

## Pentecost Sunday 2022 Acts 2

Okay, to kick things off this morning, what stands out to you from Acts chapter 2? Have a chat and tell the person next to you.

When it comes to Pentecost I have feel a real kinship with the book of Acts and that's because my story is entwined in the supernatural, personal activity of the Holy Spirit.

So as I've said before, I've always had a sense of the spiritual, the supernatural even though I come from a non-church, non-Christian, atheist upbringing. The things of God didn't feature or were belittled. Yet I just knew that knew there was another world alongside this one that we can see.

And so my seeking, searching began alongside an awareness of the dark entities in this realm.

One of my first encounters with the spiritual realm was with these dark entities where an event occurred in my life where I can only describe as waves of fear that entered my being and gripped my heart. I became a fearful, scared, anxious young person. It was awful

Sometime after that I was given a Gideon's New Testament which devoured and it was alive(!) It was as if every verse had meaning and relevance was directed straight at me. Jesus in these pages was so real.

Then on the first Christian youth camp I ever went on about six months after becoming a Jesus follower. It was like no other time in my life. It was fantastic in so many ways: great speakers and great sung worship and excellent day time activities.

But best of all was the nights: after the speaker all the chairs at the front were cleared away and an invitation was given. One, for those who never committed their lives to Jesus and two, for those wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

And the Spirit showed up; there were words of knowledge and prophecy over these young people's lives. Some began to speak in tongues. Some cried. Some shook. There was even deliverance from evil spirits. (Christian youth camps are so tame these days 😊). Most of all there was joy and enthusiasm that did not wane quickly.

Then often on Sunday mornings and evenings the same opportunity was extended again the Holy Spirit showed up. The fruit of this was so many people experienced a closer, more intimate relationship with God and life-change. For me one area of many, that fear that crippled my life was driven out and replaced by the Spirit of God who gives peace and courage.

So when I read the Book of Acts and other places, what I experienced seem absolutely reasonable and normal.

And we have this chapter in Acts which many call the birthday of the church.

Here we read of the Holy Spirit being poured on all the believers, which is the fulfilment of a promise.

You see in the Old Testament the Spirit resided on select individuals but God promised there would come a day where the Spirit would reside on all who believe.

Jesus also promised, as Israel's God in person, that in Him the promised was going to happen "Now!"

And we read all of what happened.

But that still leaves a question,

***"What is the meaning of Pentecost?"***

Yes, God keeps his promised, but why give the Spirit?

If you feel comfortable, tell the person next to you.

Did anyone say "witness"?

Did anyone say, "transformation"? You know, life change, growing Christlikeness?

Did anyone talk about the gifts?

Did anyone say, "power"? You are empowered, enabled by the Spirit.

The Spirit calls people to be followers of Jesus and then energises them to be shaped by Jesus and follow him.

I want to say "Yes!" to all of those.

I want to say there is another dimension that is core and we read in Acts chapter 2 verse 2 to 4:

"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.”

I want to suggest that at the core of all of this, of what Pentecost is about, is they had an *encounter*, a sensory experience, of the Holy Spirit.

You see, when comes to the Holy Spirit and the things of God, what we are prone to do is we *talk* about the Spirit.

We *think* about Him.

We read about Him. We might even have debates about what the Spirit acts and what he does.

And they absolutely have their place.

I want to say there is more.

The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, the One who brings us to the Father and the Son is to be encountered.

Maybe as Martin Luther King did.

On the eve of his 28<sup>th</sup> birthday a preacher by the name of Martin Luther King Jr. stood behind the pulpit of a church in Montgomery, Alabama. His home had been firebombed and he was sleeping little, anxious about recent death threats against his family. The future of the Montgomery civil rights campaign looked bleak. King began to pray aloud in the pulpit and something unusual happened - a burst of the Spirit's activity sweep over him.

Then King began to pray, and he said these words:

“Lord, I hope no one will have to die as a result of our struggle for freedom in Montgomery. Certainly I don't want to die. But if anyone has to die, let it be me.”

After that his mouth remained open but no more words came from it. He swooned and other ministers leaped up to help him to his seat. The audience, unlike some others, roared with enthusiastic approval.

The Holy Spirit had come down on the young scholar from Boston.

“Amen, hallelujah! Thank you Jesus!” the congregation shouted.

Ever after, King himself felt embarrassed by the episode.

Or maybe as Jackie Pullinger did in the slum called the Walled City in Hong Kong, where she worked as a missionary for decades.

What lead her there was dream and when you got there she would minister to the drug addicted by praying for them in tongues. I mean, they had no health or medical insurance to draw. But as Pullinger prayed in tongues over these the addicts they would be miraculously cured.

Or Mick Duncan

In his time in the slums of Manila there his most prized possession was a radio. It was life-saver. On the weekend he could listen to cricket being broadcast from Australia and in the evenings he could listen to the BBC. This radio was kept on a shelf just above where he would pray.

