

This morning's theme was **Pentecost... and the General Election! (Reading Acts 2:1-21)**. I attach my notes in case they are helpful (strictly optional!).

Questions for discussion.

- 1) (For this question, someone ideally needs to have heard the sermon or at least read the notes!) What did Allan mean by saying: *'Pentecost was divine retribution for the Cross!'*? What does this reveal about the heart of God?
- 2) *'Every time the Holy Spirit comes upon us, something wonderful and holy is conceived within us'*. (See Luke 1:34-35). What has been your most memorable experience of the Holy Spirit to date?
- 3) *'The most important thing we can say about the Holy Spirit is that he is the Spirit of Love'*. What grounds are there for making this claim and what difference does it make?
- 4) *'Vote Love!'* How should our Christian faith affect the way we approach Thursday's election?

General Election and Pentecost..! 4 June 2017

- Increasingly frustrated by Election campaign – all about who's winning in the media; more heat than light; not about real root issues.
- If what we believe is true... our most serious problem is we are a nation which denies/disregards God and his ways. Spiritually/biblically illiterate.
- Is ignorance bliss? No! Is it an excuse? (No defence in law). Many other moral and social ills flow from this root problem. For example...
- **Economy.** For many (not all) life is good: enviable standard of living and security. But where is gratitude/thanksgiving to God in public discourse? (and for good government, whichever party; police & security services)
- BUT for a significant minority life is hard economically. All major parties honestly want to improve life for all, but their recipes for achieving differ
- **Social ills.** Health, mental health, social care and education systems are facing huge issues caused by dysfunctional lifestyles and relationships. The root of many of these lies in disregarding God/his ways – but how many politicians, of any party, would dare to say so?!
- **Immigration.** Also widely divergent solutions... Did notice that HS came to a city full of immigrants and visitors from all over then known world!
- Not my role to tell you who to vote for... unlike American cousins (very different system, Supreme Court appointments, understand why they do it... although leads them to positions which are incomprehensible to us!)
- Encourage you to exercise your democratic responsibility of voting, and do so prayerfully and in the light of your Christian convictions, thinking about the good of everyone, not just ourselves.
- Behind this sermon lies a study of the **Book of Joel** (the Prophet Peter quotes on the day of Pentecost).
- Like many prophets he sees the problems his nation is facing (in his case, a catastrophic swarm of locusts) as a wakeup call to return to the Lord.
- But beyond the sense of short-term judgment, he has a long-term conviction of mercy (Mercy always triumphs over judgment – God's heart).
- ***"Pentecost is divine retribution for the Cross!"*** (Anon)
- Powerful thought: Israel/Jerusalem (& Roman overlords) in mid-30s AD just committed the worst atrocity imaginable – crucifying the Son of God

- How did God respond 50 days later? Poured out His Spirit on all who would receive! (Young/old, male/female, slave/free, rich/poor etc.)
- And what is the true nature of the Gift that was poured out that day?
- Yes, powerful and elemental (images of fire, wind and torrential rain apply) but he is a person, not an 'it'... not 'the Force'!
- Yes, He's the equipping and energising motivator of the church's mission
- BUT more profoundly than any of that... He is LOVE (because he is God)
- Most important thing we can say: he is the Spirit of love. Evidence?
- Paul's major discourse on gifts and work of Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12-14 interrupted by... what? Sublime discourse on love in 13. Remarkable.
- Remember chapter divisions not in original. Same thing in Romans 12
- 2 Timothy 1:7. *God has not given us a spirit of fear (timidity), but of power, and of love, and of self-discipline (sound mind).*
- E.g. Alpha Course years ago, HS Days, ordinary Anglican young mum, not normally demonstrative, couldn't stop saying; *He loves me!*
- Greatest revelation any of us can have... and the one we need most.
- When we pray for the Spirit to come, his first and greatest work is love.
- Old hymn writers knew this when writing hymns to/for the Spirit e.g.
- *Come down, O love divine... for none can guess his grace, till he becomes the place in which the Holy Spirit makes his dwelling.*
- *Come Holy Ghost: Thy blessed unction from above is comfort life and fire of love (unction = oil; give me unction in my gumption help me function!)*
- Call to be carriers of supernatural love to a society in disregard for God. Need gifts and power, but love trumps everything else.
- Back to election. VOTE LOVE! The people you believe are best able to improve life for the all, esp. the neediest in society. Will have different views on that: liberal love; socialist redistributive love; Tory tough and stable love. Could argue all from Scripture. Come to own conclusion.

Ministry Time

- We simply have to ask (like Alpha Days). Often as I start to pray... not surprising, Bible says, *draw near to God and he will draw near to you.*
- *Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost* (MP 198) – read/pray whole hymn...
- Always think of Gabriel's words to Mary when asked how can this be?
- *The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*
- Our experience may not be as dramatic as hers, but every time we are aware of the Holy Spirit upon us, something holy/wonderful is conceived