



Reflection by Rev'd Tony Meek

Pentecost
John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15
19th May 2024

The apostles were chosen by Jesus to be his messengers. But he knew that they would not be strong enough to witness to him in their own power. So he promised them that God himself would dwell in them, that God would fill them with that divine power which was perfectly present in him. The Holy Spirit which he promised would not be simply a human power; it would be God himself, acting in the apostles, and in us, to give divine power for the work of bringing God's message.

The apostles were given power both to act and to deliver their message in words. Immediately after the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples were given the power to act. They stood up and were given courage to make themselves prominent, so that the people of Jerusalem would take notice of them. Soon afterwards, God's power enabled them to travel all over the known world, eastwards to India, westwards to Rome, facing perils from robbers and shipwreck, facing hostile crowds and even death. All these things they could endure because of the power that the Holy Spirit gave them.

The apostles were given power to speak in the name of Jesus Christ. At the time of his Ascension he had promised, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will bear witness to me in Jerusalem, and all over Judea and Samaria, and away to the ends of the earth.' So indeed, immediately following the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter preached boldly to the people in Jerusalem about Jesus, about his resurrection, and about how belief in that resurrection could free them from fear of evil and death.

But the activity of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the past. The work of being messengers empowered by God's Holy Spirit is something that we are all called to do today. Both action and words are needed in our witness as Christ's messengers. It is not enough simply to be and be seen to be good. Of course, our example matters, but of itself is not enough. Action and words are both necessary to convey the good news of Jesus Christ to those around us. It is not good enough to behave like a Christian if you do not speak like one. It is certainly no good speaking like a Christian if you do not behave like one! How may Jesus be calling you to be his messenger?

Does God want you to witness to him in missionary work? Could you witness to Christ and express social concern in places that have not known his name? As well as clergy, doctors, nurses, teachers and agriculturalists are all needed to be messengers for Christ. Have you been given some special gift or talent which could be used in God's service overseas? Or in deprived areas at home?

Or is God calling you to speak and act for Jesus as a minister, ordained or lay? Every day, people are being surprised, shocked, frightened, unsettled or just delighted as they come to realise that God is speaking directly to them and calling them to his particular service. Are you listening for that call? Would you recognise and act upon it if it came?

And to us all there comes the constant call of our Lord to be his messengers wherever we are and whatever we are doing. We can act as messengers of Christ by working for him in so many ways, be it visiting the sick and lonely, fetching and carrying for those unable to do so for themselves, helping in the worship at church, or simply offering everything we do to his greater glory.

At Pentecost, we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit, not just to those frightened followers of Jesus in that room in Jerusalem some two thousand years ago, but to all of us, here and now. That spirit dwelling within each of us can give us the power to be messengers of Christ. Are we using it as we should?