

ADDRESS: 20 MAY (Pentecost Sunday) – Mrs Sarah Finegan

“The Holy Spirit is for you”

(Joel 2:23-29 and Acts 2:1-12)

Introduction – Sharing

I would like to begin this morning by talking about the nitty gritty of sharing Jesus or even just the fact that you have a faith today with people who don't know Jesus or who don't have a faith. Maybe you are a bit like me and have heard many sermons about sharing Jesus with people and how we are to love them and talk about God's love. Maybe you have been brave enough to try it in some of your relationships. What was their reaction?

There have been some occasions when I began a conversation like this or a conversation has just happened and I didn't force it and things have felt like they have went well ... but ... on the most part conversations seem to go something like this:

I am having a moment of connection with a person I have built up trust and relationship with and I sense that I have an opportunity to share something small. I might mention the words Jesus, Church or quite often I talk about prayer. Then it's like I've just thrown an invisible bomb that explodes between me and the other. All of a sudden that connection becomes less and the words I just used echo around the person's brain and body which triggers all sorts of things inside them like: scepticism, fear, mockery, a painful memory of church, a painful memory of suffering, or a time when they experienced hatred of the church towards their life choices. Words and the meanings behind words are very powerful and create all sorts of ripples. Sometimes it's nothing that I have even said to a person that is freaky but sometimes the words I use stir up all sorts of stuff inside them. Maybe it's even a subconscious but never the less the person then shoves up a barrier of protection instantly and it's very hard to move beyond that.

Have you had a conversation like this? GOOD - ME TOO!

I suppose what I really want to say to you this morning is that maybe you are not doing anything wrong but what you are trying to say is getting lost in translation and the person can't hear or make sense of what you might be trying to speak about. Maybe it's not you but it is just what it is like to share Jesus in our culture today.

You see, WE DONT GET A FRESH START TO SHARE JESUS IN OUR CULTURE AND LANGUAGE because our land has experienced the message of Jesus already and sometimes Christians have held hands with war, narrow-mindedness, oppression, abuse, gossip, internal petty fighting and bigotry. There isn't a clean slate. The ground in our nation is broken. We have a barrier to overcome.

Why did God's Spirit come like that in that way?

Let's think for a minute about the first Pentecost. The believers who all spoke the same language and were from the same country (and who had lived alongside Jesus) were

gathered in fear waiting for the special gift Jesus said he would give - the Holy Spirit. They had obviously been operating in the Spirit before when they healed in Jesus' name and drove out demons. Nevertheless Jesus wanted them to wait for him to come and give them a gift – an increasing measure of the Spirit. On that day the wind and the fire stirred up in the atmosphere in that room and all of a sudden the believers found themselves being able to speak in many different languages that they had no education in.

The writer of Acts even poses a question in the text for his readers. Acts 2:12 “What does this mean? I hope you are wondering this as well as I am, speaking. Or maybe you are asking “What was all that about”?

You can't get away from the fact that this was indeed a supernatural event that people on that day in Jerusalem heard about Jesus in their native tongue. It was no longer lost in translation and from that point onward the gospel of Jesus moved out into new territory, new geographical areas and he was spoken about in many new languages. God's purposes have always been inclusive. So much so that here in Kirknewton and East Calder we are still singing about him today.

There is a sense that we are very similar to the believers in the room that day. We have the fear that we just cannot communicate Jesus effectively, we have the barrier of translation; we need the Holy Spirit's help.

Although we are also different from them - we don't get a clean slate like they did to bring Jesus into a new culture or language without any baggage attached to his name.

We don't have fresh ground -we have broken ground.

If God was to come and anoint your tongue today with a special gift, what would you most desire? I mean I certainly would be chuffed if I could all of a sudden speak Chinese or Swahili but it wouldn't be that useful. I still would not be able to speak in a meaningful way to my neighbours about Jesus!

