

WELCOME 23rd May 2021 – Pentecost '21 B

Acts 1:1-8 & 2:1-21

Welcome! It's great to be together. As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources for you to use *over the course of the week*. *As God leads you into the fullness of His word/work in your life he will then introduce you to someone who needs to hear the good news from you. Also... somewhere here today you may feel a nudge - tap - tug. Don't ignore it! That's probably the Holy Spirit prompting you some way. Let's talk about that after worship.*

As we move into this week... **The moon** landing was faked. Harold Holt was kidnapped. Area 51 hides proof of extra-terrestrial life. JFK was killed by multiple gunmen. Russia determined the winner of the 2016 US election. SARs-CoVid-2 came from eating bats or a weapons lab. Conspiracy theories are strange aren't they? We could list dozens...

Conspiracy theories seem to find fertile ground in times of uncertainty, crisis & social unrest. Conspiracies thrive when people feel vulnerable, powerless or a need to gain a sense of control over their lives or explain the unimaginable. Conspiracies always blame, accuse, deflect responsibility...and always cause hurt.

But the word "conspire" is no such word...It literally means to **breathe** with" or "breathe together." Like a **child** nestled against its mother.

Today...Pentecost...the **pouring out** of the Holy Spirit...is the day when God breathes **INTO** us so that we breathe **WITH** him.

It's the greatest conspiracy ever in the truest grandest sense of the word.

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We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

Whirlwind Spirit of God, Roar through our failings & fears, Shake the foundations of our ill-placed securities; Sweep away the cobwebs of our apathy, Blow down the walls that separate us, one from another. Then into all our empty spaces, breathe courage to challenge injustice, call us to the urgency of mission, bring passion to our living, make us bold to speak your word to grow & mobilize your church.

Let your gentle breeze and still small voice become in us today a mighty wind and loud proclamation. Make Easter & Pentecost pour from us today so the world may see you risen and reigning Lord of all! Through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen!

Let's hear God's Word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Where did you see the power of God at work this week?
Then what did you do?
2. Where would God's power be helpful in the week ahead?

Now we'll sing...Lord I need You...

BLESSING/SENDING

May God bless the world in which you move, and bless your home and bless your friends.

May God bless the eyes with which you see, and bless the ears with which you listen.

May God bless the way you use your hands, bless the way you employ your tongues...

*And the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us now and always. Amen.*

Pentecost – '21 B – GETTING OUR ACTS TOGETHER: POWERFUL ACTS

How does the old saying go... "Two can keep a secret if _____." Why is that? What is it about secrets that beg for the telling? Charles Colson always argued the greatest proof of the resurrection... "I know the resurrection is a fact, & Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one was beaten, tortured, stoned & put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true. Watergate involved 12 of the most powerful men in the world & they couldn't keep a lie for three weeks. You're telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible." The apostles could not keep the resurrection a secret! But of course they weren't supposed to!

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." It was a conspiracy...but it was in fact **FOR** the world not **AGAINST** it. But that's **not** what the disciples thought...look at what leads to that promise & command: **So** when the apostles were with Jesus, they **kept asking** him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel & restore our kingdom?"

For 40 days after his rez Jesus has been w/ & among them proving he's really alive, that his crucifixion/rez were absolutely necessary &, like he did during his ministry, pointing to the final fulfilment of God's kingdom which had already broken in in him w/ the defeat of sin death & evil by his death/rez. While he's doing that the apostles are asking **THAT** question: Is **NOW** when you're going to boot the Romans & make us the big dog in the yard again? Is **NOW** when we get to run the show here on earth in your name like our ancestors David/Solomon did? Is **NOW** when you're going to give back everything our ancestors lost because of their unfaithfulness? They're wondering if now is when the great divine conspiracy against the pagan nations of the world is finally revealed...& those nations are eliminated once for all & forever...**AFTER** Easter they **kept asking THAT** question!

In so many ways I understand that. Their 3 year journey alongside Jesus must have tested their faith & understanding every day & often they failed. I get that. **Me too.** They're like kids driving across the Hay Plains... "Are we there yet?" Knowing where you are going makes all the difference in the world. Knowing the destination...the goal...the end of the journey makes all the difference in the world. Are we there yet? Their question is in essence, "Jesus, where does this whole thing wind up?" They had missed so much during his ministry I get it that they're asking for a heads up about the final whistle. Thomas & Philip at the last supper asked "We have no idea where you're going. How can we know the way?" "Lord, show us the Father, & we'll be satisfied."

Lights of Wagga "Jesus, show us where we're going – show us the final destination, tell us what the finish line looks like & we'll be satisfied." Is now the time? Are we there yet?

I love Jesus' answer...not so much what he **says** but what he **doesn't** say. Jesus doesn't say, "I'm getting the heavenly streets of gold repaved & soon as they're done..." Doesn't say, "Yep. The Father's polishing up his lightning bolts to finish off the bad guys & I just need to get y'all to a safe place so you're not collateral damage."

