

Celebrating the wonders of the Holy Spirit

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, September 13 2026

Exodus 31:1-11; Acts 2:1-8 & 14-21 and Acts 4:1-10

Rev David Cameron, locum minister

Our focus over these weeks is to invite you to embark upon a journey of fresh discovery as we reflect upon and appreciate God as creator Father, redeeming Son and ever-present and empowering Holy Spirit. As the Trinity, they each represent one of the key ways in which our God has built a bridge from heaven to earth and through such invites us to experience ever more of who and what God is.

Throughout these weeks I'm inviting you to live with whichever element of the Trinity we are exploring and reflect upon whatever unfolds in your thinking, living, praying and being.

Please don't try to figure out how the Trinity works!

Live with the tension of unknowing and allow the weekly journeys to enrich and broaden your journey of knowing, celebrating and understanding.

Today – you may have noticed that our reflections and focus has been upon God as the Holy Spirit - the ever present one who seeks to empower us and enable us to live the life as followers of Jesus.

In the Old Testament reading in *Exodus 31* we discover an example of the way in which we often discover the Holy Spirit at work in the days before the coming of Jesus. Someone put it well when they said that the Spirit came upon particular people, at a particular place at a particular time and all this for a particular purpose – in this instance it was to come upon Bezalel: “I have filled him with a

divine spirit – with ability, intelligence and knowledge and every kind of skill to devise artistic designs...” - it was often so through the Old Testament.

Something of a seismic shift however was about to take place as Jesus was speaking to his disciples and followers for the last time. Final words carefully chosen – future powering them and equipping them for life without him – three key words were spoken to the disciples in Acts 1:4–9, words with which we began our service today:

Wait, Receive and Witness

Wait - Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with^[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Receive - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;

Witnesses - and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

These the final words of Jesus! Well, we know just how significant are final words.

Soon thereafter such words came to pass – Acts 2 - for they did indeed wait, in the upper room where behind closed doors – away from the maddening crowd, they received Holy Spirit who came upon them like tongues of fire, a symbol of refining and holiness – they began praising God, this a symbol of surrender – and instantly

became witnesses... this a symbol of confidence and this on their doorstep - in Jerusalem.

Everyone around them amazed as they were praising God in a language and indeed dialect that the folks who'd travelled to Jerusalem from all over recognised!

What's going on folks asked - are these folks drunk ? Peter gets up before the crowd and explains: 'no, these folks are not drunk ... it's only 9 o'clock in the morning – no, these folks have been filled with Spirit as prophesied many years ago by the prophet Joel

This wouldn't be the last time that Peter would stand up and speak confidently and boldly about his faith – in the third of our readings today, in Acts 4, we find him and John on their feet preaching and teaching the people about Jesus and his resurrection – seemingly quite effective and convincing – a man had been healed and some 5,000 had come to faith - as a result they were arrested – next day they were set before the authorities of the day and in their cross examination of them they asked 'by what power or name or authority do you do this?'

Boldly and confidently, Peter declared that this had been done in the name of and by the power of Jesus Christ of Nazareth – and then, Peter obviously wasn't reading the room – he states – “whom *you* crucified, whom God raised from the dead.”

I say he hadn't read the room as this was the very same group that had cross examined Jesus and triggered for Jesus the journey to the cross and his death.

Can you recall where Peter was when all that was going on – he was out the courtyard outside, having his own cross examination – by,

at one point, a servant girl then a few others passing by ... they asked him: 'here aren't you one of his followers ?' His reply: who me no – don't know the guy – three times denied he knew him.

Let's return to the events in Acts 4. What do we see going on – same group but here we find Peter bold, confident fearless – what was different? The clue I believe can be found in Acts 4:8, in a tiny part of the sentence - between two commas we find 5 words: ... 'Peter, *filled with the Holy Spirit*, said ...'

Transformed from the mealy mouthed, hesitant, denying Peter in the courtyard to being bold, confident and assertive – all this because he had been filled with the Holy Spirit – being filled with the Spirit made a world of a difference for him and being filled with the Holy Spirit makes a world of a difference to us. For friends we are invited to be witnesses, like Peter, to the love, life and ways of this same Jesus.

Have you been filled with the Holy Spirit?

You might want to know first what difference the Spirit makes in our lives, for, as well as giving us more confidence in the sharing of our faith, the Holy Spirit, as we saw earlier, begins a glorious work of transformation within us, as his fruit quietly grows, making us, as the years pass more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, gentle, faithful and self-controlled.

But is that all? Is it just inner transformation that the Spirit brings?

No, there's more – the Spirit also brings an outward focused gifting. Throughout the New Testament we find particularly in Paul's letters reference to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. *Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12–14; Ephesians 4* all set out for us some of the wonderful lists of

the way the Holy Spirit imparts to every follower of Jesus a particular gift and in *1 Corinthians 12:7* we discover what such giftings are for: “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”

In Peter’s case we saw him teaching, bringing words of wisdom and knowledge. Other gifts of the 27 or so listed include hospitality, administration, mercy and compassion, leadership, etc.

So question for today – given the potential for both inward transformation and outward *world* transformation are we, like Peter filled with the Holy Spirit?

Have to say this was all news to me in my early 20’s, even after I’d become a Christian. I had a sense there had to be more to this God life and faith and then one day a group of us got talking about what we’d been discovering about the workings of the Holy Spirit – off I went to a special place – a life changing place in Pollok Park in heart of Glasgow near where we lived. It was here I proposed to Lesley some 50 years ago almost!

It was to this place I came seeking to know something of the work of the Holy Spirit. Sitting by the pond I opened myself up and prayed for God’s Spirit to come on me as never before. Quietly a very strong sense of peace came upon me – a peace that passes understanding. I happened to have my little Gideon New Testament with me and when I opened it up it ‘happened’ to fall open at Galatians chapter 5 – a passage that speaks about the fruit of the Spirit! It was such a life transforming moment that its impact has never left me. Now let me be clear: it didn’t result in me reaching a blissful state of perfection – just ask my wife or daughter – I am still a work in progress! What I can say is that I’ve never been the same since and daily I pray ‘Lord, fill me with your Spirit.’

In closing I'd like to invite you to pray (and sing) this powerful prayer by Daniel Iverson – it's Hymn 619 –

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me
Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me .
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me,
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Amen.