

Chorale Prelude “Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist”, BuxWV209 – D Buxtehude

(2:55) Thoughts for Whitsunday also known as the feast of Pentecost

The Collect, Epistle and Gospel from the Authorized version of the bible are those specified in the Book of Common Prayer

(3:07) The Collect

God, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgement in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

(3:37) The Epistle is written in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles beginning at the first verse:

When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

(5:06) The Gospel is written in the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of Saint John beginning at the fifteenth verse:

Jesus said unto his disciples, If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, (not Iscariot,) Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.

(7:50) A 'Thought for Whitsunday' from Revd. John Samways

Living on the cusp of fear and joy is a reality for us all through these extraordinary days. For weeks we've been daily awaiting the latest news with a degree of *bewilderment*, *perplexity* and, at times, *amazement* and even *scorn* and *derision*. Exactly the same reactions are identified by Luke as he describes the reactions of residents and visitors in Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-13.

Each of us at some moment in our life has been eaten up by fear only for that crippling feeling to turn into overwhelming joy (remember driving test or exams?!). As we now arrive at Pentecost we are *all* 'wanting to take the next step', namely from lockdown (nurturing fear) into post-lockdown (releasing joy and new life). None of us want to simply stay where we are, living uncertainly on the cusp of fear and joy, of hopeless end and endless hope. Apart from anything else, it is exhausting!

After 'setting the scene' in Jerusalem, Luke continues (Acts 2:14-37) with Peter's response as he addresses the crowds. He explains what is happening, reminding them that what they are seeing was 'promised' some 800 years earlier through the prophet Joel. I suspect none of us enjoy waiting for promises, especially for centuries(!) – now it has been delivered. Peter then continues to put it all into context by recounting the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (known personally by many in the crowd). It is this Jesus who, having ascended to be alongside his Father in heaven, is now pouring out the *gift* of the Holy Spirit 'on all people', thus fulfilling God's promise.

‘When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and asked Peter, ‘What shall we do?’ (Acts 2:37) - a good question and one we should be asking ourselves! If we’re ever offered a gift, unless we receive it the gift will count for nothing, any potential benefit will be lost. Peter’s reply is unequivocal. In summary he is saying, ‘Don’t miss this opportunity!’

‘Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.’(Acts 2:38-9). This is a promise God has not withdrawn, it is a promise for all generations today.

What is the benefit of this gift? Nothing less than ‘love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22,23). Can *any* of us say we have *all* we need in each of those departments, especially as we live on this cusp of fear and hope? What causes us to hesitate to reach out for this gift and hence forgo its benefits? Could it be our inner sense of unworthiness, our determination to ‘do it my way’, our false humility, our pride? “Before the truth sets you free, it tends to make you uncomfortable.” (Richard Rohr).

If we accept this gift, where might this ‘lead’ us? Look no further than Acts 2:42, the foundation stone upon which the Church is to be built. How might we build upon this foundation today?

Pentecost invites us annually, and never more clearly than in 2020, to ask, ‘What should we do?’ May each of us allow ourselves time and space to ponder this question and, perhaps, to share our thoughts with a friend or two. God does not call us into ‘reTirement’ but into ‘reFirement. Just one letter changed but a wholly new perspective upon life ‘post lockdown’.

‘Come, Holy Spirit; come, Lord, come.’

(12:24) Prelude & Fugue in C BWV 533 – attrib. J S Bach

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