

## Wangaratta Wesleyan Methodist Church Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2015

### Pentecost: What a blessing!

Bible passages: Acts 2:17-18, 22-24, 36-41; Luke 11:9-13

#### **Intro: Why did Jesus have to die?**

Spirit was poured out on the people Peter stands up with the backing of the other 11 disciples and preaches a rousing evangelistic message. The climax of Peter's message that day was v 36, 'Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.'

There was a mighty reaction to that statement and many people responded. Why were so many challenged? Partly because they suddenly realised the scandal of an innocent man dying.

- I often get asked the question in my grade 5/6 SRI classes, 'Why did Jesus have to die?' At the root of this question is the thinking: If Jesus had done nothing wrong then why did he have to die. It doesn't make sense. Why would God allow this?
- We have all followed the shocking story of the Bali 9 duo, those two rehabilitated Australian's who received the death penalty. Most would agree that the death penalty is unwarranted even in the most severe cases, but what about these men who had demonstrated that they had not only rehabilitated but were even training others to walk in the right way.
- Imagine then the scandal if the Indonesian authorities had not been able to find the guilty ones so they chose a random person of the streets to take the penalty for them. Can you imagine the public outcry that would result?
- Now we are getting closer to the scandal of Jesus and the cross.
- But it is worse than that. Every person watching that day as Jesus died were the guilty ones. The book of Romans explains that every person is guilty of sin and deserves death and only one person can claim to be not guilty. The fire of God's wrath passed by all the tinder dry branches and consumed the only green branch there was. That is the scandal of the cross yet the only way salvation could come.

As this mega drama is being played out upon history and Peter boldly speaks that glorious day the blessings of Pentecost become evident.

First...

#### **1. The Spirit is poured out**

The first and most obvious result of Pentecost was the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the people who trusted Jesus.

Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32 and we note that the Spirit is poured out...

##### **a. Without bias**

All people: young and old, male and female, regardless of position in society. The Spirit will be poured out without favourites.

Why is this significant?

- The death of Jesus signalled the end of the old covenant and the beginning of the new covenant. The old covenant had many restrictions: only the priests could enter the presence of God, only the circumcised were children of God, only males could have specific roles in the temple.
- However the new covenant brought freedom to enter the presence of God for all people. No longer was circumcision the sign of a child of God rather our faith in the Lord Jesus meant that our hearts bore the sign that we belonged to God and regardless of our gender all people can receive the empowering of the spirit.

I wonder if the church still has its favourites; those who have more right to the Holy Spirit than others, those who because of their position or education or gender or experiences are seen to have more right than others to the Spirit? Paul said, 'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Gal 3:28)

May it never be that we develop a hierarchy of blessing where position, study, money or experience can obtain a greater access to the Spirit's power? We all have equal access and what a blessing the Spirit is to us.

We also note the Spirit is poured out...

#### **b. With power**

Last week Alan spoke about the Spirit, like wind and fire, as being unpredictable and uncontrollable. Let me also add uncontainable to the list. The power of God's Spirit, like God himself, cannot be contained in human, earthly confines. He manifests himself with wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below.

The demonstration of the Spirit in ordinary people doing extraordinary things, like at Pentecost was a sign of the uncontainable nature of God. Is God still the same and wanting to display his power through you and me? He certainly is.

Peter continues and...

### **2. The gospel is preached**

As Peter explains the wonder of God's message to the stunned people they come to the realisation that this Jesus whom they thought would disappear once crucified is now alive. Peter shows that Jesus is the fulfilment of prophesy that their favourite historical figure, King David spoke of many years before. This means that this Jesus like the Holy Spirit manifest before them is also...

#### **a. Jesus: Uncontainable**

If the influence of the temple priests, the might of the Roman authorities or even death couldn't contain Jesus then what could contain him? There was nothing left to stop this man and the movement he began. He was simply uncontainable. Peter puts it this way, 'you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. <sup>24</sup> But God

raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.'

Now we come again to that powerful statement by Peter that brought such conviction. It was the realisation that Jesus was more than an extraordinary man; he was both...

#### **b. Jesus: Lord and Christ**

For those Jewish people who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Harvest and other local Jews the thought of Jesus being both Lord and Christ was either total blasphemy or a realisation that would shock their socks off. There had been so many things happen in the past 7 weeks that was challenging their theological understanding but this last event had sealed the deal for many of them. This demonstration of power and the miraculous way in which these uneducated men were speaking in other languages caused many to be convinced that Jesus was equal with God and that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

A specific ministry of the Spirit is to lead people into truth. That day they were being led to believe the truth about Jesus.

