Pentecost/Jubilee 2022 Stowe Church
Readings: Acts 2:1-21; Jn 14: 8-17&25-27

It is somehow a fitting that today- the climax of the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations- should coincide with the Church’s celebration of Pentecost.

In the Jewish calendar there are 3 major celebrations which required pilgrimage to Jerusalem if possible to worship. They are Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. Pentecost came 50 days after the Passover and had two main significances: commemoration of the giving of the Law to Moses and celebration of the end of the barley harvest. So it was a time of celebration and remembering that God was in charge.

Jerusalem was packed with pilgrims, Jews from many countries as well as Israel. (June was a good time to travel.) People have travelled from all over the world to be in London for the Jubilee and that is their main focus, but still they come I hope with thankfulness for her Majesty and maybe some sense of awe. I like to think that the Queen would agree that our service this morning should be more Pentecost than Jubilee.

So, Jerusalem was packed with people God chose that day so that it could have the maximum impact. The disciples were doing what Jesus had commanded them and were waiting, prayerfully. Not always easy, but then it happened! A great outpouring of God’s power through the Holy Spirit sounding like a mighty rushing wind and appearing as tongues of fire. Instantly they were equipped to go out and speak to the crowds about Jesus: who He is and what His death and resurrection achieved. What caught their attention was that all in the crowd were able to understand what the disciples were saying – in their own language or dialect. The Holy Spirit was giving the gift of being able to speak in various languages. So they listened in amazement. At the end of Peter’s sermon they were challenged and we are told that 3000 people asked for baptism as a result. Then the disciples gave further teaching about Jesus and so they took the good news back to their home towns and countries. So then more people responded to the Gospel and little groups of believers formed and churches were established and Christianity gradually spread.

Pentecost marks a major event in spreading the Gospel. But this was not a one-off event. In the first 13 chapters of Acts there are more than 40 references to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Early Church was certainly a Spirit filled Church.

It is important to realise that the Holy Spirit has always been at work from the beginning of everything, Gen 1:2 In the OT : “the Spirit of the Lord was upon me” “The Lord said to..” “the word of the Lord came to….” But He was not a fixture. The Holy Spirit is God, just as the Father is God and Jesus is God.

(Trinity is next Sunday…come along) The Holy Spirit is personal not an it and certainly not a ghost.

After Pentecost the Holy Spirit did not go away, He was present in a constant way. And should still be very much part of a Christian’s life.

In the reading from John, Jesus is speaking to His disciples (If you love me…*Jn14:15-17)*

All through the NT the HS can have slightly different names : Spirit of God, Spirit of Jesus, Spirit of truth, Advocate, Paraclete, Comforter….

The Holy Spirit did not just kick start the church, He is the ongoing source of God’s grace and power. We would have no desire to be here to worship God this morning, but for the work of the Holy Spirit. When the tangible presence of Jesus left to ascend to the throne of God – taking our human form into heaven – He promised not to leave his disciples as orphans. Jesus said the Spirit of truth will be “in” you. This is a promise to us as individual Christians. How, when ? When we come to God acknowledging our failures and shortcomings and our need of forgiveness. “Asking Jesus into our life” If we are Anglicans then at our Confirmation the Bishop asks God to confirm us with His Holy Spirit.

My understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit only grew after I had made that personal commitment to Jesus – this was actually at 18 about 7 years after my Confirmation, but |I still think the prayer was answered.

So we can have the reality of what Jesus promised ; That God makes his home in our hearts if we love him and obey his commandment especially to love one another. The Holy Spirit of God helps our understanding of the Bible; he helps us to pray (Rom 8: 26, 27) and he is the way God answers our prayers for help and guidance. We literally cannot live without him.

I am also sure that it has been the Holy Spirit in the life of our Queen who has enabled her to fulfil her promise to us her people which she made at 21 and which she confirmed in her Coronation oath when she was anointed. In both cases she made clear that she needed to have God’s help to fulfil what she has promised.

So we thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of our Queen and we pray “take not your Holy Spirit from us” .

Prayer: Lord, help us to open our lives to you and ask you to pour your Holy Spirit daily into our lives so that we can walk close to you and serve you according to your will for us. In Jesus’ name we pray.