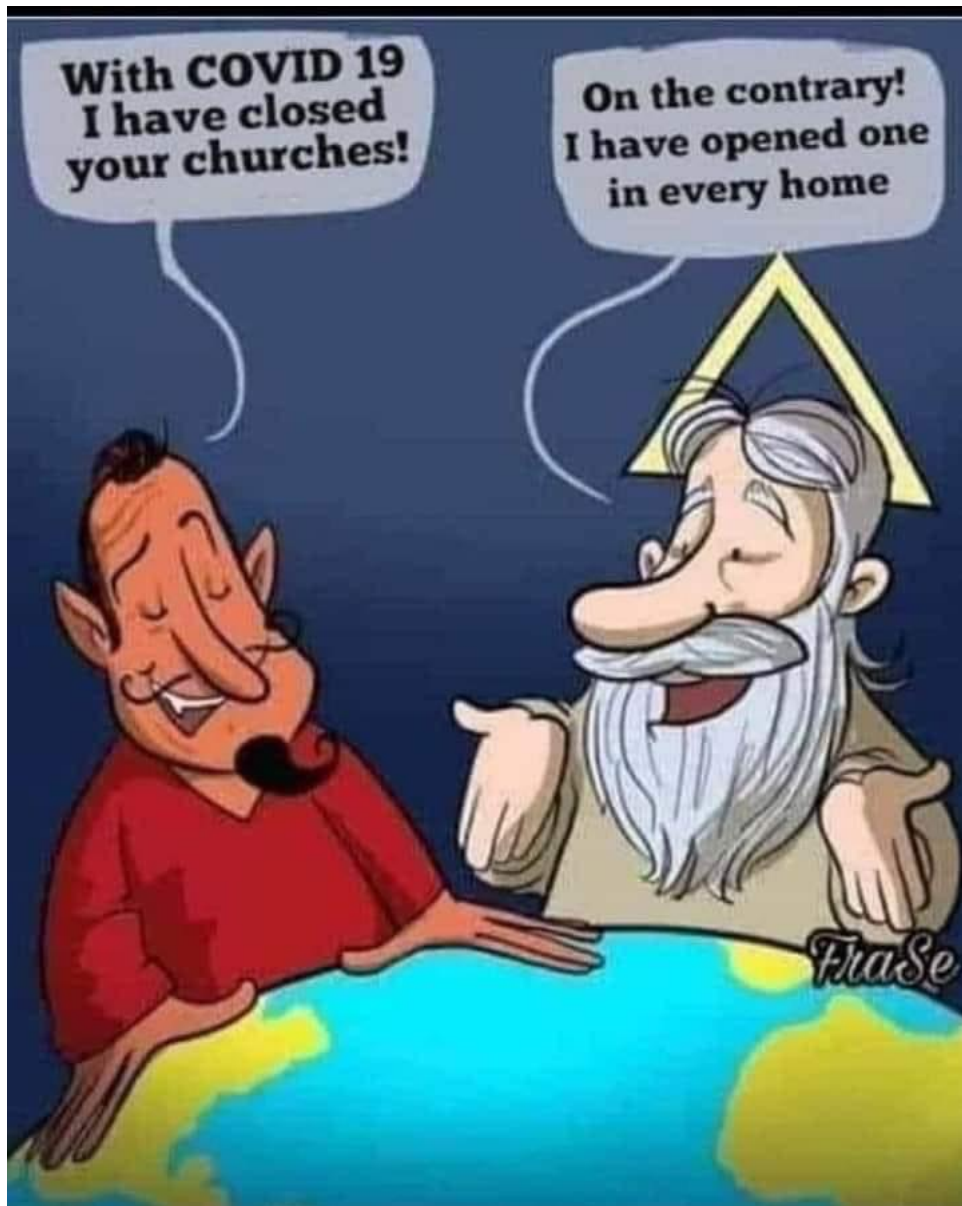


Penge Congregational Church



May 2020 Newsletter

An initiative of Hope Together

We are asked to pray where we are, that God will give us opportunities to witness to Christ, at 8.20pm (20.20 hours) on the 20th of each month, for 20 minutes.

The Prayer for Wednesday 20th May:

Read John 15: 1: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener"

And pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you for your gift of the Holy Spirit. Help me to pray for 5 people who don't yet know you. Please work in their lives to open our hearts and minds to your love and truth, shown to us in Jesus. Help me to speak about you. May they be led by the Holy Spirit to repent and follow you.



*Pray ... that God
will give many
opportunities to
speak about Christ.*

Colossians 4:3



From the Minister

What do you think when you look at the image on the front of this Newsletter? It was shared by our friends at Penge Salvation Army.