One of the great challenges of today is a crisis of truth. Many people don't know the truth about Jesus, if they did they would embrace Him. Wherever the gospel is preached or spoken of the truth of Jesus as Lord and Christ is also proclaimed. Ever since Peter first preached this truth it has been proclaimed all around our world.

Let's reflect for a moment. How well are we going with speaking the gospel to others? Does it concern us that there are many people in Wangaratta who have never heard a clear presentation of the gospel message?

You know it's not the responsibility of the ministers in the various churches in Wangaratta to reach these people it is the responsibility of every Christian like you and I. What would happen if we asked the Lord for two things: the courage to speak out the truth about Jesus and for the Holy Spirit to open the hearts of the people we speak to? I wonder if that's what the followers of Jesus were asking for as they met together early that Pentecost morning.

Peter's Holy Spirit empowered preaching that morning led the people to a searching question. Verse 37, 'When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"' Any evangelist loves to hear that question and Peter was ready for it, you see there is...

#### **3. Something required:**

We cannot earn or pay for our salvation but it does require a response. The reaction of the people to Peter's message revealed a deep conviction that they had got Jesus wrong. They had misread and not understood the saviour of the world. Like a ton of bricks being

dropped on them they realised their sin; the rejection of God's Son. Are you guilty of rejecting God's only Son? Then maybe you also need to ask this question, what shall I do?

Well Peter made it simple and it is still this simple today. We are to firstly...

**a. Repent (ance)**

We are to stop going the way we are and turn around.

- Say sorry to Jesus for rejecting him
- Seek his forgiveness and ask for his help to live the way he wants you too.
- It may be very obvious to you what actions you need to repent of but despite our sin being obvious repentance can be a real challenge for us. It requires...
  - Humility
  - Honesty

John the Baptist spoke of the need to repent and Jesus asked his hearers to do the same. Jesus challenged the rich young ruler to repent of his ways but it seemed that his status and his pride got the better of him and he walked away unchanged. Conversely the woman at the well swallowed her pride and realised she needed Jesus and his forgiveness.

There is nothing more exciting than witnessing someone truly repentant before the Lord.

Secondly Peter exhorts them to be...

**b. Baptised**

I find it interesting how often baptism is spoken about in the New Testament. So often new believers were encouraged to be baptised straight away as if it was part of the action of belief. Now we understand that baptism is not a requirement to be saved rather it is symbolic of our salvation.

However the action of baptism is such a powerful reflection of the need to die to our old ways of living and to be washed by the precious blood of Jesus that it needs to become a must for the Christian who is serious about following Jesus.

Paul speaks of baptism in Romans 6, 'Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.' That is powerful.

One of the things that trips up new Christians is the temptation to rekindle their former habits and ways. Satan whispers in our ears tempting us to turn back to our old ways. We must die completely to our old ways and bury the past. We can be set free and the action of baptism as a testimony before family and friends is a powerful analogy of what is happening spiritually within us.

I love baptisms because it gives the opportunity for the person being baptised to cement their desire to follow Jesus. Explain. If you would like to be baptised please speak to Alan, Ange or I. We would love to answer your questions and encourage you towards baptism.

As the gospel is preached there is something required but also...

#### **4. Something given:**

Like a loving Father, God wants to give good gifts to his children. Firstly he grants...

##### **a. Forgiveness**

The action of repentance symbolised in our baptism brings forgiveness for our sin.

It was Jesus' claim to forgive sin thus equating himself with God that infuriated the religious leaders giving them the evidence needed to kill Jesus. What irony that the claim to forgive caused his death that in turn became the reason he could forgive.

God so liberally wants to forgive us. Are we prepared to receive it? I have noticed that people often struggle to receive God forgiveness maybe because that would require forgiving themselves also. May we embrace the gift of forgiveness.

Then there is...

##### **b. The gift of the Holy Spirit**

It is clear that the Holy Spirit is given to us as a gift when we repent of our sin. V 38 says, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Comment on.

The Holy Spirit enters on conversion, the part of Jesus that he leaves with us. However scripture reveals to us a number of times that we need to continually seek the empowering and infilling of the Spirit. Why is this?

- Bit like my car that has a few oil leaks... We are not perfect therefore we need continually filling up.
- We need empowering for ministry
- We need God anointing by his Spirit. Speak personally

#### **Conclusion: Who calls first?**

<sup>21</sup> And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

<sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Our prayer can cause others to call out to God. Our prayer can draw God's Spirit to grab their attention. So can I encourage us all to argue less about the insignificant things and pray more for our friends that they would call out to God and be saved.

Sermon by Pastor David Lloyd