

SERMON: Sunday – 23 May 2021 – Rev Alistair Cowper

PENTECOST - COME HOLY SPIRIT COME

John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15
Romans 8:22-27

I came across a lovely wee story this week about Jesus and God the Father chatting together.

Jesus looked across the table at God and asked ‘where have you been these last months?:

God replied, “I’ve been in Scotland”.

Jesus, with a shocked look said, “So, there’s been a pandemic raging for the last year and you’ve been in Scotland. Doing what?”

God leaned over and whispered, “working from home Son, working from home”.

Paul’s letter to the Romans speaks of creation groaning.

We don’t have to look far to see examples of creation groaning.

The news this week reported of a huge % of our plastic waste which we think is sent for recycling is actually being exported overseas where it is dumped and burned.

Then there are nations fighting each other, humans refusing to live together as one people, as in Israel/Palestine.

People and planet, longing for freedom, hoping for more.

Paul writes that even people who have the Holy Spirit as a foretaste of future glory, groan to be released from sin and suffering, eagerly awaiting the day when we will have new bodies.

Many of us will relate to that, the idea of having a new body. Who’s would you have?

Someone once spoke about how as we got older it seems that more and more body parts either stopped working or fell off!

Imagine having a new body like the body the Risen Jesus had.

Anyway that’s something we can look forward to and as Paul says, we must do so with patience and in confidence.

In the meantime the Holy Spirit is our helper, helping us in our weaknesses and even praying from within us, to connect us with God, in a perfect Father-Son, Parent-Child embrace.

We might say that the Spirit is the glue that binds us to God, the Divine Whisperer who teaches our spirits about love and how to love.

I've been encouraged in my spirit this week with the daily reflections from Thy Kingdom Come. Here's one of the video reflections, this one on prayer and how the Spirit helps us in our prayer life.

VIDEO CLIP

The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words.

(Romans 8:26)

That video certainly spoke to me about desiring to be more and more one with God and being sensitive to God's Holy Spirit pray in and through my life. And to be encouraged that consenting to God's prayer in one's life does have a lasting benefit, not just for ourselves but for future generations as well.

Many of us have sorely missed being able to gather together in worship in person for some 14 months now. We've missed being able to do that together. And it's good to be together, those of us who are able to be. But not everyone is able to and perhaps we've been made more aware of that in these past year and months.

God's Spirit has been reshaping the church and society at large. Some changes will be permanent and some will be built upon.

Albert Bogle wrote in (L&W, May 2021)

"In future when we talk of church we need to think past buildings and denominations. We need to be more flexible. Christian believers might not always be able to attend set worship times in person for a variety of reasons.

The growth of online church will continue to contribute to the mission and discipleship of the local church community.

While we see decline in the western church structures and her institutions; interest in spiritual ideas and a longing after mystery are still a great part of the human condition and a national renewal of Christian faith can I believe begin to flourish.

As we begin to return to buildings let none of us slip back into the old habits. We have all been taught a salutary lesson (*by this pandemic*) and we are truly a church without walls. We carry the fellowship of Christ into every life situation leaving his fragrance behind us.”

If we read the story of the first Pentecost, we read that on the day and there were people of all languages, from every nation, that when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they could understand one another and they were filled with a love for one another and a passion for justice.

3,000 people became believers that day and were baptised and the church was born.

Today, we have that same Spirit with us, groaning within us, teaching us, pleading for us, turning us back to God’s ways, loving us and sending us out in that same love.

Whatever we are lead to do, may we do it in the Spirit of Love, in Jesus’ name. Amen.