when I said just that. I was called into the head teachers office. A formidable woman. Called in to do a tough job and she was single minded. People went into that office and never came out again. Well, you know what I mean I walked the walk with a certain amount of fear and trepidation, trying to think how many “s” in resignation. It got worse; I was asked to sit down. Then the bombshell as I was then asked to take on a senior role in school. I was brave enough to respond with “I’m not up to the job” and more importantly I didn’t want to upset the person already in role. In a nano second I realised that this wasn’t a polite request, it was a command. Training would be given, the path would be made smooth, I know you can do it. There was a plan to be achieved and it need implementing. Start today and close the door on the way out.  On the bright side I didn’t have to worry about my spelling.

In our readings the disciples face the same situation. A command, a promise but they also get the gift of peace.

**Pentecost ….. what was it all about ?**

On this day of Pentecost, we have two accounts of Gods Holy Spirit being poured out on the disciples. On both occasions the disciples are scared, hidden away, fearful behind locked doors, watching and waiting. But they are together.

In the gospel it is the day of the resurrection, and the outpouring of the spirit feels very personal and calm. The risen Christ appears bringing firstly peace and then the promised gift, now is the time, not to set them apart and become a kind of holy club or even to give new spiritual experiences but to do for the whole world what Jesus’ has been doing for Israel. “the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”. it’s not a polite request, it’s a command. And Jesus knows that they can do it.

If we fast forward now to Jerusalem. Together in one place again, perhaps wondering what next. How will Jesus’ message spread to cultures not thinking about Gods kingdom or waiting for a Messiah? The long story of God and Israel has reached its climax in Jesus, now salvation brought to Israel is to come from the Jewish world to the wider gentile world, the disciples are to start the process. Jesus has begun the work of the new creation; it doesn’t have to be done again but now the command is to implement his achievement through their mission and there is a big difference between achieving and implementing.

And what a dramatic affirmation of the gift of the spirit. The senses are attacked by the sound and feel of gushing wind, tongues of fire resting on each one and then filled with the spirit the gift to speak in as many tongues that are needed to be heard. To implement the command, they need the holy spirit – Jesus’ breath, Gods breath, and it enables them to do the Job they would never dream of doing.

Peter is the great example. He was always getting it wrong, getting confused. He denied Jesus and ran away. Was he up to the job? Well here he is addressing thousands of people, making clever theological connections with Hebrew scripture, witnessing so boldly that 3000 people are converted. By the power of the spirit Peter is becoming the person he was meant to be. Jesus saw his potential. He was up to the job.

Two different accounts that indicate that God works in many ways and the spirit can be experienced differently at different times. The spirit comes dramatically but in different ways. Each time the disciples are together. First, Jesus himself appears bringing peace, hope, comfort, and support – all the things the bereaved need – and then he breathes the Holy spirit into them to liberate and empower. A relatively calm scene compared to the one in Jerusalem when the spirit comes like a violent wind. Like tongues of fire. It brings the gift of the spirit so that men whose local accents were laughed at can now communicate with people from every part of the roman empire. Gods spirit liberates and empowers ordinary people.

Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, *“What does this mean*?”

**Pentecost …..well what does it mean for us, here , today**

I have listened to many accounts other people’s experiences of receiving the Holy spirit in very dramatic ways – days, dates times are recalled- and thought to myself “well nothing as dramatic happened to me.. Perhaps I’m not spirit filled. Perhaps I’m not up to the job”. I am reassured by our readings today that God the holy Spirit comes to us in different ways. It may be dramatic like a might wind or flames of fire. But God the Holy spirit is also the comforter, the counsellor, the advocate who brings peace and reconciliation. So our experience of the spirit may be quiet, deep down affirmation and consolation.

However, the spirit comes it enhances our God given potential both as individuals and a community. Lets not forget that the disciples were together as community in each account. The spirit helps us to be all that we can and often takes us to new places within ourselves, our church and our community. We may need to accept out worth, we may need to take on new challenges that stretch us, we may need to invest more time in the people around us.

The command remains the same “As the father has sent me, I am sending you.”

The promise remains the same “he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit”

The gift remains the same “Peace be with you.

Where the spirit is at work, we expect to see boundaries being broken down, prejudices challenged, fears and anxieties overcome and those who are committed to the journey never give up on the process of growing deeper into God. People who are passionate about unity, about building bridges and working for reconciliation. Where the spirit of God is at work the church doesn’t stand still, isn’t content with being cosy – it wis willing to take risks and is outward looking, even when it is uncomfortable.

 Are we up to the job? Jesus believes we are.

Ultimately the gift of the spirit is given to each of us so that we can be sent out as the Father sent Jesus. Sent to witness Christ at work in the world wherever we find ourselves.

We haven’t always got the best words. Sometimes our day-to-day life makes people wonder about God. But we do have to be ready to given an account t of the hope that we have in us.

Can we respond to the holy spirit at work in us? Yes of course we can. Can we do something risky for God? Can we be Gods person in Gods world? Yes and yes!

This Pentecost lets come out of hiding and let God empower and liberate us . let God work in us so that others may be empowered and liberated too. Let us dream dreams and see visons and prophecy. Let’s rise to the challenge and share the amazing love of God far and wide.

Today, lets us pray that that God will send his holy spirit on us

And clothe us with power from on high.

May the Spirit kindle in us the fire of God’s love.

Amen