

Sermons at All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev Geoff Read on Pentecost Sunday, 8th June 2025

Bible texts: Acts 2:1-12, John 14: 8-17

Lord, what is it you want to say to us this Sunday?

This week's sermon has had a long and difficult birth!

At one point as I sat at my desk, Bible open, keyboard ready I just had the sense I need to push back my chair, turn around and go to my prayer corner, kneel again to ask that question

And as I did, I heard the heavy rain begin outside

You may have heard it too on Friday afternoon

You may have even been out in it

And as I listened I remembered years ago when we lived in Germersheim, on the Rhine in Germany

The bends of the Rhine had been straightened, canalised, leaving the old bends to become almost swamp like, complete with mosquitos

The sun would shine, the temperature would rise, and the heat and the humidity would get trapped in the Rhine valley

On those evenings we would hear the thunder as the clouds formed, and we would long for the rain to come

And I can remember one time as it did, people would come out and dance in the street, heads raised, allowing the rain to soak into them

This is the image of the waiting we read of in Acts, Jesus commanding his dps to wait for the promise of the Father (1:4) that then comes to fruition in Acts 2

And what is it that builds as they wait, like the heat and humidity

Its absence, its longing for the presence of Jesus again

They'd seen him go once – arrested, tried and crucified and killed, buried, hopes crushed

But then they see Him come again on Easter day

Throughout the three years they were together Jesus had promised them that He would come again, but at that stage that promise had passed them by

But then, a Peter describes Easter in Acts 2 "But God ..."

... God raised Him up, freed him from death because it was impossible for him to be held by its power (Acts 2:24)

But then having seen Him come, the dps see Him go again but promising to come again – moving from our realm of time and space to that of eternity in what we call the ascension

But this time it's different ...

Disturbed and then comforted by the events of Easter day, their expectations have changed, they are open to the counter-intuitive, the reversal of all they have known before

and so, they wait ...

... and they long for the absence, His absence, to be reversed, for the presence of Jesus again

The *dps* were beginning to get the idea

Going away, coming back – they'd seen it in Good Friday and Easter day

So now I wonder if this time they were expecting a coming back, a reversal of the ascension, for Jesus to be with them again

But maybe just as the resurrection coming of Jesus had been a complete surprise then, so maybe now too the coming of Jesus would be more, this time by His Spirit?

As Pentecost comes Jesus is present to them again, and it is even more, as He keeps His promise that we read of in John – to not just be with them, but in them, by His Spirit (John 14:17)

To be with and in them you forever

This coming of Jesus by His Spirit is something even more, for it is not just to be with them, or even to be in them ...

It is also for them, and us, to be drawn into the relationship of love that has existed for eternity between God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

It's what in the Orthodox Christian tradition is called *theosis* - we are invited in, to become partakers, guests of the divine nature, the love of the Trinity, what Jesus goes on to call "not being left as orphans" a few verses later (Jn 14: 18), what St Paul calls being "in Christ" and God's love being poured into our hearts – how? By the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5)

And it's the experience of these "amazing deeds of power" (Acts 2:11) that propels the once frightened, then waiting disciples down the steps from the Upper Room and into the back streets of Jerusalem

... and as they tumble down, so this good news bubbles out from their lips and lives, empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak of Jesus risen, alive and present in ways others around could sense but not understand

"Parthians, Medes and Elamites .."

This new life in Jesus is for sharing

Sharing with other spiritually hungry and thirsty men and women, people facing all the stuff life throws at them and wondering if they have to face it alone, people who ask "there surely must be more to life than this", who sense its true but have no idea where to find that

As these Spirit-filled *dps* encounter a hungry and thirsty world we read that "All were amazed and perplexed asking: what does this mean?"

This is what lies at the heart of church

... to be a community where we seek after these things but discover that we are actually already found by Jesus

It's for this reason that the writer of Acts 2, Luke, uses the words of abundance as he describes Pentecost

All were together waiting (v1)

the wind fills the house (v2)

the tongues of fire rest on each of them (v3)

and all were filled with the Holy Spirit (v4a)

and all begin to speak as the Spirit gave them ability (v4b)

At our annual meeting I talked about the story of our Electoral Roll, of people out there who not yet on it: are longing to find the more in life that they know deep down they were created for, but who don't know where to find it

The ones asking: what does this mean?

- People now in retirement who are seeking meaning as they reflect back on life and wonder what lies ahead – but who were either never part of church or drifted away and now find themselves without resources or community to do that important work of sense making
- Young people in Gen X, especially young men, who the statistics show are longing for spiritual truth
- children, young people and their families still reeling from the impact of Covid, the overwhelming of social media

Church is the God-given place, the community for such people

That creates welcome, acceptance and hospitality

generous space for questions and sense making

and the experience of Jesus, alive and present by His Spirit, among and through us His people

And that is why we pray: Come, Holy Spirit

That is why we long for More

No just for ourselves

But out of love for others, the love of God that is being poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit

On a good day, I long for that

But I also know how easily I can be distracted, or turn inwards to my own wants, needs and desires

Which is why we need each other, in community and in worship, to remain open and turned upwards and outwards as we pray: Come, Holy Spirit!