Last month I used another image they had shared which said, "The Church has left the building". I said I didn't think it was a sad image because it represents an opportunity for us not just to think outside of the box, but literally to step outside of the box of our church building. We can't come together for "church" on Sunday morning; and maybe this helps us to think of "church" as something that we are part of at all times. I would go further and say that maybe we should stop thinking of church as something we do on Sundays, and start thinking of worshipping God as something we do all the time; of our faith as something we feel and live.

Maybe this is what this month's image, on the front cover, tells us too? If we think of our relationship with Jesus as a living, vital thing that we experience all the time, then we are church, in the sense of being the Living Stones Peter speaks of, wherever we are. We are never alone, even in lockdown, because we have Jesus with us in our hearts all the time. And of course, as all of us who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit are God's children and part of his family, we are the Body of Christ whether we are physically together or not.

I think of the words of the writer of Ecclesiastes: "Two people can accomplish twice as much as one... If one person fails, the other can reach out and help... A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back to back and conquer. Three are even better for a triple-braided cord cannot easily be broken". Just as we believe in the God as the Trinity, three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we can also see ourselves as church in terms of that triple braided cord: Jesus, ourselves and one another.

Right at the end of this month, we celebrate the Day of Pentecost when the promise Jesus made to his disciples was

fulfilled. You may remember reading about this promise on the last Sunday in April at the end of Luke 24. "And now I will send the Holy Spirit just as my Father promised. Stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven". If you read through the Scripture readings you will find later on in this newsletter, you will find the account of the Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit descended in tongues of flame on each believer. I have added a second reading, from 1 Corinthians, where Paul reminds us that we have all been baptised into Christ's body by one Spirit and we have all received the same Spirit.

Maybe the Lord will grant that we can meet again and celebrate Pentecost together. But, if he doesn't, well, we are all part of that one Body where we are. We are all part of that tripe-braided cord which cannot easily be broken. The Holy Spirit which is in all our hearts binds us together in a fellowship that can't be broken by a mere virus.

May the Lord bless you and protect you.

May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the Lord show you his favour and give you his peace.

Pam

Joan Fairbrother

It is with great sadness that I must inform you of the passing on Wednesday 15th April of Joan Fairbrother who had been a member of our church since the 1970s. Joan suffered a stroke and went home to God two weeks short of her 99th birthday. Joan and her late husband, Harry, had lived in Bexhill on Sea for the past several years but Joan never forgot her church family and was in regular touch with many of us. She was a gentle and sweet natured lady, but she had a wicked smile!

She and Harry lived for many years in my road and my fondest memory is of walking past with one or other of my children, and being summoned in to say Hello to Harry. Once that had been accomplished, the hall cupboard would be opened, a bag of chocolate produced, and the child invited to make a choice. That bag must have been regularly topped up because the number of chocolate bars never seemed to diminish!

Our condolences go to Ann and Jane at this sad time.

Bill Clarke

More sad news: Bill Clarke passed away peacefully in St Christopher's Hospice on Monday 20th April after a long illness. Bill wasn't a church member and he only attended services very occasionally but he ferried Pat back and forth faithfully, and would often come in at the end of the service for a hug and a chat. He was also very kind and willing to help us out with practical things. Every summer we have a maintenance week when we do as much as we can in the halls while everyone is on holiday. Bill was invaluable at these times and mucked in by helping to deep clean the kitchen or whatever else needed doing. My favourite memory comes from when Pat broke her ankle badly, and I visited her at home. It wasn't long before Christmas and, after I had drunk the cup of tea Bill made for me, he began plying me with chocolate. Then he produced a couple of bottles of Christmas alcohol! Since it was 3 in the afternoon, and since I had driven there, I had to decline his kind offer but this sums up for me Bill's kind nature.

Our condolences to Pat, and to their daughters, Lorna and Sue.

A message from Chris Parker

Thank you all

I would like to thank all of you who have send cards and made phone calls to me regarding the passing away of my Dad (Frank) who was just short of his 94th birthday. Dad had been in a care home in West Wickham for about 18 months due to his Alzheimer's progressing and Mum no longer able to cope with all the stress and strain physically and mentally.

Dad was very active before the onset of this horrible disease. Many will remember him and my mother attending some of the activities and talent shows at the church. My memory was when they sang a duet together. Years back they came on some of the rambles. Particularly I remember the one over Box Hill. It was pretty cold and we were well wrapped up, when a man dressed only in shorts and foot ware came running past. We still managed to unravel and devour some birthday cake at the end of the walk.