So I made a list of everything I would like my tongue to be like:

1. I want a tongue free from religious jargon that can still communicate meaning and love.
2. I need a tongue that is willing to interpret the scriptures with love instead of using the bible like a knife.
3. I need a tongue willing enough to take every platform to apologise for the hatred the church has participated in, consciously and unconsciously.
4. I need a tongue that knows when to speak and when to be silent
5. I need a tongue that desires to share the kingdom and doesn't give way to apathy
6. I need a tongue of inclusion not division
7. I need a tongue which is about connection not correction.

8. I need a tongue that prioritises living in right relationships with everyone over being right.
9. I need a tongue absent of arrogance.

I NEED A TOUNGE THAT GOD WILL USE TO HEAL THIS BROKEN GROUND.

It appears to me that this is what a HOLY OUTPOURING might look like today...

Is this Holy outpouring for me?

Who might get this HOLY OUTPOURING?

I have spent many years in Jesus communities and I have learned different things through teaching or just by observing and osmosis that the HOLY SPIRIT IS FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE. And this is a lie because when the Holy Spirit was prophesied in Joel we read - THE SPIRIT WAS TO BE Poured OUT ON ALL FLESH! Are you made of flesh? YEP. It's for you! Just in case you're under any doubt, let's talk about some weird subconscious thoughts that exist in churches.

1. SOCIAL STATUS: when Joel prophesied the coming of the Spirit he said it was EVEN for servants. This was an incredible thing to be said in a culture that constantly operated with a social division around who was a master and who was a servant. The masters had a place of privilege and I am guessing held all the religious power and authority at that time. You're right we don't have servants here in Kirknewton and East Calder. BUT we do have people who we might think have more power and authority in the church. Maybe you think there are people more holy than you that God would want to pour out his spirit on. The Minister, the session, the prayer meeting, the house groups - maybe we are even in one of these groups and sense a privilege. YET the Holy Spirit has no social divide - he transcends social status and decided to pour out his Spirit on all flesh including you.

Might the people on the fringes of our church community receive a holy outpouring and heal our broken ground.

2. AGE: Let's talk about age and the different generations. Joel prophesied that this outpouring was for young and old, sons and daughters. It strikes me that in our church there might be some who think "I am too young or inexperienced or less knowledgeable - the Holy Spirit wouldn't come to me, or there might be some that say I am too old and not able to serve God with my diminished energy. BUT the Holy Spirit is for ALL FLESH EVEN THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OR THE OLDEST.

Perhaps we could position ourselves better as a church to be ministered to by the Holy Spirit through the children and elderly instead of thinking we have to fill the kids with knowledge and serve the elderly. Can you see the subtle difference?

Might the kids and the elderly receive this Holy outpouring and heal broken ground.

3. GENDER: Joel said the outpouring was for men and women! That would probably be controversial at the time but it has lost its cutting edge in our culture today as we assume we are not sexist and men and women have an equal place to receive from God and to minister. Here... after all we have a female minister here! Box ticked. YET if the Holy Spirit was to describe his personality (which he does in scripture) as relational, close, intimate, gentle and comforting – which gender would gravitate to desire this outpouring?
Might the men receive this intimate, powerful gifting and healed broken ground.
4. What about the people who already have received a measure of the Holy Spirit and are quite content with that. I mentioned before that the believers already were moving in the ministry of the HS when they cast out demons and healed the sick with Jesus. Yet – God wanted to give them MORE and he did in the room that day.

Some of us might say – I have got this far with the amount of the measure of the Holy Spirit I already have. Why would I need more? AND YET what if the more poured out healed our broken ground.

Let me finish –

- We want to share Jesus
- We have barriers to cross and broken ground
- We have a spirit who can pour out a special supernatural anointing to cross barriers and heal broken ground
- The Holy Spirit wants to share his holy outpouring with you.

AMEN

Time of reflection listening to Breath by the Brilliance

Breathe, breathe on me now
Open your mouth
And speak the word that heals this broken ground
Say, say what you will
As we are still
And we breathe in the very breath of God

Oh, Spirit of God
Here with us now
Giving us life again
Breathe, breathe on us now
Fill us with your love
Send us with Your power
Spirit of God Amen