

## **PENTECOST SUNDAY : 31 MAY 2020**

### **“BEING PENTECOST PEOPLE”**

#### **John 20:19-23 and 1 Corinthians 12:3-13**

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Today we celebrate a Great Festival in our Church liturgical calendar. The Great Festival of Pentecost – which brings to an end the Season of Easter.

We have journeyed together as an Easter people – people of the Resurrection - through the 50 days of Eastertide and we have had Jesus travel the Emmaus way with us.

So, the question we need to ask ourselves is: What is different about this Season? What significance should Pentecost have in our lives? Our Gospel text speaks about being empowered by the Holy Spirit for mission – we are called to be a Pentecost people of mission – As God has sent Jesus to fulfill God’s mission, so Jesus sends us out to also fulfill God’s mission – in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the Scripture passages leading up to today, we have heard Jesus speaking about the “Helper, the Comforter, the Counselor, the Advocate. All these words have the same root meaning, and that is “the one who comes alongside” the one who would give believers the assurance that Jesus is with us always and that Jesus is Lord of all.

And beloved, this is an important truth to always remember – Jesus is with us always – in Spirit – as we experience significant challenges, hardships, anxieties, concerns and worries during this time of COVID19.

The Holy Spirit is also one who would give us the strength – strength to endure all the difficulties and challenges and also the power to carry out the work Jesus has sent us out to do. As I shared in the message on Ascension Day – we are called to be Christ’s witnesses. Look again at Jesus’ words “As the father has sent me, so I send you.” And with those words he breathed on them and said “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

You see, Jesus knows that the disciples can do what he has sent them to do. In fact he does not ask them if they would like to do it, he’s giving them a command. They are to go out and do it.

They can do it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had said much about the Holy Spirit and Jesus promises to send his own spirit, his own breath, his own inner life.

In the same way brothers and sisters, Jesus is assuring us of his presence with us always and he is not asking us to go out and do what we are called to do – his is giving us a command.

Since we have the life and breath and spirit of God within us, we are called to make Christ known and to carry out God's message of forgiveness and amazing transforming love to all people. As much as we would like to worship together, we should remember we do not need to be in a Church building to carry out God's mission but we do it in how we live our lives each and every day – where God has placed us. Our neighbourhoods and communities, our places of work and school – these places are our mission field. We are to not only proclaim the message by words but also through our actions our attitudes and behaviour, through our heartsets and mindsets.

We are not left without the tools to do this work. The Spirit gives us those tools. In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, we learn that the Spirit gives us "gifts". He also makes it clear that, though there are different kinds of gifts of the Spirit, there is only one Spirit and one God.

The root of this word gift points to the nature of these gifts: the gifts (charismata) are the result of God's grace (Charis) All believers are given such gifts – not for their own good – so that they can boast about it – but for the good of the community – for the unity of the community.

To be gifted by the Spirit is not something that happens to some believers and not to others. Every one of us is gifted by the Spirit in some way so that we can use that gift not for our own glory to benefit ourselves – but for the benefit of all God's people. The use of the gift is so that the church, the Body of Christ, may be built up.

We are called to be good stewards of the gifts God has given us. This means we are called to use our gifts in order that this parish as a whole can be effective in fulfilling God's mission and purpose in this community. We are called to serve God in this place through our unique giftedness.

Since we have this Spirit of Jesus living within us, we are called to also show forth the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. Because as Jesus said, By their fruits you will know them. In Jesus' famous discourse on the vine and the branches he says in 15:16 "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last."

We are to show the fruits of believers living in the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

So on this day of Pentecost when we recall the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, may we be Pentecost people – may we be people who use well the gifts of the Spirit – the tools to go out into the world and do the work Jesus has sent us to do. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to transform us from within and to manifest the fruits of the Spirit. Scripture says that John the Baptist came to baptize with water, but Jesus would baptize us with the Holy Spirit.

I pray that we may be Pentecost people – filled with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this power may we use our gifts in the service of others so that the Body of Christ revealed through God's people here Anglican Parish of Germiston may grow, flourish and bear fruit that will last – to the glory of God. AMEN.