

2019-01-13 ... 10am Service ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

Acts 8: 14 – 17; Luke 3: 15 – 17, 21 – 22

**'Essential nature of the Holy Spirit'**

I received one Christmas present that I couldn't use immediately. Perhaps you did too.

Quite a lot of things that we use nowadays rely on a rechargeable battery. So –

whether it's a cordless but landline phone, a razor, a mobile phone, some kitchen appliances or ... as in my case – the very kind gift of a Kindle

... the instructions are clear

**Plug in to charge up before use.**

And, as this morning's Bible readings remind us, there is a spiritual equivalent.

**Acts ...**

The few verses we had from Acts 8 are particularly important.

Those people in Samaria believed ... they believed in God, they believed in Jesus as Lord ... but if they were going to be able to live as Christians ... live Christ-centred lives ... they needed the Holy Spirit in order to be **plugged in** and **charged up**.

Otherwise – as is often the case with our new electrical goods they would try ... but fail immediately and so assume the Christian Faith was 'not for them' or even that it was a 'sham' ... or they'd get a really good start ... but not for long – and so old ways of doing things, old ways of coping would soon reassert themselves.

They needed ... we need ... to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit – for it's the Spirit who comforts, encourages, guides, energises ...

It's the Spirit who connects us into the life of God.

**Old Testament: Isaiah ...**

Two weeks ago, I asked congregation members to write down any 'Faith questions' you had for 2019.

Some of them were about **'Why bad things happen to good people'** and others on a related theme: **'how can my faith cope when bad things happen to me or my loved ones.'**

As to the first: **'Why do bad things happen to good people'** ... perhaps a 'hard answer' in that it's clear that bad things happen to all kinds of people and Jesus never ever made any promise along the lines of 'Follow me and nothing bad will happen to you.' Faith is not that kind of 'deal with God'. Indeed a calling to follow Jesus is a calling to follow someone who was unjustly accused, persecuted, tortured and illegally executed!

If you go back to our verses from Isaiah – there are promises about help **in** difficulty – not freedom from difficulty.

**You will pass through waters**

**but I will be with you**

**through rivers**

**but they will not overwhelm you**

**PTO**

**through flames**

**but they will not consume you ...**

And remember from the opening words of John's Gospel:

**'The light** (that is – Christ's light

**shines in the darkness ...**

that tells us that we will face, live in hard difficult times within our lives, but the words continue:

**but the darkness will never overcome the light.'**

And it is the Holy Spirit who brings the light of Christ to us ... who keeps the light shining for us in the darkest of times.

This is – at least part – of the answer to the Faith question:

**How can my Faith cope when bad things happen to me or my loved ones?**

We cope because the Holy Spirit helps us – and often that help comes partly through the love and support of other people ... don't isolate yourself, don't keep your questions or cries to yourself ... turn to God in difficulty and turn to friends too.

But also – for all of us – we need to co-operate with God before as well as during and after difficult times.

Don't be like the person who launches out on a 3 day expedition without having charged their mobile phone!

Don't as a Christian launch out on life today, tomorrow – without receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit – repeatedly – we need recharging just as much as mobile phones do.

As human beings we need recharging physically – food and drink, we need recharging mentally and emotionally – breaks, holidays, fun times (and let's hope that happened for our politicians!!)

... but we also need regular recharging spiritually by the Holy Spirit.

Know, discover how that happens for you:

Is it – in the Eucharist here ...

in quiet prayer ...

in sharing a walk with God?

or ...?

Each of us will have our own way of **'plugging in'** ...

the important thing is that we don't forget to do so.

**Conclusion ...**

For our own discipleship this year – may our use of electronic devices that need recharging to function properly remind us of our spiritual need ... if Jesus had the need – as we know from our Gospel reading – surely we do too ... our spiritual need to receive and keep receiving the Holy Spirit ... otherwise we are weakened, we won't withstand the buffeting that comes our way ... whereas with the Holy Spirit we can be the people God longs for us to be.

Amen.