

Pentecost 2021 (23.05.2021)

Acts 2: 1 – 21 and John 15: 26, 27; 16: 4b – 15

The story of the Day of Pentecost which Lorraine has just read from the Acts of the Apostles is a very dramatic story. It changes everything . . . but nothing is new.

It changes everything for the Apostles. They experience God as Spirit in a way they haven't before, but in the way Jesus had promised them they would. They are transformed. They had been mainly fishermen from a provincial backwater. Within a few decades they had preached and taught; they had organised and planned; and they had created an effective network of churches not only in the area they knew, and not only among the sort of people they were familiar with, but right through what we call Turkey and Greece and across to Rome. You would never have thought them capable of it. And they wouldn't

have been without the dramatic transformation through experiencing God as Spirit.

But the Holy Spirit was nothing new. It isn't a phenomenon which sprang into being on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit had existed since before time began. It was the Holy Spirit which brooded over the waters as God began to create the world. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit came upon Joshua, Gideon, Samson and Saul. The Holy Spirit spoke to David and entered Ezekiel. In the New Testament it was the Holy Spirit that overshadowed the Virgin Mary when she became pregnant with Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit which descended on Jesus like a dove when he was baptised and which then drove him into the wilderness. And it was the Holy Spirit which Jesus said had anointed him and commissioned him to start his earthly ministry, a ministry of proclaiming good news to the poor and release from oppression and repression.

The Revd Matthew Pollard, Rector of Bridlington Priory

So the Holy Spirit is not making a *début* at Pentecost. But what is happening for the first time is that the Holy Spirit is giving to Jesus' followers everything Jesus was in his earthly life. Jesus made the invisible God visible. And everything that Jesus was is now available to us, is our potential. God became visible after Pentecost in the Apostles. God can become visible in you and me today. We have the gift of living as Jesus lived, wholly at one with ourselves, without considerations of self-interest, but open, courageous and compassionate, refusing to engage in retaliation or revenge – and ready to turn the world upside down!

Amen.

NB: this sermon was deliberately unusually short as the service had been preceded by a review of the APCM which had occurred during the previous week. Brevity of sermon was the *quid pro quo*!

MRP