The funeral was on 16th April and a very strange event it was. Due to Covid 19 restrictions we could only have nine mourners. Mum had placed a bunch of primroses on the coffin. Picked from their garden from an area he used to burn his bonfires.

Dad was welcomed into the chapel to the theme tune of BBC Snooker Championship. He was a real fan of snooker, going back to Pot Black. He attended his local village hall snooker afternoon and one at the church he attended. We sang 'What a friend we have in Jesus' and later 'How great Thou art', his favourite. The Grand and Great Grandchildren had put together a video of their memories in poem form. It was a teary moment. The service was a real joyous occasion as we



celebrated his life and the journey he was now on in the presence of his Lord.

The minister who conducted the service wrote to mum a few days later expressing how dad's funeral was just the tonic he needed. He had a particularly trying week and the joy and celebration of a true and faithful servant was a great pick me up. As we left the chapel we departed to the hymn 'We shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace, and the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you, and the trees and the fields shall clap their hands, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands'. There was an impromptu clapping as we envisaged Dad arriving at his final destination with all the angels welcoming him home.

God bless you all.

Chris Parker



Zoom Church

We didn't want to miss out on meeting together during the lockdown. So we found an app called Zoom which allows us to meet up without leaving our houses. One of the early sessions was on Palm Sunday. Earlier we had put out a box of Palm Crosses in front of the church with a sign saying "Untouched by human hand since last Palm Sunday." Someone witty in the group suggested that we had missed an opportunity for a Palm Pun and then we all held up our palms!! This has now been a feature of each group. When we say the Grace to one other instead of just looking each other in the eye, we hold up our palms to the camera. The groups have been a real opportunity to shout Hosanna, God saves.

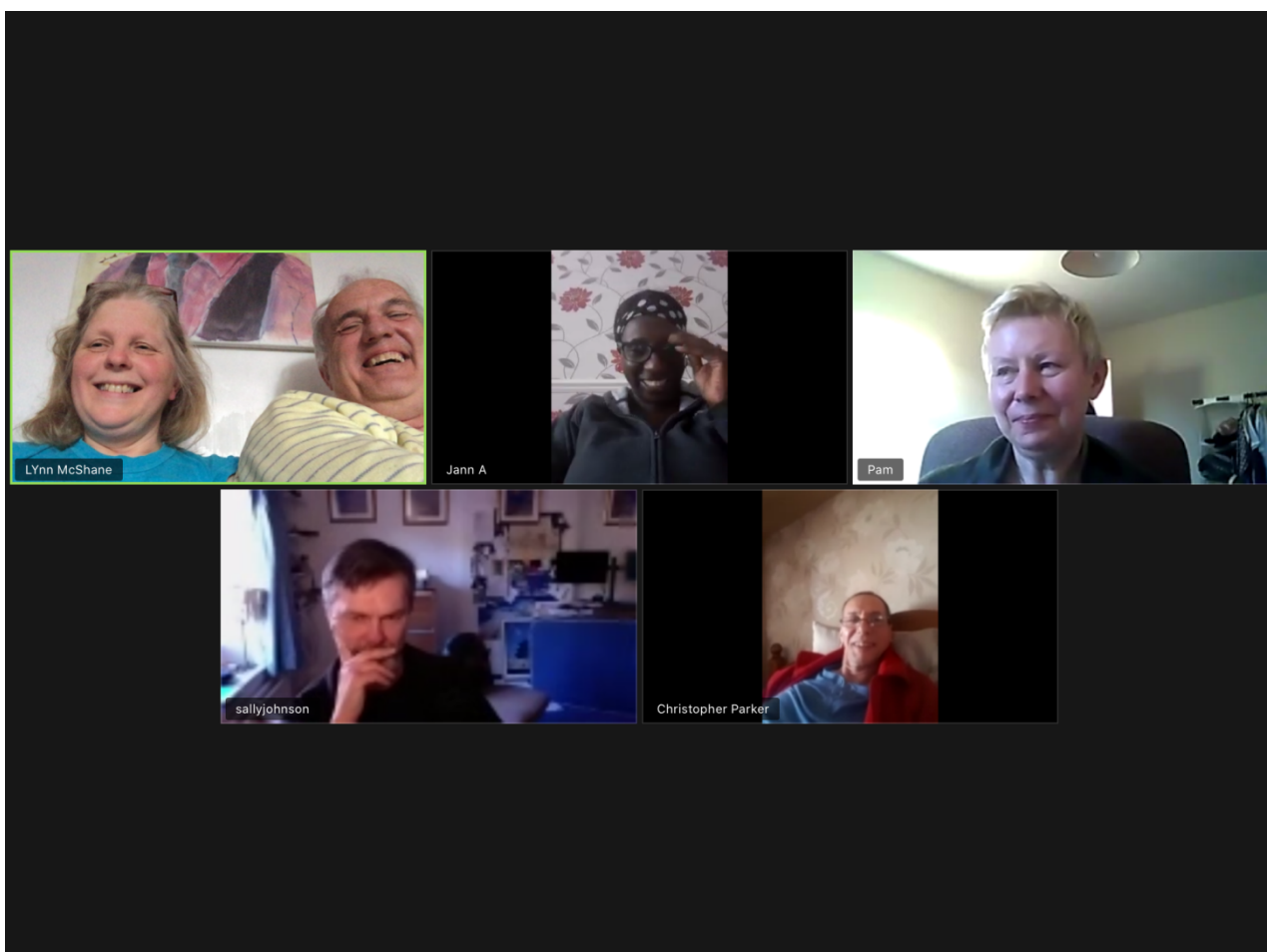
We've looked at a random selection of Scripture passages suggested by which ever person wants to lead for that meeting. Here are some of the key themes that I think have come out. - -

