

2023-05-28 ... 6.30pm Pentecost Evensong ... Mrs Jane Rylands

Joel 2: 21 – end; Acts 2: 14 - 21

Our readings this evening show how closely the events of Pentecost are rooted in the Old Testament. The festival that Jews, representing every nation under heaven, had gathered for was to celebrate the covenant God made at the time of Moses' leadership on Mount Sinai. According to the account in **Exodus chapter 19** the Lord told Moses to say to the people of Israel: ***'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶you^[a] will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'*** The Lord said to Moses: ***"I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you."*** On the day itself, ***'there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire.'***

By tradition the Israelites were able to understand God talking to Moses. So in both events we have weather, fire and God speaking – God is acting consistently in his dealings with God's people.

Peter also makes the direct link with the very hopeful prophesy of Joel – this is the fulfilment of the words we have in **v 29 and v 30** ***'in those days, I will pour out my spirit. I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke.'***

That description of the portents makes me wonder just how dramatic the experience of the apostles was – how toned down was the drama for it happening in an upper room. Have we become too accustomed to the story to hear the description of ***'a sound like the rush of a violent wind'*** for what it was?

Are we just remembering a one-off event? In a way we are... but just as the apostles lost their L plates that day and began the task that Jesus had left them with – to witness to all that he was and is to the world - so we each have lost our L plates and gone from someone who heard about Jesus to someone who tells others about his love and what it means to be part of his story; or we are on a journey towards that point.

The thought that I came across when reading in preparation for what I would say this evening and which has had me excited since is that just as ***'each one heard them speaking in the native language of each'*** so we hear God speaking our language.

It has surely never occurred to you that you needed another language to pray in other than the one you use everyday.

But I think experience tells us it means more than that.

You may have heard mention of the five love languages – gifts, words of affirmation, physical touch, acts of service and quality time. You need to know if the person you want to show love to will feel more loved if you give them a bunch of flowers or if you do the washing up. God speaks all those languages.

You may have heard mention of the different learning styles. If you are a teacher then your lesson plan must include elements that appeal particularly to the visual learner, to the one who learns by listening, to the one who learns by reading and writing, and to the one who learns by doing. God communicates in all those ways.

As a recipient of God's love this means that whatever our age, our cultural background, our emotional condition, God will speak to us in the way that we need – we just need to listen out. Even though all of us have participated in the same service this evening we will in all probability all pick something different as the bit that struck home and which will give us something extra to think about.

As a sharer of God's love, of God's Word, I think this is really encouraging. There is not just one way to share and there is no absolute telling who will hear what in what we say or do. If I'm on Junior Church duty or involved in an All Age Worship, I will have done my best to tailor my tone and my presentation to speak to the youngest as well as those older. However, it could be that what strikes home to the ten year old are the words of the ancient hymn we have sung and not the game I have carefully prepared.

Of course, we should put thought and prayer into our actions and words but God is in charge and the Holy Spirit is in and around us – let us look forward to those moments when God takes us over – who will be more amazed I wonder – us or those we minister to!!!