One day when he was praying he had a distinct 'impression' that he should move the radio off the shelf and down onto a table. What was implicit in the 'impression' was that someone would try and steal the radio that night. The next morning there was gaping hole in the wall next to the shelf. Someone had pulled back the piece of plywood believing the radio would be in its normal place.

Throughout the 1990's Jason Robinson was a top level rugby and rugby league representative for England.

He was one of best the sport had seen and had all the trappings that come with sporting success: financial security and all the material wealth he could want but also had relationship problems. Despite having great success on the field, off it his problems were overpowering him. It got to the stage that he would be out drinking six nights a week. On the outside everything was great. He was earning a lot of money, he had a fast car and nice clothes to go with it.

But he admits that on the inside he was empty and searching. And like a lot of people he looked in the usual places: money, in possessions, in drinking, in relationships. None of them filled the gap.

Drinking became for him a vicious circle. He had problems so I drank, yet the more he drank, the more problems he had, and the more problems he had, the more he drank. But he was getting away with it on the field because he was still a good a player as ever.

Then one day his friend and team mate came and talked to him about a dream he had about Robinson. And as you would be, Robinson was immediately curious. His friend, who was a Christian, told him in his dream he saw Robinson standing on top of the world. He had the world at his feet but gradually the world started crumbling beneath him. Robinson was amazed. The dream was uncannily true. It stopped him in him in his tracks and he knew that he had to get his life sorted out.

So Robinson rung another Christian friend and after talking things through, gave his life over to Jesus. <sup>1</sup>

The list could go on.

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Now at this point I think you know where I stand on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

I've spoken many times about the Spirit.

So some might ask, "Do you want us to become a Pentecostal church?"

I mean, I sown a lot of seeds in this area.

Well, yes, no, maybe.

You see, it depends what you mean.

Would like everyone here in this local congregation – myself included - to experience more of the reality of the holy Spirit in their lives? Absolutely!

Do I think I think the some of us in this room need to come into a deeper experience of that which already resides in them? Yes!

I mean that's my story. I think it's the Biblical story.

What I don't mean it in the classical sense.

You see a classic Pentecostal say the sign of being Spirit-filled is you have to speak in tongues.

A charismatic is someone who says, you are filled with the Spirit if you are a Christian and the fruit of that is love, and some will get the gifts of tongues, while others get other gifts.

And there is always more.

Now on this, what I've noticed in churches across the board is that they *lurch*.

Some years ago and for a significant number of years churches across the denominations – Baptist, Anglican, some Brethren and even Presbyterians –

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.veritesport.org/?page=jasonrobinson>

experienced a new wave of the Holy Spirit in their congregational life.

The read, for example:

“ ‘In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
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.”

The read this and said, “That’s for us!”

It was called the charismatic renewal and it was fantastic. For many, many Christians it added a new dimension to their walk with Jesus. The neglected gifts of the Spirit were active again.

But then, the excesses crept in. You know people started focusing on the experience rather than the Spirit. People wanted the power but not the Person of God. The help not the Helper. The comfort not the Comforter. And all sort of other silly stuff crept in (still does happen).

Then because of these excesses, these same churches lurched the other way and said, we don’t want these excesses that make us look foolish, so we better clamp down on things.

So many of them did.

And they became very orderly. And some not only became orderly, they became rigid. They became entrenched.

If the Spirit was going to move it was going to be in very defined ways.

And for these very same churches, the lights starting going out.

I don’t want us to lurch.

When you lurch it’s jarring and it doesn’t last.

I don’t want us to lurch, I think what we are to do is to *lean*.

To lean more and more into who the Spirit is and what He what’s to offer.

And every one of us can lean because you lean from where you’re at and each of us is different.

So I would love us to be a charismatic church.

And mean ‘us’.

In a natural, low key way, that invites but doesn't pressure.  
We do so together in a relaxed way.  
It's nurturing a culture of openness.  
It doesn't have to be in a time of crisis.

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So this morning, an invitation to come.

For some people here, what you need is an *encounter* with the Holy Spirit.  
For some, it's a fresh experience, a refreshing.

I've heard many of your stories.  
It's been a long time between drinks.

Sometimes I hear a lament that it is has been far too long since people have  
experienced the reality of God's power in their lives.

When was the last time you:

heard God's voice,  
received a vivid God given dream, vision or image,  
felt something spiritual,  
got filled with a new sense of peace or joy  
or spoken in a tongue they never learned?

For others, it's a first time.

For you, you've this talk of encountering the Holy Spirit is a little scary, it's outside  
your normal experience and yet you know it's you the Spirit's talking to.

So this morning, this is room, this place is a safe place.

If you would like to be prayed for in this area of encountering the Holy Spirit, you  
come.