

Wednesday Worship

6th May 2020

Introduction

The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole world.
The Spirit of the Lord moves over the deep.
The Spirit of the Lord warms our hearts.
The Spirit of the Lord fills all things.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.
All **Come and fill us.**
Come, Lord of life, come.
All **Come and fill us.**
Come, wind of heaven, come.
All **Come and fill us.**
Come, flame of love, come.
All **Come and fill us.**
Come, giver of all gifts, come.
All **Come and fill us.**

Today we remember the baptism of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, who descended upon him. The Father calls out to Jesus that he loves him. And through Jesus the Father also gives us the Holy Spirit, with all his gifts and power, and declares us to be loved as well.

Hymn: Spirit of the living God

Opening prayers and lighting of a candle

O Lord, open our lips
All **and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**
Give us the joy of your saving help
All **and sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.**
Let us worship God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
All **Amen.**

Spirit of God, you give life to the world.
All **Breathe on us, breath of God.**

Spirit of God, you give guidance to all rulers and leaders.
All **Breathe on us, breath of God.**

Spirit of God, you give talents and skills to all people.
All **Breathe on us, breath of God.**

Spirit of God, you direct all artists and craftspeople.
All **Breathe on us, breath of God.**

Spirit of God, you give comfort to the troubled.
All **Breathe on us, breath of God.**

Spirit of God, you renew your church.
All **Breathe on us, breath of God.**

Ist Reading: Exodus 33

The LORD said to Moses, 'Go, leave this place, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, and go to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "To your descendants I will give it." I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, or I would consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.'

When the people heard these harsh words, they mourned, and no one put on ornaments. For the LORD had said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, "You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you. So now take off your ornaments, and I will decide what to do to you." ' Therefore the Israelites stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onwards.

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each of them, at the entrance of their tents and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and bow down, all of them, at the entrance of their tents. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then he would return to the camp; but his young assistant, Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the tent.

Moses said to the LORD, 'See, you have said to me, "Bring up this people"; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, "I know you by name, and you have also found favour in my sight." Now if I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favour in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.' He said, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.' And he said to him, 'If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favour in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth.'

The LORD said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name.' Moses said, 'Show me your glory, I pray.' And he said, 'I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, "The LORD"; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But', he said, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.' And the LORD continued, 'See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.'

Psalm 135.1-7, 13-end

- ¹ Praise the LORD!
Praise the name of the LORD;
give praise, O servants of the LORD,
² you that stand in the house of the LORD,
in the courts of the house of our God.
³ Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
sing to his name, for he is gracious.
⁴ For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself,
Israel as his own possession.
- ⁵ For I know that the LORD is great;
our Lord is above all gods.
⁶ Whatever the LORD pleases he does,
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all deeps.
⁷ He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth;
he makes lightnings for the rain
and brings out the wind from his storehouses.
- ¹³ Your name, O LORD, endures for ever,
your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages.
¹⁴ For the LORD will vindicate his people,
and have compassion on his servants.
- ¹⁵ The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
¹⁶ They have mouths, but they do not speak;
they have eyes, but they do not see;
¹⁷ they have ears, but they do not hear,
and there is no breath in their mouths.
¹⁸ Those who make them
and all who trust them
shall become like them.
- ¹⁹ O house of Israel, bless the LORD!
O house of Aaron, bless the LORD!
²⁰ O house of Levi, bless the LORD!
You that fear the LORD, bless the LORD!
²¹ Blessed be the LORD from Zion,
he who resides in Jerusalem.
Praise the LORD!

Prayer of response

Lord, you are worthy of praise,
for there is none like you
in your power and ability to save.
Although times are hard we praise you
for we know that you hear our cries
and will not leave us.

Reassure us with the knowledge of your goodness,
hold us in your arms,
free us from the idols of our hearts,
and keep us in your living presence.

All **Amen.**

Hymn: Holy Spirit come to us (Taizé chant)

2nd Reading: Luke 3.15-22

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John [the Baptist], whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Reflection

Today we've heard two great Bible stories.

First was the story of Moses meeting with God, arguing for his people and bringing out God's mercy on behalf of the people of Israel. This is just after the Israelites have made a golden calf to worship while Moses was on the mountain receiving the commandments of God. Even worse, the Israelites have credited this calf with rescuing them from Egypt. So, it's not surprised that God was unhappy and criticised the Israelites as "stiff-necked", or stubborn and unleadable.

One thing that jumped out at me in this reading was the phrase "I know you by name". When we know someone by name this suggests that we have some kind of relationship with them. They're not just a face in the crowd or a problem to be dealt with but someone we know something about. Of course, with people we have different degrees of knowing someone. I know the names of both my best friend and the person who brings my weekly food deliveries. But I know a lot more about my best friend, her hopes, dreams, fears, sorrows and joys, than I do about the person who leaves boxes on my doorstep – glad though I am for both of them in different ways.

But when God says he know someone he means he really knows them, inside out and better than they know themselves, more even than your best friend might know you.

God knew Moses by name. He understood Moses and was prepared to listen to him and act for him, and through him for all of his people – who he also knew, individually, by name. But even with this close relationship between God and Moses the prophet was not able to see the face of God and live. There was still an unbridgeable gap between God's glory and fallen humanity.

Now, though, the gap has been bridged in the person of Jesus. God himself has come to Earth to bring God to us because we couldn't get to him. And in the baptism of Jesus we see that being affirmed from heaven. The Father speaks to his Son and declares him 'Beloved'. And we are also declared beloved as we follow Jesus into baptism and beyond. The Holy Spirit descends to guide, comfort and strengthen Jesus. And that same Spirit is promised to us all, with all his resources and power. In the face of Jesus we see the face of God at last, and we find that God is on our side. And we know that God is on our side because as we follow Jesus through his earthly ministry we see him healing, teaching, calling, showing mercy, serving, calling out evil, weeping with the sorrowful and rejoicing with the joyful, all the way to the darkest place of all – even into death itself.

This is God at work, even in the darkest places and in the most hopeless of situations, giving himself freely through his Holy Spirit so that we can know we're not alone, be equipped to do his will, and find help at all times – both good and bad.

Prayers

We pray for God to fill us with his Spirit.
Lord, come to bless us.

All **Fill us with your Spirit.**

Generous God, we thank you for the power
of your Holy Spirit.
We ask that we may be strengthened to serve you better.
Lord, come to bless us.

All **Fill us with your Spirit.**

We thank you for the wisdom of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to make us wise to understand your will.
Lord, come to bless us.

All **Fill us with your Spirit.**

We thank you for the peace of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to keep us confident of your love,
wherever you call us.
Lord, come to bless us.

All **Fill us with your Spirit.**

We thank you for the healing of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to bring reconciliation and wholeness,
where there is division, sickness and sorrow.
Lord, come to bless us.

All **Fill us with your Spirit.**

We thank you for the gifts of your Holy Spirit/
We ask you to equip us
for the work which you have given us.
Lord, come to bless us.

All **Fill us with your Spirit.**

We thank you for the fruit of your Holy Spirit.
We ask you to reveal in our lives the love of Jesus.
Lord, come to bless us.

All **Fill us with your Spirit.**

We thank you for the breath of your Holy Spirit,
given by the risen Lord.
We ask you to keep the whole Church,
living and departed,
in the joy of eternal life.
Lord, come to bless us.

All **Fill us with your Spirit.**

Generous God,
you sent your Holy Spirit upon your Messiah at the River Jordan,
and upon the disciples in the upper room.
In your mercy fill us with your Spirit.

All **Hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy for ever.
Amen.**

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us
All **Our Father, which art in heaven...**

Hymn: The kingdom of God is justice and joy

Closing prayers

God of power,
may the boldness of your Spirit transform us,
may the gentleness of your Spirit lead us,
may the closeness of your Spirit comfort us,
may the gifts of your Spirit equip us to serve and worship you
now and always

All **Amen.**

Now may the strength of God guide us.
The power of God preserve us.
The wisdom of God instruct us.
The Spirit of God be within us.
This day and evermore.

All **Amen.**

Go in the power of the Spirit,
to live and work to his glory.

All **Amen.**