

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Jesus tells his disciples that he is going away, and that this is a good thing, because then he can send the Holy Spirit to be their advocate, to convict of sin and to lead people into truth.

"When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Only Luke's Gospel and Acts refer to a specific day when the spirit is given. Here in John's Gospel, the Spirit is mentioned 5 times, and 3 of them are in today's passage. John uses 2 terms for the Spirit - the "Spirit of truth" and the "Paraclete". The first of these terms links the Spirit and Jesus, who identifies himself as the truth (14:6). "Paraclete" is made up of the verb "to call" and the preposition "beside" and thus means one who has been summoned or called to the side of another - literally, an "advocate," or, by extension, a helper or legal representative in a trial or other arena of judgment. What good news it would have been to the disciples to know about the promised gift of the Spirit. Pentecost marked a liminal moment for the early church community when people's gaze shifted from looking back at their memories of Jesus, to looking ahead to what they must trust to sustain their life after his death and resurrection had passed into history and memory.

COCU39B.Pentecost Day Readings

This year the Pentecost celebration has a particular emphasis on how the gift of God's Spirit impacts, not just followers of Christ, or even human beings, but the whole of creation. The Acts 2 reading describes the experience of the disciples when they receive God's Spirit. The John reading supports this narrative with the account of Jesus' promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit whose presence and action will be experienced not just by the followers of Christ but also by the world. When these readings are placed beside the Psalm, which describes how all of creation depends on God for breath and life, and the Romans passage, which describes all of creation as awaiting the time when God's life flows through God's children, the cosmic implications of Pentecost become clear. The giving of God's Spirit is not just about personal empowerment, or an individual experience of God's presence. It is about God's life and grace flowing into the entire cosmos. It is about followers of Christ being empowered to bring God's resurrection life to the whole of creation, finding our place in the unity of God's universe.

Pentecost was originally the feast of first fruits – a thanksgiving for the harvest. Today, this appreciation for the earth and the life God gives us through it seems to have diminished. Rather than taking care to protect and preserve our planet, we debate whether climate change is our fault. Rather than appreciate and care for the resources that our planet provides to ensure sustainability, we exploit the earth to the maximum, damaging the creatures with whom we share the world, and jeopardising the future for the generations to come. When we view Pentecost as nothing more than a personal gift of empowerment and presence from God to us, we run the risk of increasing our selfishness and ignoring the wider call of God for which we have been empowered. But, neither we nor our world can afford such self-indulgence. Rather, we need to hear the message of the Scriptures which proclaim that God's "breath" gives life to all creation, and which reminds us that creation longs for us to take our place as Spirit-filled, loving, life-bringing children of God. This means, on a personal level, that part of our spirituality must include making daily choices for simple, sustainable living, and on a global scale, it must mean that we work, in whatever capacity we can, for governments, corporations and communities to make choices for sustainability and planetary care. This is the Pentecost challenge this year. *(John van de Laar, Sacredise)*

Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b

The world and all its creatures depend on God for provision and breath - which leads the Psalmist to commit to praise God.

O Lord, how manifold are your works!

In wisdom you have made them all;

The earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships, and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.

**When you send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.**

May the glory of the Lord endure forever;

May the Lord rejoice in God's works. God looks on the earth and it trembles, God touches the mountains and they smoke.

I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praise to my God while I have being.

May my meditation be pleasing to God, for I rejoice in the Lord.

Acts 2:1-21

The believers are filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and they start to praise God in various languages.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 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. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

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. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

'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. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Romans 8:22-27

All of creation, and we, hope for the day when God's children receive their "full rights." In the meantime, when we are weak, the Holy Spirit helps us by praying for us in groans beyond words.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.