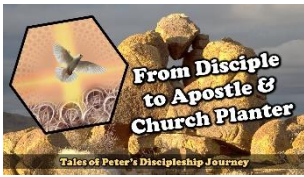


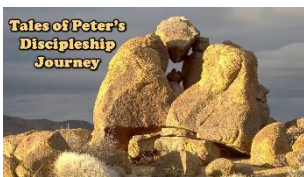
From Disciple to Apostle & Church Planter



<Acts 2:1-13>

*¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the **rush of a violent wind**, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ **Divided tongues, as of fire**, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."



This is the sixth sermon in this series about the disciple Peter. It was going to be the last in our series, but I've decided to added a bonus one next week that I am calling *From Apostle to Saint*. You can find previous sermons here: Methodist IC .org .uk.

We have been following Peter's journey with Jesus, from being called as a fisherman to leave his nets, to hearing of the many times when Peter stepped out boldly and faltered, to Jesus forgiving Peter and appointing him as the one upon whom the church will be built. Today, we have just heard how Peter received the Holy Spirit and in a moment we will hear him boldly proclaiming the gospel and 3000 people coming to Christ.

DISCIPLE
v.
APOSTLE

I've called today's sermon *From Disciple to Apostle & Church Planter*. **So what is the difference between a disciple and an apostle?** I will explain the way that I understand this but having spent a while looking it up this week, it is less clear and more complicated than I am going to say; you can do your own research, but for today, I am going to try to keep it simple!

A **disciple** is a **follower and pupil of a particular teacher**; so, a disciple of Jesus is a student of Jesus. During Jesus' lifetime, his followers were called his disciples, and we mainly think of the 12 disciples, although Jesus had many other disciples, both men and women. An **apostle** is a **messenger who is sent by someone on a mission for a specific purpose**. After Jesus' ascension, the 12 disciples are referred to as the Apostles; because they were sent by Jesus on a mission to tell the world the gospel news. There are still 12 because Judas had gone was replaced by Mattheus in Acts 1. But Paul and Barnabas are also called Apostles in the book of Acts, although they did not have a direct link to Jesus. And Paul himself refers to others as Apostles, including Junia, who was a woman (*Romans 16:7 if you want to check it out!*) **All apostles were**

disciples, but not all disciples were apostles. As followers of Christ today, we call ourselves disciples of Christ. There are however some denominations today that still use the word Apostle for those who are specifically sent on a particular mission or as an office of authority in the church hierarchy.

When I chose the title for this sermon, I was thinking that Peter's role had now changed from just being a pupil of Jesus to being a leader on a mission to spread the story of Christ the Messiah, far and wide, and to start the early church. Pentecost being the birth of that church.

We have already heard the scripture of how the Holy Spirit, appeared to those gathered together in a large room. Acts 1:15 indicated that there might have been 120 of them in that room, men and women. And we also learn that after the Spirit came to them, the crowd that was in Jerusalem all heard their native tongues being spoken.

There were a lot of Jews in Jerusalem because in the Jewish calendar it was festival time. Back when Jesus was crucified, it was Passover commemorating the night that God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Seven weeks after Passover, the Jews celebrate Shavuot. Shavuot is the celebration of the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai. It is also the time when the early summer harvest was celebrated and when the first fruits of the harvest were brought as an offering to God.

So, what are the 12 disciples, now apostles, going to do now that they have received the Holy Spirit? Of course, it is our impetuous **Peter** who has the boldness and courage and prophetic spirit to get up and respond to what has just happened. With the Holy Spirit flowing through him, Peter gives a passionate speech, putting what is going on into context. Today, we would call it preaching! Take a listen to what he says. We are going to hear verses, 14-24 and then jump to v36. You can read the omitted verses later for yourself.

