

40 Days of Fitness

A daily devotional by Rev Garry Hardingham

DAY 30 – The First Reformation of the Church

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. Acts 2:1-4

Traditionally, we celebrate Pentecost as the foundation of the Church. That in breathing the Holy Spirit onto Jesus' followers, God inaugurates the church. However, I would argue that the church had already existed in a proto form from the moment Jesus called together his disciples and what happened at Pentecost was the reformation of the church, a church that had already begun its primary role of witnesses to the work of God in Christ.

There is an important distinction to be made here.

In the New Testament there is no Kingdom of the Spirit, there is only the Kingdom of Christ.

There is no body of the Spirit, only the body of Christ.

There is no Incarnation of the Spirit, only the Incarnation of Christ.

To centralise the formation of the church on the infilling of the Holy Spirit is to remove the central place of Jesus as Head of His church and to disconnect the mission, purpose and structure of the church from the messianic community that Jesus had already formed when he first called his twelve disciples.

This is a problem for churches that speak more often of the Holy Spirit and play down the centrality of Christ in their worship and practice.

It is not the Holy Spirit that saves, it is Jesus alone.

It is not the Holy Spirit that inaugurates the new covenant, it is Jesus alone.

The 'earthiness' of Jesus' miracles and teaching while wandering on earth is the basis of the mission and structure of the church, not some esoteric infilling of the Holy Spirit.

Is the Holy Spirit important? Of course it is.

It is in the act of the coming of the Holy Spirit that Jesus, the One who was the proclaimer of the incoming of the Kingdom of God, now becomes the One who is proclaimed. The vital function of the apostles in the economy of salvation lies in the fact that they are called and commissioned by Jesus and are endowed by the Spirit by Him. They become the foundational instrument of the proclamation of the truth of God's reconciling purpose in the world. The Spirit at Pentecost emboldens and empowers Christ's Church to not just hear and see the works of Christ, but to speak and act.

The true power of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is in the reformation of the Church from passive following to active proclamation. But the Head of the Church remains Jesus.

PRAYER

Gracious Father,

We thank You for Your Holy Spirit,

poured out upon Your church at Pentecost.

Help us to move and act and worship in the power of Your Spirit,

Bringing honour and glory to You as we proclaim

The salvation of the Jesus to a lost world.

Remind us time and time again that Jesus is the Head of the Church

and that He has never abandoned us, but continues to advocate on our behalf

In the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen