

## Happy Birthday!

### **A Call to Worship: Waters of God**

Soft summer rain falling on parched earth,  
waters of God, flow down upon me.  
Torrential floods ripping lives into pieces,  
waters of God, have mercy upon me.  
Soaking waters which nourish the seed,  
waters of God, replenish me.

### **A prayer:**

Mighty and gracious God, It is with gladness that I come now in Your presence, bringing to You a humble, grateful heart. I adore You, Creator and Sustainer of all things, giver of every good and perfect gift, for the numberless blessings I have experienced in my life, for Your goodness and mercy that have followed me all my days.

God of overflowing generosity, I praise You for the supreme gift of Your love in the coming of Your Son, my Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the God You have shown me to be in Him. Today I remember with joy the coming of the Holy Spirit from the risen, ascended Christ at Pentecost, upon all, dispelling our fears, clearing our vision, uniting us as one, equipping us for mission.

As you come to me today, and are among Your people wherever, may the same Spirit of Pentecost minister grace in these ways to each of us too. May hearts and lives be open to the wind of the Spirit, the giver of life, that I and all may be energised to live more faithfully as a member of your coming kingdom and as joyful witnesses to the good news of Jesus Christ. In whose strong name I pray. Amen

### **Scripture Readings for today:**

#### **Numbers 11:24-30** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>24</sup> So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the tent. <sup>25</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied—but did not do so again.

<sup>26</sup> However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. <sup>27</sup> A young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.”

<sup>28</sup> Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses’ aide since youth, spoke up and said, “Moses, my lord, stop them!”



<sup>29</sup> But Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD’s people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!” <sup>30</sup> Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

**Acts 2:1-21** from the Message by Eugene Peterson

<sup>1-4</sup> When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.

<sup>5-11</sup> There were many Jews staying in Jerusalem just then, devout pilgrims from all over the world. When they heard the sound, they came on the run. Then when they heard, one after another, their own mother tongues being spoken, they were thunderstruck. They couldn’t for the life of them figure out what was going on, and kept saying, “Aren’t these all Galileans? How come we’re hearing them talk in our various mother tongues?”

Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; visitors from Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene; Immigrants from Rome, both Jews and proselytes; Even Cretans and Arabs! “They’re speaking our languages, describing God’s mighty works!”

<sup>12</sup> Their heads were spinning; they couldn’t make head or tail of any of it. They talked back and forth, confused: “What’s going on here?” <sup>13</sup> Others joked, “They’re drunk on cheap wine.”

<sup>14-21</sup> That’s when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: “Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren’t drunk as some of you suspect. They haven’t had time to get drunk—it’s only nine o’clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen:

“In the Last Days,” God says, “I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters; Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams. When the time comes, I’ll pour out my Spirit on those who serve me, men and women both, and they’ll prophesy. I’ll set wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billowing smoke, the sun turning black and the moon blood-red, before the Day of the Lord arrives, the Day tremendous and marvellous; and whoever calls out for help to me, God, will be saved.”

**John 7:37-39. (NIV)**

<sup>37</sup> On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ <sup>39</sup> By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.



**The Amazing Holy Spirit**

Would you like to join in with a well know song:

*Happy birthday to me, Happy birthday to me; Happy birthday (your name), Happy birthday to me!*

Today we celebrate the third major festival of the church year, the Day of Pentecost. You may recall that last Sunday I shared with us that Ascension is probably not one of the best known of the feast days on the Christian calendar, and it falls between the second and third major feasts, Easter and Pentecost, if we take Christmas to be the primary feast day.

However, Pentecost is a much older feast than Christmas and Easter, as it originates from Judaism, the Jewish holy day, in the Old Testament (Deut. 16:10) called also, the Feast of Weeks, in Hebrew called Shabuoth. This feast was observed on the fiftieth day after the 14th of Nisan, the date of the celebration of the Passover. The feast of Pentecost, while primarily connected with the celebration of the completion of harvest, by the offering of first fruits, etc., seems also to have been associated in the minds of the later Jews with the giving of the law, the Ten Commandments to Moses on the fiftieth day after their departure from Egypt.

In the New Testament, the release of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles at the feast of Pentecost in the event we associate with and which in the Christian calendar is the seventh Sunday after Easter. The name Pentecost is derived from the ordinal number *pentekoste* in the Greek, meaning fifty.

So what exactly do we celebrate on the Day of Pentecost anyway? Well you would be correct to say it is the Church's birthday. The day that the Church of Jesus Christ was birthed in the world for all nations. However, it is also good to go and look at what we find written in the Bible and all three of the scripture readings give us the clue. We celebrate the amazing Holy Spirit active and present among God's people and each of these passages helps to reveal who the Holy Spirit of God is and what God is saying to us today.

In the passage from the Old Testament book of Numbers, the Israelites are still wandering about in the wilderness. There are some 600,000 of them and Moses as their leader is getting worn out of in today's terms heading for "burn out". Moses needs some help in caring for all of these people. So the God tells him to select 70 elders from among the people. Moses does so, and then suddenly, something wonderful and surprising happens – and in effect it is the Old Testament experience of Pentecost that we think about in the New Testament account in Acts. God places his Holy Spirit in these people and they are able to prophesy. What exactly prophesying means here, we are not told but some biblical scholars think that it may have included things like speaking, singing, playing musical instruments, dancing, or even collapsing into a mystical trance-like state, or possibly visions from God. In fact not far removed from the description of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that Paul gives to the Church in his letters to the Romans and the Corinthians.

An instructive part of the Numbers passage is the reference to two men who were not among the elders that were all around the tent of meeting. These two men, Eldad and Medad, were back at the camp. Yet God's Holy Spirit also came upon them and they too were able to prophesy in the camp. This detail of the Spirit resting on Eldad and Medad in the camp and prophesying there, is a lesson to Joshua, Moses's assistant, that human beings cannot restrict, manipulate or give orders to God's Spirit. The Spirit of God is present and active whenever and wherever God chooses to be and in this particular case, to drive home the point even further, we are told that this happened only as a one-time event.

Joshua isn't too happy about Eldad and Medad, and Moses tells him that he shouldn't be jealous of Eldad and Medad. Instead, Moses says to Joshua that he wished the Lord God would put his Spirit on all God's people, so that all of them could be prophets - something that centuries later comes true on the day of Pentecost. So, Moses' words were a foreshadowing of what God the Holy Spirit would do on the day of Pentecost as described in the passage from Acts.

The arrival of the Holy Spirit was phenomenal and many strange and wonderful things occurred. There was a mighty wind, tongues of fire appeared on the heads of the apostles, many languages were spoken, and yet everyone understood what was being said.

The experience of the first Pentecost needs to grip our hearts as not just believer's, but as the living stones of the church today. It is the feeling of God's presence in our hearts, in the form of the Holy Spirit. There are ways we can welcome him into our hearts, so that God becomes a reality to us. His coming brings faith and guidance as God's Spirit leads us to Jesus Christ as Saviour and on into the heavenly Father's home.

So as we now turn to the Gospel passage, we read that Jesus is in Jerusalem celebrating the last day of the Festival of Tabernacles, also known as the Festival of Booths or in Hebrew, as Sukkot. This is an eight day celebration that takes place on the 15th day of the seventh month, Tishrei (varies from late September to late October) – in other words, in the autumn. It is also a harvest festival but it marks the end of the harvest time and thus of the agricultural year in the land of Israel. At this festival, the Jewish people build temporary shelters, which serve to remind them of God being with them when leading them out of Egypt in their wilderness journey when they had no home and their dependence on the will of God, as well as their need to be compassionate to those who are homeless.

One part of this festival involves water and as we know water in the literal sense revives the earth as well as human beings. In the metaphorical sense it stands for a new age of joy and fulfilment. The water represents redemption, the overflowing of God's blessing: "You shall draw water in joy from the wellsprings of salvation," says the Prophet Isaiah (12:2-3)." In the festival rite, water was carried up to the Temple altar and poured out as an offering to God. While this was being done, Psalms 113 to 118 were sung to the accompaniment of flutes by the Levite choir. When they came to the words, "O give thanks to the Lord" (Psalm 118:1), and again to the words, "O work now then salvation" (Psalm 118:25), and finally to the closing words, "O give thanks to the Lord" (Psalm 118:29), the worshippers shouted and waved their palms towards the altar. The whole dramatic ceremony was a vivid thanksgiving for God's good gift of water and an acted prayer for rain and memory of the water which sprang from the rock when they travelled through the wilderness.