<Acts 2:14-24, 36>

*14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the **prophet Joel**:*

*17 'In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.*

*18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.*

*19 And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.*

*20 The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.*

21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

22 "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you,

as you yourselves know—²³ this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law.²⁴ But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. ...³⁶ Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

What did Peter say? By drawing upon the Jewish prophetic tradition Peter showed that he too was a Jew, he knew the foundational texts. Peter was calling upon Jewish history and so people in the crowd could identify with, rather than discount, him. Peter connected the receiving of the Holy Spirit with the fulfilment of the prophesy of the prophet Joel. “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, **and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy**” (Joel 2:28). The prophecy of Joel originally warned about the arrival of God’s judgment upon the enemies of Israel in “the Day of the Lord.” Here now, Peter grounded his message within the context of Jesus’ death and resurrection, so the words of Joel took on a broader meaning. A new day has come. **The pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh now signals the empowering of Jesus’ disciples to proclaim the resurrected Christ to all the nations.**

For 2000 years now the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all people of God, empowering them equally to do the will and work of Jesus Christ. So if you are ever asked about women in ministry, Peter’s sermon one you can quote! “I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, **and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy**”

Let’s listen now to what happened to those who heard Peter’s message.

<Acts 2:37-42>

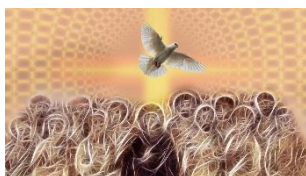
*³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ For **the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.**”⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about **three thousand persons were added.**⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

3000 people! That’s a lot of converts. A lot of people hungry for good news. The spirit’s fiery love created a community where only strangers stood before. And that was the birth of the church! Peter, whom Jesus had entrusted with being the rock, lived into and up to the aspirations that Jesus had for his life. The book of Acts continues with more stories of Peter’s ministry. We’ll take a brief gallop through those next week. Peter was given a mission by Jesus and when he was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he took up the mantle and faithfully and boldly led that mission. The church today, and all of us, still have that mission.

Rather than requiring of all of the people to speak one language, Pentecost gave the power to Peter & the apostles to speak the languages of the world, to tell the gospel in every language. As my seminary professors would say, context is important. The message needs to be good news for whoever is listening. The message is different for the rich than the poor, for the healthy than the sick, for those in power to those facing injustice. Each needs to hear it in a way that will touch their hearts. And the power of the Holy Spirit will give us the words to do so. And maybe with those words needs to come action.



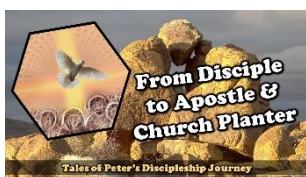
The world has been looking on this week at Minneapolis, where George Floyd was killed when the police pinned him to the ground and put a knee to his neck. Black folk in the US are arrested in so many situations when a white person would not be. They are killed in disproportionate numbers for walking in their neighbourhoods, playing in the park, or sitting in their own home. They are angry. They are scared. And there is a lot I could say. While this is in America, racism and prejudice are here the UK too. So, will we like Peter, speak up boldly for our faith? What actions will we take?



The Holy Spirit comes in different ways. Yes, there are times when the Holy Spirit is a small quiet voice. But sometimes the Holy Spirit comes with the power to knock us into orbit and to the ends of the earth. At Pentecost, there was a noise so loud that it could not be ignored. The same wind that was blowing in Genesis 1 was blowing in a mighty way at Pentecost. God's word was still creating. That Spirit that animated Jesus' life was shared with those present. There was energy that caught fire in the room.

Are we anticipating the Spirit showing up and rocking our world in spite of the very different ways we are gathering as Church? Or are we assuming the Spirit is not with us because we aren't in our buildings? If those winds blew through that ancient house and holy heads were set on fire and ears were opened, then surely it is possible for the Spirit is with us still. Perhaps God is waiting for us to notice that the wind is still loud and the flame is still burning.

Can you feel an energy in the room where you are right now? What is the Holy Spirit stirring in you? Remember it only takes a spark to get a fire going!



For the faithful witness of Peter.
May we be as bold as him.
Thanks be to God.
Amen.

Resources

Bartlett, David L. and Barbara Brown Taylor, Eds. *Feasting on the Word*. Year A, Volume 3. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Bartlett, David L. and Barbara Brown Taylor, Eds. *Feasting on the Word*. Year B, Volume 3. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011.

Bartlett, David L. and Barbara Brown Taylor, Eds. *Feasting on the Word*. Year C, Volume 3. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Hamilton, Adam. *Simon Peter: Flawed but Faithful Disciple*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2018.