

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (2.1-13)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

Mike

We've just heard the story of Pentecost in the reading from Acts chapter two. So that's the context for a conversation I'm going to have with Sue and Eric from St Nick's. And we're doing that here on Zoom today, which is nice. And it'll make a change from just me talking at the camera. So it's good to have you both along, and thank you for agreeing to do this. Now, Sue, in church (when we were in church) we say, I believe in the Holy Spirit or we believe in the Holy Spirit week by week. I just wonder what that meant to you.

Sue

I've been thinking about it since you sent us the questions and yes, it's quite a difficult one, isn't it? Because if you wanted to do it from the scriptures, it's quite complicated. But for me personally, I believe that the Holy Spirit is a guide. He guides us throughout our lives.

He's part of the Trinity, the three in one. And I just think that, he's the comforter, he's the one that helps you along in your life day by day.

Mike

And how about you, Eric? Have you got anything that you'd like to add to that?

Eric

I liked the bit where in your question where you said that we say, "I believe", and actually, I think as you said earlier, we do say "we believe". I like the idea of saying "I believe", because, you know, I can't say what other people believe. I know what it is for me. And for me, the Holy Spirit is the bit that's like the treacle that you spread out, that when you step in, it holds everything together. So yes, without the Holy Spirit guiding and being there, I'm not sure which of the three comfort, because the idea of the Trinity is quite difficult to get a grip on. But I really think that the idea of the Holy Spirit is the bit for me that is around, and is the bit that, you know, gives me a nudge every now and again, just to say, "Oh, Hey, let's get on with it". So yes, that's what it means to me.

Mike

That's great. I love the idea of Holy Spirit as treacle. That's a new one - I mean that image. It's interesting you mentioned the Trinity because of course, Trinity Sunday is the following week. So we'll come back to that one. How about in the story of Pentecost, we've got this quite amazing image of an event, with tongues of fire,

they're speaking all sorts of different languages, rushing winds and all that sort of thing. I just wondered if - Eric we'll start with you – have there been any times in your life where you've had something more of a very specific experience of the Holy Spirit?

Eric

Not in tongue of fire or doves or anything coming down on me. Although a bird left a parting gift earlier on this week. Two particular ones, I think. When I was in my early twenties, I was living away from home for the first time down in Surrey and I do remember lying in my b'n'b bedroom one evening. And that was when I really felt the presence, saying to me everything's going to be fine. And actually, you're now going to make contact with this church that I'd already spoken with, and it'll all be fine. And at that point, you know, the idea of being away from home on my own. And, I suppose I was quite naïve at the time. And even in my early twenties, someone say I'm still naïve, but you know, who knows? So that was great.

And then years later, probably in my forties, I used to do a lots of coffee bar services at the Methodist church, because I've got fingers in all sorts of denominations. You've got to hedge your bets these days. You know, I do remember that if I ever tried to do the service and just dashed it off, because I was in a rush, it would go like that. But if when I started off, I prayed for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that would mean that it would be well accepted. And the number of times that someone came to me when I'd pray to the Holy Spirit. and even when I was doing it, I'd changed something because a little voice in here said do this bit. And then someone particular would come up to me and say what you said tonight really spoke to me. So that for me is the Holy Spirit working through me. It wasn't me doing it. So they're my experiences - the two key ones for me. It happened on several occasions.

Mike

Well thank you for being willing to, to share those. Sue, is there a particular moment or episode for you, where you feel the Holy Spirit's presence has been very much in your life?

Sue

I've had a number of them over the years. I used to go to a church camp years and years and years ago. And, you know, we'd been praying for the young people who were there. And this one day I really felt God was saying to me, you must talk to this person. And later on, they, they gave their heart to the Lord and I was only part of that chain, but I did what God told me to do. And the joy that I had in my heart afterwards just for doing what God told me to do was amazing.

