

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

Make the right choice : obey the Spirit's voice

Please note that our Interim Moderator and Locum, Rev. Rona Young, will be visiting those with pastoral needs by telephone during the coronavirus crisis. If in need of pastoral care, please contact Rona by telephone on (01292) 471982.

The Minister's Message

Reflection Pentecost "The fire of the Holy Spirit"

Today is Pentecost – the day we celebrate the birthday of the church over 2,000 years ago.

Bible reading (1) Acts 2: 1 – 4

The Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

In verse 2 we read that *"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 looked like tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them."*

In Matthew's Gospel chapter 3: 11 John the Baptist is speaking to the crowd of people who had come to see him baptise people in the river Jordan. He said, *"I baptise with water for repentance. But after me will come one more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."*

When John met Jesus, it must have been one of the most dramatic and momentous events in the whole of history. John and Jesus are standing at the dividing line of the centuries. The Old Testament period is ending, and the New Testament period is about to begin.

It appears that John thinks Jesus will also baptise – but instead of baptising people in the water, as John had done, the Son of God will baptise in a very different way, he would baptise them with fire.

There are different aspects of fire we can think about, that will help us to understand more fully about the Holy Spirit. The first is that **fire consumes**. In the Letter to the Hebrews in chapter 12: 29 the writer says, *"God is a consuming fire."*

The late Selwyn Hughes gives the following illustration:

"Many years ago, while living in the North of England, I was in the vicinity when a show room, displaying many prestigious cars, accidentally caught fire. The flames took hold very quickly, and although the firemen were soon on the scene, they appeared powerless to prevent the fire from spreading."

I watched in astonishment, as the fire crept towards the costly cars, blistering the paint, shattering the glass, and then engulfed them in sheets of flame. It took about an hour to bring the blaze under control, and when the smoke cleared, I saw a sight that I would never forget, it was so clearly imprinted on my memory. A Bentley, which hours before had been gleaming in all its glory, was now a charred and blackened chassis. A Rolls Royce, considered by some to be one of the most luxurious and expensive cars ever produced, was nothing more than a piece of twisted metal. The fire had done its work well: everything combustible had been consumed.”

By its very nature, fire eats its way into things – to engulf, devour and consume. And so, when we let the Holy Spirit into our lives, we can expect him to burn away any impurities in our personalities.

In Isaiah chapter 4: 4 the prophet says that one day the Lord will cleanse Jerusalem by a spirit of judgement and a spirit of fire. Our pride, self-righteousness and bitterness will be consumed in the Holy Spirit’s fire.

Bible reading (2) Isaiah 6: 1 – 7

Isaiah’s commission

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty;
The whole earth is full of his glory.’

4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

5 ‘Woe is me!’ I cried. ‘I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.’

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, ‘See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.’

Now, we are thinking about the **purifying effects of fire**. In this passage, Isaiah becomes conscious of sinfulness in connection with his lips. *“Woe is me!”* he cried. *“I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people with unclean lips.”*

We all know that it is so easy to sin by something we say. We also know that, not long before his arrest, Jesus said, *“You will all fall away.”* Simon Peter declared, *“Even if all fall away, I will not.”* Later, however, we read in Matthew’s Gospel that he denied Jesus again, this time with an oath, and said, *“I don’t know the man.”* (Matthew 26:72).

The Bible records many instances of people speaking words that saddened the heart of God. In this passage, it is one of the seraphs who brought a live coal and touched Isaiah’s mouth and said, *“See, this has touched your lips: your guilt has been taken away and your sin atoned for.”* Isaiah’s lips are purified and when we confess our sin, God will forgive any thoughtless or hurting words that we have said.

Another effect of fire that illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit is **to get things moving**. Another story:

"A businessman took over the small factory of a company that had gone into liquidation and hired a completely new work force, with no knowledge of the factory. On the first morning, he tried to get the machinery going, but despite pulling all the levers within reach and turning every wheel he could see, the machinery remained motionless.

"Try oiling the bearings," suggested someone. He did but nothing happened. *"Let's get rid of all this dust,"* said another. Still there were no signs of movement. All kinds of advice were given and possible solutions tried but with no avail. Then some of the workers went into the boiler room and discovered that there was no fire in the boiler. So, they opened the furnace door, put in some fuel and started a fire. Soon steam rushing into the cylinders, hit the pistons and within an hour or two the great wheels began first to tremble, then turn. Fire was the answer."

In some churches, it is as if the fire has gone out. Unless the fire of the Holy Spirit is at work in a church, there will be no movement and no real progress.

But that is not true of Newton Wallacetown Church. Yes, things are different in ways we could never have imagined, and despite a vacancy lasting almost a year, with the online services and the Extraordinary Times, and numerous phone calls and e-mails etc., members of this congregation have kept together – and there is no way the fire of the Holy Spirit has gone out.

At present, we do not know how long it will be before we can gather for worship in the church again, but let us continue to set the fire of the Holy Spirit alight in others' hearts.