Into this setting then, Jesus being present at this feast, spoke these words of invitation, referring to the Holy Spirit: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" "

So, just as water is the best drink to quench our thirst, the Holy Spirit, the rivers of living water, is able to quench our spiritual thirst.

As we celebrate Pentecost today, may these passages remind us of the God we love and serve as the living stones, the church of Jesus Christ in this day and time. May we give thanks to the Holy Spirit and be open to God's Word as it speaks to us and our life situation. Let us give thanks to the Holy Spirit for bringing us together as God's people today to live, worship and serve God in unity and peace. The amazing Holy Spirit, breaking down all dividing barriers, drawing us ever closer to our Triune God and one another.

Join with this prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, restless breath of love, breathe on me now and help me to pray as I ought. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Come, Holy Spirit, to Your world today. As You brought order out of chaos at the beginning, brood over the chaos we have created in today's world, so that people everywhere may learn the way of life as You intend, and find purpose, meaning and hope in their existence. Where there is oppression and abuse of others, bring Your justice. Where there is anxiety and fear, bring Your peace. Where there is hatred and division, bring Your love. Where the resources of this awesome world are exploited, and we fail in our calling as trustees of land and sea, grant us repentance and the grace to learn a better way. Guide the rulers of the world in ways of justice and integrity, of truth and peace. *Come, Holy Spirit, come.*

Come, Holy Spirit, to Your Church today. Breathe into me and all who believe, new life and zeal and delight in the gospel. Set our hearts on fire with Your love. Grow Your own fruit in our lives. As You did that day in Jerusalem, in all our diversity make us one in truth and love. Let the gifts of all be valued and used for the common good. Empower and equip me to bear compelling witness to Jesus' universal Lordship, by the way I live and speak and serve, that many will come to know Him for themselves. Make me unafraid to stand out from the crowd, and let it be seen that I have been with Jesus. *Come, Holy Spirit, come.*

Come, Holy Spirit, to all who need Your presence today. Spirit of comfort, be near to all who are sad and lonely. Spirit of power, give Your strength to those who carry heavy burdens and are weary on life's journey. Spirit of peace, speak calm to troubled hearts and minds. Spirit of life and light, lift from despair those for whom daily life has lost interest, meaning and hope. Shine the Christ-light into their darkness. *Come, Holy Spirit, come.*

Come, Holy Spirit, and do a new work through the church in this land and in all the world. Revive our congregation and equip us for those tasks to which Your people in every age and place are called. Sweep Your church forward with new life, new hope, new vision. May we act ever more closely together, in the rich diversity of the one body of Christ. So may glory be given to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and always, as I bring this prayer in the words Jesus taught – saying: Our Father .... Amen.



Here is a hymn, from the Church Hymnary 4, number 595 – calling on the Spirit to come to the church in renewing power to equip it to spread the light of Christ to awaiting world. Written by Elizabeth Ann Head (1850-1936) and sung to the tune *Spiritus Vitae*, which you can hear on this website Youtube link below:

<https://uk.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=yfp-search-sb&p=o+breath+of+God+come+sweeping+through+us#action=view&id=6&vid=a6fcca70b0769af8be88712353026b29>

O Breath of life, come sweeping through us, revive your church with life and pow'r;  
O Breath of Life, come, cleanse, renew us, and fit your church to meet this hour.

O Wind of God, come bend us, break us, till humbly we confess our need;  
then in your tenderness remake us, revive, restore, for this we plead.

O Breath of love, come breathe within us,  
renewing thought and will and heart;  
come, Love of Christ, afresh to win us,  
revive your church in ev'ry part.

O Heart of Christ, once broken for us,  
'tis there we find our strength and rest;  
our broken, contrite hearts now solace,  
and let your waiting church be blest.

Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating  
while harvest fields are vast and white?  
Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,  
equip your church to spread the light.



**Blessing words for Pentecost** —a traditional Jewish blessing,

May God's breath stream within you.

May God's breath renew you.

May God's breath invigorate you.

Walk with confidence into this day.

With the blessing of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit ever and always upon you. Amen.