

Talks – Genesis Pentecost – myfishbites.com

Note

This talk has much new content but also some content borrowed from other talks on the Holy Spirit. This was used as a talk in a church not as a youth work church so you'll probably need to consider adapting and editing it.

Pentecost – bringing light in the darkness

Think – one of the 'golden ages' of TV in the UK had a show called 'This Is Your Life' where celebrities were invited onto the show and they looked back on their life, remembering key people and key events from their past. If the disciples were interviewed later in life, surely one of the things they'd have remembered would have been Pentecost.

What is Pentecost? It's the coming of the Holy Spirit, sent by God as promised by Jesus, to empower the church and be the constant presence of God with his people throughout time. The Holy Spirit in us is what changes darkness into light and he is the one who takes our sin and mess and turns our lives around. He's the one who helps us grow and change and be more like Jesus. Jesus promised that with the Holy Spirit in us, we will do the works of God (that he prepared before time for us to walk in according to Ephesians).

In order to look at Pentecost I'd like to go back to the beginning of the Bible and Genesis 1. Because this is a summary of who God is, what he does and what he's still doing!

Darkness and Drama – Genesis 1.1-5

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light... God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light 'day', and the darkness he called 'night'. And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

Seven Stages

1. God created the heavens and the earth. Not an accident (normally things decay)
2. The earth was formless and empty.
3. Darkness was over the surface of the deep.
4. The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.
5. God spoke and things were created. "Let there be light" and there was light.
6. God gave a name to the darkness and the light – day and night
7. There was evening -> then there was light. The first day.

The World Around Us Today – Dark and Light

Things seem to be getting darker on the whole don't they? There is an increase in terrorism, an increase in destruction, an increase in persecution of Christians (someone said, "those who hate truth called truth 'hate'...") Many Christians worldwide are beginning to feel like the people of Israel in slavery in Egypt. But just as God rescued his people then, so Jesus will return soon to rescue his people, as the Bible makes clear!

Without knowing it, people live superficial lives quite often. If you look at what's popular in culture, how people think, what they do, how they spend their money, how they spend their time, it's pretty meaningless and empty. In some places, the world is very dark and evil.

But at the same time, more people are becoming Christians than at any time in history. The numbers are quite staggering: a minimum of 106 million Christians in China, 25% of Ethiopia born-again Christians and some estimate up to 1/3 of Indonesians are Christians. In one refugee camp with Syrians in recently, a pastor spoke of at least 100,000 Muslims coming to faith.

As Jesus predicted, the light is getting lighter and the dark is getting darker.

In the beginning...

The Holy Spirit has been around since the birth of creation. Genesis 1.1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The word used for God is 'Elohim', which is plural. A guy called Chuck Missler points the Septuagint (the Greek translation of Hebrew texts) uses the words 'tohu' and 'bohu' in Genesis 1.2, referring to a unique kind of deep darkness and disordering. In Jeremiah 4.3 'bohu' is referred to in the context of judgement.

Jeremiah 4.3 – "I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty; and at the heavens, and their light was gone."

A 'concordance' is a book that looks at the Bible and tells us what the words meant in the original language the Bible was written in (so that's Hebrew and Greek). The most famous one is called 'Strong's concordance' and that defines 'tohu' as "formlessness, confusion, unreality, emptiness" and 'bohu' as 'emptiness'.

So when we look at the beginning of Genesis, don't we see a picture of the world today? Don't we see a picture of emptiness, formlessness, a void and confusion around us today?

But here's the thing – the Spirit of God was hovering. The world couldn't perceive Him and didn't know what God was going to do next. But God was there, apparently silent, but His plans were about to made a reality. What God decided in the spiritual realm would become apparent in the physical realm with the creation of the world.

God made something (the world, man) out of nothing. He created something from disorder, chaos and emptiness. He created order, peace, joy, creation, life, flowers, animals and humans. This was the purpose of God and this is still his purpose today. Science today can make things but it cannot create – only God can create!

God brings light to darkness and brings life from emptiness. It's what he did in Genesis 1, it's what God used Ezekiel to prophesy about with the bones telling them to come to life; it's what God did on the day of Pentecost through the Holy Spirit.

God has called us to pray and speak his Words of Life today into situations around us, agreeing with his Will and his Word. As John Wesley famously said, "God does nothing except in response to believing prayer."