Jesus reminds the disciples & us that his mission, his goal was to bring God's power God's rule to bear on real human lives & real human circumstances. Jesus' mission was to bring people into a relationship w/ the Father such that they lived in his presence & power & lived his life here... "on earth as it is in heaven." For that to happen the Holy Spirit has to come take hold of our lives for that purpose. For that to happen the Holy Spirit has to come take control of our hearts/lives/lips. *my witnesses*

Jesus wasn't about the business of setting up a heavenly elevator service to hoist us out of this world & into something else, but to engage w/ us more deeply in this world, in love & compassion & justice & peace...Jesus knew that God the Father was always at work in this world, he hadn't abandoned us to our own mayhem, & so Jesus & those who would come to trust in him would also always be at work in this world bringing God's power, God's rule to bear on real human lives & real human circumstances in love/compassion/justice/peace. Jesus is giving **them/us** his work, his mission to continue in this world. "On-going acts of Jesus/Spirit through his people"

3 times on the night of his betrayal Jesus promised his Spirit/breath in us as a gift that would assure us we are not orphans/abandoned "I will ask the Father, & he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth...you know him, because he lives with you now & later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you...when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything & will remind you of everything I have told you." – Jn 14:16-18 & 26

Pentecost keeps that promise...The risen Jesus Christ who by his death destroyed death - who by his shed blood & broken body forgives sin - who by absorbing the world's evil defeats evil - who guts the tomb of its power & threat giving life to all as a gift...w/ Pentecost keeps his promise of his presence & power unleashed in us. Pentecost keeps that promise of breath that brings life to the dead & points us to the world bursting at the seams w/ Christ's love & the power that raised Christ from the grave. God's plan was not/is not to take us from the world but to join us in it – to lovingly plant his presence & power so deeply in us that all we are & do reflects his image, presence & purpose.

On Pentecost, the Spirit reached into the hearts of Jesus-followers who were as plain as homemade soap, & empowered them to speak with wisdom, to understand life at its deepest, to exercise the gift of strong faith, to take authority over sin/evil, to win people's hearts with their words/deeds, to discern truth from deceit, to display the spirit's variety of gifts in a way that built up the fellowship, to prophesy such that lives were shaped & changed & opened to God-inspired opportunities...& above all else they revelled in the best gift of all: the supreme gift of love...radically shared

They were people whose capacities seemed limited, whose charisma & influence appeared minuscule. Yet they were set alight by the Holy Spirit & those early followers of Jesus encouraged each other & challenged each other & held one another accountable to that same Spirit of Jesus until they saw in their lives & in their churches the fruit of the Spirit & they knew there was no limit to how often or how much they could bear that fruit. They went passionately & urgently to the world with the same good news – the same life-saving world-transforming good news they had been given:

- **"The Son of Man came to seek & save the lost"** – those who seem farthest away are the very ones whose hearts Jesus came to recapture for the Father – that he has HIS HEART set on those who want to hold God at a distance
- **"...this is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, & Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth."** – that eternal life is found in a living relationship with God through Jesus under the power of the Holy Spirit
- **"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself & take up his cross daily & follow me."** – that to follow Jesus is to embrace his way of living & to imitate his character & to conform to his way in this world
- **"As the Father sent me so I send you...Go & make disciples of all nations... anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, & even greater works"** He had walked the road to death & resurrection to reclaim a broken world from the clutches of sin & death & evil, & now he hands that on-going work to all who would trust in him...same power that raised him from the dead lives in you...accomplish infinitely more than you might ask or think

It's the greatest conspiracy ever in the truest grandest sense of the word.

This week I had coffee w/ some folks who already are co-conspirators w/ us, but w/ whom I'm hopeful we can make a closer conspiracy...I always tell you to listen to the promptings of the Spirit & test 'em out. Well I was prompted to spend time w/ some folks from the Wagga Church of Christ...to explore the possibility of a Spirit-led conspiracy...that maybe working more closely together we might more faithfully bring the gospel to this city. We'll have them worship w/ us...some of us will worship w/ them...**BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING** we're going to be praying & listening to Jesus speaking & leading by his Spirit. You need to know that...you need to pray for that... There's no plan no strategy no secret design...just 2 groups of disciples whose hearts long for this city to be drawn into eternal life in Christ by the power of his Spirit & who live under the overwhelming mandate from Christ...

"...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, & to the ends of the earth." & who want to do that better than we are now...

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Take it home...

Where or with whom will you allow the Spirit's power to work through you this week?

30 secs... **Go**...I'll pray for us to close...

Lord Jesus come today & set us on fire with your life & your love. Pour out your Spirit in us so that every day this week we might invite others into your abundant joy, your limitless strength & your boundless hope. Fill us Lord with your power...the power which destroy the grave & frees from sin...then drive us to meet the world's deepest need. Amen