

# Barre Congregational Church

May 31, 2020: A Pastoral message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ Day of Pentecost~

*“The Power of Pentecost ...”*

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**Scripture Reading: Acts 2 v 1-4, 14 - 21 and 1 Corinthians 12 v 13b - 13**

## **I. Introduction:**

On December 26, 2012, my father passed away. I am grateful to have been on vacation with my family in South Africa at the time when it happened. We celebrated Christmas with him, and I was getting ready to perform the wedding for my niece on December 27<sup>th</sup>, the day after he died. We were all heartbroken, because his was a sudden death. So, it was with heavy hearts that we went to bed that night. Through the grace of God, we woke up and got ourselves ready for the wedding at 2p.m. It was when we were waiting for my niece to arrive at this outside venue, when we experienced the strongest wind, like a whirlwind surrounding us. Wellington is not a windy place, especially not during the summertime, but we do see the occasional whirl wind. This felt so different though, and I smiled, looking at my mother and telling the congregation, that it must be my father’s spirit hovering over us. I did feel my father’s presence in a very special way during that hour, and in addition, I believe in my heart that it was God showing up, giving us comfort, and the most peaceful and joyous wedding ceremony.

We read in the Bible about God’s presence in the wind, fire, the clouds, and through many more manifestations. That is how the people of Israel and the disciples experienced God’s miraculous presence, important messages, and provisions.

## **I. The Day of Pentecost is about a Promise by Jesus Christ**

On the Day of Jesus’ Ascension, leading up to the Day of Pentecost, He had a last conversation with His disciples, where He addressed their questions about the Kingdom of God. At the end of their conversation He promised them that “ You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the world”. In the words of Eckard Schnable in a Commentary on Acts, “they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfil the task of their mission, the same Spirit of God Who in the Old

Testament was involved in the creation of the world, Who sustains all of life". They would be His witnesses, that means, they would tell the rest of the world about having been eyewitnesses to His life, his death, His resurrection, and ascension, starting in Jerusalem and in the rest of Judea and go into territories that were not so acceptable to travel through, and work with people from different ethnic backgrounds, sharing with them what they saw and experienced. They would be open for new experiences and new relationships with people different from themselves.

That was not the first time they would be introduced to the Holy Spirit. In John Chapter 20, on Easter Day, Jesus appears to His disciples, and as He commissioned them to go and tell the world about Him, He breathed on them saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit". How powerful, how intimate to receive the Holy Spirit directly from Jesus Christ.

The Day of Pentecost is therefore a promise of Jesus' continuous presence in the lives of His disciples as He would leave them and this world to be with God. He would be in them, living in and through them through His Spirit. His breath would give life and power to their message, and they would be transformed, and never be the same again.

## **II. The Day of Pentecost is about being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit**

Luke describes in vivid terms the experience of those 120 Christ followers gathered on the Day of Pentecost, to celebrate the Harvest Festival, 50 days after Passover when Jews came to thank God for the gifts of the grain harvest. They suddenly heard a loud sound from the sky, and the powerful "coming of the Spirit" as translated from the original language, that filled the whole house of believers. Those gathered there, saw the manifestation of tongues of fire resting on each one of them. This was followed by all of them speaking in languages not their own. It appears they were experiencing bursts of the filling of the Holy Spirit, even though they may have received the Spirit previously already, according to Schnable.

This experience of the coming of the Holy Spirit, would transform the lives of these ordinary disciples in ways they did not expect. Peter is an example of a disciple who denied Jesus a few weeks earlier, but now, being filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up courageously and explained the significance of the life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. As he defended what happened to them to the crowd who thought they were drunk, he quoted the Prophet Joel, who challenged the people of Israel to repent to God, and promised them that they would be

restored, and that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all people. Peter's use of this prophecy is an indication that God through the Holy Spirit will be revealed to all people, irrespective of their age, gender and race and class. They all would go through a powerful transformation not from their own doing, but that this Christ, through whom God manifested the incredible miracles and wonders and signs, which they all witnessed, is now alive through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In and through the Holy Spirit they all would live different lives.

### **III. The Power of Pentecost is to be called and sent by God**

In our Corinthians passage we see Paul outlines for the church in Corinth the results of being filled with the Spirit of God. He talks about different gifts by the Spirit, different kinds of service as manifested by the same Spirit through them, and different kinds of works. He coached and helped them understand how God works through the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. The powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost needs to be revealed in their lives and through these various gifts and services. As the church in Corinth, they are still growing, and as they grow, they will recognize their special gifts as they feel called and sent by God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit within that reveals the call, in ways they will discover on a deep spiritual level. The call is not the same for everyone, but everyone will receive and experience the manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit in them, to do what they feel called to do.

### **IV. Conclusion: What does this mean for us today?**

The Day of Pentecost is a day that must bring a powerful transformation within all of us. It is a day to appeal to God to transform us, to allow the Holy Spirit to come alive in all of us, once again. It is a day to be open for a strong wind, a burst of the work of the Spirit, and see God entering our ordinary lives and change us as individuals, as a church, as communities, as nations. It is a God-given opportunity to have a new experience of God's miraculous power and presence among us; and to ask God, what do You need from me, from us during a time like we are living in? What is my call today, Lord? Has it changed? Where are You leading me? It is a day where we are reminded that we are one, where there is no discrimination among us, that when one suffers, we all are driven by the Holy Spirit to bring about change and transformation. There is enough suffering today. We have this pandemic that has invaded our lives, we have death and dying occurring on mass scale, unemployment and financial issues, health issues, and we have seen this week yet again the painful effects of racism in our society. All of these must invoke in us the call

for healing, for provision, for the end of racism and discrimination. We must surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit in us, through us, today and always, because our Lord and Saviour breathed the Spirit upon us Himself. He is our role model of love and peace and justice for all. We must do the same and feel the strong wind of peace and joy.

May God help us and bless us all as we respond to the power of the Holy Spirit on this Day of Pentecost. Amen.