I went to a Baptist church for a while. We also sang in the spirit and the sense of, oh, it's really hard to describe this lifting of one's soul. When, you sing like that is, it's just, Ooh. Yeah, it is. It's the word. So I do know that the Holy Spirit can do things for you just out of this world, you know.

Mike

I think a lot of people think that what we might call the more spectacular experiences of the Holy Spirit is something that's quite modern or American or something, but actually you go through church history and there are examples of it all the way back. And it's really lovely to hear your story of that as well. But we might think of the Holy Spirit as perhaps associated with kinds of outbursts of something quite unusual happening, whether it's words for service that you didn't know you had, or this amazing singing in the Spirit experience or something like that. But what about the day to day? What about the humdrum of life. How do you feel the Holy Spirit is there for you, Sue, would you say?

Sue

It's that having a sense of comfort; it's that sense of knowing that whatever happens, God is with you - the Spirit is with you. And I do know that I 'leak', so if I don't pray, and I don't read the Word, I get flat; the Spirit

goes. You could be filled with the Spirit, but you leak, if you don't keep reading God's word, praying to the Lord, you will lose some of that. Not all of it, but some of it, you know?

Mike

Yes. Because that verse that says be filled with the spirit, it actually means it's a continuous thing, it means keep on being filled.

Sue

Not just a one-off.

Mike

How about you, Eric? In terms of the day to day of the Holy Spirit, if you like,

Eric

I love the idea, the metaphor of constantly topping up, you know. It's almost like is your glass half empty or half full. To a Yorkshireman I suppose it depends whose round it is! But for me, it comes back down to, Psalm 46 verse 10: "Be still and know that I am God". And it's that being still that for me is the Holy Spirit just calming me down and putting me back into focus, to get my feet firmly anchored when, quite honestly, anything can be going on around you. But that, to me, is the everyday experience of the Spirit for me.

Mike

Thank you. It's been a great to have different voices and different experiences to out into our Sunday video. So thanks for agreeing to do this, and I look forward to editing it in, so that we've got a different sort of a sermon slot. Have you got anything else you just want to add?

Sue

Yeah, I just wanted to add one thing was that I was before coming to St Nick's, I prayed for the Lord to show me the right place to come. And I really did feel that I came in, and it was a small church, and it wasn't happy clappy which in some ways I was used to, and yet the Spirit told me this was where I should be. And I just really wanted to put that in at the end that, you know, God does guide you through your life. And certainly I felt that the Spirit led me to St Nick's.

Eric

Yeah, I would, I would concur with that. I was without a church for several years, went to a house group, but it was arriving at St Nick's, after a lot of prayer that, I think St Nick's is filled with something - and I hope it is the Spirit - that gives us that warmth as a family. Because I think we are a family.

Mike

Well, I can endorse that because when I was looking for a move for my change of life, then St Nick's stood out, and I've never regretted coming. But anyway, thank you very much to both of you for sharing those stories together.

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for God to fill us with his Spirit.
Generous God,
we thank you for the power of your Holy Spirit.
We ask that we may be strengthened to serve you better.
Lord, come to bless us
And fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the wisdom of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to make us wise to understand your will.
Lord, come to bless us
And fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the peace of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to keep us confident of your love wherever you call us.
Lord, come to bless us
And fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the healing of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to bring reconciliation and wholeness
where there is division, sickness and sorrow.
Lord, come to bless us
And fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the gifts of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to equip us for the work which you have given us.
Lord, come to bless us
And fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the fruit of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to reveal in our lives the love of Jesus.
Lord, come to bless us
And fill us with your Spirit.

We thank you for the breath of your Holy Spirit,
given us by the risen Lord.
We ask you to keep the whole Church, living and departed,
in the joy of eternal life.
Lord, come to bless us
And fill us with your Spirit.

Generous God,
you sent your Holy Spirit upon your Messiah at the river Jordan,
and upon the disciples in the upper room:
in your mercy fill us with your Spirit,
**Hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy for ever. Amen.**