- We need to **expect** God to answer prayer and therefore be persistent in prayer.
- The word yeast means "God is good" and this is a truth that needs to work its way all the way through the "bread".
- It feels like God has given us a Sabbath rest from the busyness of our lives so that we can focus our eyes on him.
- We have asked for spiritual eyes to see what new thing God is doing among us.
- Thinking about the Resurrection and the Road to Emmaus has helped us to understand that there is a very fundamental difference between knowing the Gospel in your mind and knowing it in your heart.

- We have talked quite a lot about “going to church” as opposed to worshipping God wholeheartedly.

Zoom is really easy to use so if anyone wants to join the Zoom church, you'd be more than welcome! Please ask Lynn for details of how to join in.

Lynn (with some interference by Pam!)



A reminder also that you can listen to a Sunday service online each week on our website: www.pccweb.co.uk.

Be Still

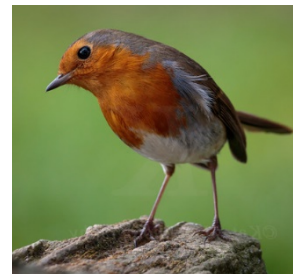
As we enter another round of three weeks in 'lock down' we could all be getting a bit bored or if you are in the line of work which cannot be done at home you may be getting anxious as to income or business possibly folding with no real sight as to the end of this strange time we are living in.

Although I am fortunate in having a secure income, I was hit with the passing away of my father, 93 years. It was not Covid related but trying to sort out transfer of accounts in banks and utilities for my mother was not over easy and a bit stressful when you cannot speak face to face and having to wait up to an hour for someone to talk to.



I have found solace in visiting my allotment. The day I write this I was there especially early, 7am. What is the quote in "Frozen"? 'The sky's awake, so I'm awake'. I did a half

hour digging and then stood for a moment and looked towards the oak trees. The sun was blocked but the one with the largest canopy was catching the leaves of its neighbour giving it a yellowy orange glow. A



couple of squirrels played catch me if you can round and round the trunk before scampering higher and leaping to the next part of the obstacle course.

Who else was up at 0700 hrs? Surely that wasn't a DIY enthusiast starting up a hammer drill at this hour? No of course not, but the woodpecker hammering away at the bark to reveal some grubs for breakfast. Soon the robin was within touching distance, hopping about near my feet, making use of the recently turned earth and the exposure of a spider or centipede. I'm sure if I had taken some mealworm and held it in my hand he would have hopped upon my palm.

Yes not a sound in the air other than nature going about its business. During these last few weeks I guess many of us have had a bit more time on their hands, but have you taken time to STOP! Yes stop, listen and be still. I find that being in the garden or allotment I can be still and as I look around I find I am in awe of God and His wonderful creation. Who else would have thought of creating worms to aerate the earth and pull the autumn leaves below ground to put nutrients back into the soil? It is good to stand still and meditate and pray.

Jesus is found to take several 'time outs' in the Bible. The most significant being his time in the wilderness when he was tempted by satan**. Perhaps not the break He was looking for but it helped Him focus on what was important and what His mission, purpose was for God while he was on earth. God even took time out after He had created the universe. On the seventh day He rested.

If you change one thing in your life that you didn't do pre Covid 19, then stop and take stock of the wonder of this world that was created for you to care for by our mighty God.