Some people say that the world was created with a big bang. They believe that the physical world was made with this bang. But even if this were true (which I don't believe), it would only have created a physical world – a world that we can see and touch. But God created mankind to be both physical (our bodies) and spiritual (our spirit, even our feelings etc). A big bang could not have created anything that was spiritual. No, instead in Genesis we read that the Holy Spirit was hovering over the waters. This is something far more than a physical event. When God steps in (or steps out) the effects are felt both physically and spiritually – just as it was for the Israelites leaving Egypt and just as it has been since creation!

So, back to Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit

When we look at Acts 2, what do we see? We see Christians meeting together, having gone through a very confusing and difficult time with Jesus promising to be the Messiah, dying on the Cross, rising again and then going to heaven.

In Luke 24.49, we know that Jesus had said to the disciples, "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

But what was this being clothed with power from on high? The disciples didn't really know although they must have had some ideas it would be 'different' because they'd spent time with Jesus, for whom the supernatural was more real than what we'd call the natural.

Quantum physics – is showing that the world we can't see is actually more real than the world that we can see! This is the truth that God's Word tells us – that the supernatural world is the real world and where things happen. We then just see this in the natural world. This is what happens with prayer – with God creating the world – with God working behind the scenes in ways we can't see!

When the Holy Spirit came on the disciples on Acts 2, it wasn't in a way that we'd perhaps be comfortable with in our ordered churches today! It was probably quite messy. There was a sound like a blowing wind, what seemed to be tongues of fire that rested on the disciples and they spoke in other tongues.

God is always in the process of bringing new life, bringing transformation, change and bringing people to himself. But he doesn't always do things the way we want, the way we think or the way we can understand! I just want to challenge all of us with this truth. God has moved through history and through nations in various ways. He never contradicts his Word but what God does may be unexpected. Don't miss a move of God because you've already decided how God should and shouldn't do things! Be free to love God, love his Word and love what God does!

A book by an author called Robby Dawkins who has seen God do extraordinary stuff in Chicago is called, 'Do what Jesus did.' Our world is crying out for us to do this!

So what was the response of people to the disciples in Acts 2? Well, they thought the disciples were drunk? Has that ever been said of any of us?! Have people accused of being drunk or something similar – do people notice we are Christians – that we are different – that there is something powerful, loving and spiritually attractive about us? Jesus talked about us all being a city on a hill – a city on a hill that is light is most seen when it is dark.

And a city on a hill attracts people to it. Know this – that as the light of Christ in you grows brighter, people will be attracted to Jesus. Even when you don't perceive it happening!

John 9.1-7 – the blind man healed

As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned,' said Jesus, 'but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' After saying this, he spat on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. 'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam' (this word means 'Sent'). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

The man was so changed that people couldn't recognise him – a sign of the change that Jesus brings. This man was so transformed that people didn't recognise him. Half the people recognised the change and half the people didn't. This is so like the work of God in our world where some people see and credit God but many don't. The man was obedient. Jesus tells us that we are his disciples if we are obedient to him – in the small and in the large, in following his Word and his ways.

We see a picture of coming to Jesus in John 9.14. Jesus clearly had compassion for the man and went to him. The Holy Spirit always draws us, even if we don't realise or recognise it! Then Jesus acted by doing what God did in the beginning, he took dirt from the ground, added his breath (spit) and applied it to bring new life (in this case to the man's eyes). The man then went and washed, symbolizing baptism. We'll also see that the process wasn't fully complete later in John 9...

True story – The other story is of how a tribe became Christians. They make medicine by spitting on their hands and using mud. In John 9.1-12, Jesus heals a blind man by spitting on the floor and rubbing wet mud on the man's eyes. The tribe were so amazed that this Jesus healed that they were saved.

Finally, back to Genesis 1

There is encouragement. Jesus is going to return. In Genesis 1.5, the Bible describes how there was evening (night) and then there was morning (day), then there was completion. Things may look dark to you spiritually at the moment. But God is hovering, God is working and God is moving in power. He is bringing the darkness to a close and is bringing his light – a light that will never fade, never change and never need replacing.

So let's carry on doing God's work while it is still light.

John 9.4-5 – As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'

Jesus is no longer in the world in person but we are as God's people. Jesus said in Matthew 6 that we are the light of the world now because we have Christ in us. So let your light shine so that men may see your good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven. Just as we said earlier, we need to keep on doing what Jesus did – in every way. Amen!