St. Augustine, the great spiritual leader of the fourth and fifth centuries, used to encourage people by saying, and I quote, *"Get close to the fire of the Holy Spirit and others will catch it too: one loving heart sets another on fire."*

A third story: "In America, the story is told of a tiny wooden chapel in Wisconsin where the normal Sunday attendance was extremely small. One Sunday, however, when the snow lay thick on the ground, something went wrong with the heating system in the chapel and the building was accidentally set on fire. Then a strange thing happened. People came from all over the area to watch the church on fire! An eyewitness commented that the fire brought the congregation together."

This true story is of course a parable. Many people who look at a church think about what keeps them away, rather than what attracts them.

We are unable to think about NWC being involved in going out on mission at the present time, but may we all commit ourselves again to God, so that once we have any opportunity, we can let others see how our hearts burn for Christ. The flame of God burning in our hearts can set others on fire.

As we begin to meet other people again, whenever we have the opportunity, may others know by our love, by what we say, that the Holy Spirit has set our hearts on fire!

*"So light up the fire,
and let the flame burn,
open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of his Spirit
let the fruit grow,
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show."*
(The chorus of M.P. 1039 "Colours of day")

Amen.

Let us pray,

Living God,

we rejoice today that, through the gift of your Holy Spirit, you breathed new hope, new faith and new life into your people.

As the disciples gathered on that Day of Pentecost, in the space of a few moments their experience was revolutionised, their expectations turned upside down, and their attitudes changed for evermore.

Almighty God,

come to us anew this morning, breathing new fire into our hearts, and new energy into our lives.

Transform, we pray, our fear, anxiety and doubt, filling us with confidence and faith.

Sovereign God,

our thoughts now turn to the world, a world where Covid -19 is still claiming so many lives, and bringing heartache and sorrow. We pray too, for the poor and the hungry, the homeless and the refugees, those downtrodden and oppressed at this extremely difficult time.

We remember especially this morning all those who are now unemployed, or living with the threat of unemployment because of the coronavirus.

Loving God,

we pray for all those who have been bereaved and those who are seriously ill in hospital due to Covid- 19. As we begin to come carefully out of lockdown, we pray that people will follow the guidelines and rejoice in their time spent with family and friends. May the test, trace and self-isolation be successful here, as in other countries, Lord God. We pray too, Lord, for all those working so hard to find a cure, a vaccine that will protect people from the virus.

Loving Father, we bring before you now those in special need of our prayers this morning – those who have been bereaved in recent weeks, those whose family member is in hospital. Lord we pray for healing for each person. May they and their families know your peace in their hearts. We pray too for all those who are ill at home and those receiving treatment during these weeks.

Come, Holy Spirit, as you came at Pentecost, come again today, and meet our deepest needs.

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord,

Amen.

Rona

Please remember in your prayers this week all of the people below in hospital, care homes or in their own homes:-

Mr James Alexander	Mrs Alison Wilson
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mr John Cassells
Mrs Aileen Alexander	Mrs Jessie Rennie
Mrs Ellise Wilson	Mrs May Wilkinson
Mrs Heather McLeod	Mrs Anna Irving
Mrs Joan Ness	Mrs Cath Lindsay
Mrs Edith Gray	Mrs Jean Hamilton
Mrs Christine Martin	Mrs Mary Ferguson
Mrs Catherine McDonald	Mrs Helen McGill

Please let the Session Clerk know of any member/relative who goes in to hospital or is ill at home. For those in hospital, please ensure you have their given Christian name which may not necessarily be the name by which s/he is usually known.

Prayer Chain Anyone having a request for prayer may contact Sheena Hunter on 01292 570200 or e-mail her at sheenachunter@hotmail.com

Difficult times While these are times of worry and hardship for many people, the Church is also struggling financially. If you are able, we would be most grateful if you would consider making an extra donation (according to means) to help cover ongoing bills etc.. Please contact Janis Meredith whose details are on page 6. Thank you.

John Bell

Congratulations! We wish every success in her chosen career as a teacher of physical education to Kerrie Davidson who has just completed her studies. Kerrie attended our Sunday School and is the granddaughter of Mrs Irene Montgomerie.

Birthdays

Five people are celebrating their birthdays this week:-

4th June Eilidh Wright 18!! and Billy McCrone 70!!

5th June Jean McCamilly

7th June Austin Hunter and Lindsey Coverdale



Salvation Army Foodbank A big thank you to all who have donated on the past four Sunday afternoons.

Please note that donations will be accepted between **2.00** and **3.30pm**. Only leave your car when the person before you has gone and, if possible, please place your contribution directly into the boot of the receiving car.

While any donation is great, the foodbank has expressed particular needs for the following:-

Small Jars of Coffee

Tinned Vegetables

Tinned or Packet Potatoes

Tinned Cold Meat

Tinned Mince or Stew

Tinned or Packet Custard

Tinned Creamed Rice

Anything that is long life!

Additionally they accept -

Toiletries - soap, shampoo, toothpaste

Carrier Bags, particularly robust bags

Everything is distributed to **those in need in our area** and **Newton Primary School** which is also a centre for collection for other schools with vulnerable families.

Remember Streaming of our morning service conducted this week by Gary McCleary and next week by Rev. Rona Young will commence at **11.00am** then our **prayer time** starts at **12.30pm** with the Lord's Prayer followed by personal prayers. This helps bring us together to reach out to him in prayer while we are distancing physically. Please join us for the service if you can and take part in the prayer time which many are finding valuable and some find comforting.



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