** If you wonder why satan is written without a capital, that's how I always do it as he is not worthy of one**

Chris Parker

We are unable to hold services at the moment because of the Coronavirus regulations. But before the lockdown, the Worship Team met to plan services for April to June. So here are the readings we had planned for each Sunday in May, and a couple of things for you to think about after reading each one.

Sunday 3rd May

John 10:1-18 New Living Translation

10 "I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! ² But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."

⁶ Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, ⁷ so he explained it to them: "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me^[a] were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved.^[b] They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. ¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. ¹² A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. ¹³ The hired hand runs away

because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, ¹⁵ just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷ "The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. ¹⁸ No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."

Reflect:

A good Middle Eastern shepherd always leads the sheep; he never drives them. What does this tell you about the relationship Jesus wants to have with us?

Verse 8: What do you think this means?

Verse 18: Jesus died freely for us. The resurrection wasn't an afterthought: the tomb couldn't contain God. How does this make you feel?

Sunday 10th May:

John 14:1-14 New Living Translation (NLT)

14 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father's home. ^[a] If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ^[b] ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going."
⁵ "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is.^[c] From now on, you do know him and have seen him!"

⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

⁹Jesus replied, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don't know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking me to show him to you? ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me. ¹¹Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do.

¹²"I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. ¹³You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Reflect:

The disciples were troubled because Jesus told them he would only be with them a little longer. What does Jesus tell them will bring reassurance? (Verse 1)

Verse 9: Jesus didn't just teach about God: he was God-in-the-flesh. This was at the root of the opposition Jesus encountered from the religious leaders.

Verse 13-14: How does this amazing promise make you feel?

Sunday 17th May

John 14:15-21 New Living Translation (NLT)

¹⁵ “If you love me, obey^[a] my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,^[b] who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.^[c] ¹⁸ No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. ¹⁹ Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. ²⁰ When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”

Reflect:

Verse 15: What do we have to do to receive the Holy Spirit?

Verses 17-18: The Holy Spirit is a constant presence in the heart of every Christian. We are sustained by his constant presence, a great comfort especially at this time of lockdown.

Verse 20: the resurrection inaugurated Jesus’ spiritual union with his disciples, and this includes all of us, which is parallel with his union with God. Doesn’t that fill your heart with praise and wonder?

Sunday 24th May. Ascension Sunday

Acts 1:1-11 New Living Translation (NLT)

1 In my first book^[a] I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach ²until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. ³During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was

actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

⁴ Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵ John baptized with^[b] water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

The Ascension of Jesus

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

⁷ He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

Reflect:

Verses 3-5: Jesus is teaching the disciples about the Kingdom of God. How does it make you feel to be a citizen of the Kingdom?

Verse 8: Jesus wants us to witness for him. The gospel is for everyone everywhere and the Holy Spirit is the source of power for all this evangelism.

Verse 11: Jesus had gone into heaven. The witnesses were left on earth but they were part of God's Kingdom too.

Sunday 31st May. Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21 New Living Translation (NLT)

2 On the day of Pentecost^[a] all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages,^[b] as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵ At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. ⁶ When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

⁷ They were completely amazed. "How can this be?" they exclaimed. "These people are all from Galilee, ⁸ and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹ Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!" ¹² They stood there amazed and perplexed. "What can this mean?" they asked each other.

¹³ But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, "They're just drunk, that's all!"

Peter Preaches to the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, "Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as some of you are

assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. ¹⁶No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷'In the last days,' God says,

 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

 Your young men will see visions,
 and your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸In those days I will pour out my Spirit
 even on my servants—men and women alike—
 and they will prophesy.

¹⁹And I will cause wonders in the heavens above
 and signs on the earth below—
 blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

²⁰The sun will become dark,
 and the moon will turn blood red
 before that great and glorious day of the Lord arrives.

²¹But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
 will be saved.^['c]

1 Corinthians 12:3-13 New Living Translation (NLT)

³So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. ⁶God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

⁷A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice^[a]; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge.^[b] ⁹The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. ¹⁰He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another

the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages,^[c] while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹ It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

One Body with Many Parts

¹² The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³ Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles,^[d] some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.^[e]

Reflect:

On the Day of Pentecost, pilgrims from all over the known world were in Jerusalem so everyone there could witness the power of the Holy Spirit. And we have the promise in verse 21 that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells us that we demonstrate we have the Holy Spirit by proclaiming the truth that Jesus is Lord.

We all have different gifts from the Spirit but in verse 6, Paul tells us that the work we do for God is in fact God working through us.

Verse 7: Spiritual gifts aren't given to us for our benefit but so we can help one another. So what does that tell you about our relationship with one another as the church?

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