



HAMILTON PENTECOST 2009
Pastor Lance Steicke
ACTS 2:1-21.

Well, here we are.

Our equivalent of Jerusalem. We're sitting, not here in the Hamilton Lutheran Church, but in the Hamilton Show Grounds.

There's a big event on – not the Jerusalem Sheep Show. Something much bigger than that! It's the Hamilton Sheepvention. And so the town is full of visitors from all other towns, interstate, even overseas.

The last few weeks we've been waiting. That's what Jesus told us to do.

Whilst we've been waiting we've gone out occasionally.

Someone ducked down to Coles or Safeway to buy some bread. A few of us even went fishing.

And we saw Jesus. I kid you not. We did. Oh, I know he died. But we know that he's alive.

And we're not the only ones who have seen him. He has appeared to all of us disciples at some time or other. But on one occasion he appeared to more than 500 at the same time. He's alive alright.

And that's why we're here. He said to go to Jerusalem and wait. Wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

And here we are. On this day of Pentecost.

And it happens.

Woosh. Bang. Close the door. The wind. No, it's not wind. It simply sounds like it.

Fire. Call the fire brigade. No. It's not fire. It looks like fire. What on earth's going on?

So this is it. It's obviously the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Wind. Fire.

And we all start speaking in foreign languages.

Not only languages from all the countries on the shores of the Mediterranean, but all those in proximity of Australia.

New Zealanders Haeremai

New Guineans Wontok

Indonesians – Salamat. Horas

We're speaking their languages

You're drunk, the other citizens of Hamilton say, the sober ones. You Lutherans are drunk. I know you (and they mention a few names which I won't repeat), you're always drunk or close to it.

No we're not. Peter, our fearless leader gets up and speaks. No we're not. We're not drunk. It's not even 9 O'clock. The pub's aren't even open yet.

Well, if you're not drunk, what's going on?

Let me tell you what's going on.

And Peter gets up and he tells them. Boy, how he tells them.

O. T. Scriptures

Jesus.

YOU KILLED THE PRINCE OF PEACE

You are guilty.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

It is, of course, a one-off event. We can re-enact what happened to fit in with a Hamilton context. But it's a one-off event. You can't expect tongues of fire today. You can't expect the rushing mighty wind today. You can't expect instantly to speak in different languages today.

The first Pentecost is a one-off event just as Christmas was a one-off event and Good Friday and Easter Sunday. When we celebrate Christmas we don't have Jesus born again. That was one-off. On Good Friday Jesus only died once and he rose once on Easter Sunday. They were one-off events.

The benefits and blessings are permanent and continuing. Somehow, for some strange reason, some people want the things and events of that first Pentecost to be recurring events.

But this is one-off stuff.

There were all the s's – not Steicke, Schurmann and Schultz, but the three supernatural signs – sound, sight, strange speech.

These three signs – wind, fire, speech – seemed like natural phenomena but they were supernatural both in origin and character.

The noise wasn't wind but it sounded like it.
The sight wasn't fire, but it resembled it.
The speech was in languages that were different.

They were signs - signs of the coming, the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Wind. You can't see the wind, you can't touch it, you can't grab it. But you know it's there. You can hear it, and you can see its results – the tree branches waving in the wind, the leaves being blown around. You can feel the pressure of the wind on you. The wind is there and you pull your coat around you to protect yourself from its icy blast in winter time.

So the Holy Spirit. You can't see him. You can't touch or grab him, but you know he's there. You see the results – in your life and the lives of others.

Fire. You can't see fire. You can't grab it. You try to grab a handful of fire and all you've got is a burnt hand. Like wind it's not a material, physical substance. But fire is powerful. We were reminded of that just last February with the horrific fires here in Victoria. Ask those who have actually experienced a bush fire and they'll tell you how powerful fire can be.

So the Holy Spirit. You can't see him. You can't grab him, but you can see his all-powerful presence and results.

And **speech.** In the rest of this text Luke concentrates on the speech and speeches. And the rest of the Acts of the Apostles focuses on speeches. And the history of Christianity for 2,000 years has focused on speeches, on sermons and studies. Getting the word of God to others.

That's what we're on about. That's Pentecost relived and Pentecost repeated. Getting the word of God to others.

The speeches in this church are about getting the word of God out to people. Pentecost revisited.

And as a congregation we are concerned about getting the word of God out to people.

Pentecost all over again as you talk with a friend or neighbour or relative.

And as an LCA we are on about getting the word of God out to others – media ministry, aboriginal ministry, congregational ministry, overseas ministry.

All of it is our parallel to the Day of Pentecost and to the Acts of the Apostles- getting the word of God out to others in the power of the Holy Spirit,

Speeches. Those speeches can be sermons, but they can also be books, devotional literature, Bible Society publications, conversations over the back yard fence or around the dining table.

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost was based on Scripture, on the prophet Joel. And what Peter was doing was opening their minds from the Scriptures, exactly what Jesus had been doing between Easter and Pentecost.

But before the coming of the Holy Spirit, before Peter's speech, before getting the word out, before all of that there was waiting, waiting on the Lord.

Remember at the Ascension, just before leaving his disciples, Jesus said, **STAY IN THE CITY UNTIL YOU HAVE BEEN CLOTHED WITH POWER FROM ON HIGH.**

And at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles we are told Jesus said to them, **DO NOT LEAVE JERUSALEM BUT WAIT FOR THE GIFT MY FATHER HAS PROMISED, WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD ME SPEAK ABOUT.**

Waiting is waiting with expectation and waiting is waiting with reliance and trust in the Lord.

And you can bet your bottom dollar that while they were waiting they were studying the Scriptures. What had the prophets said? And they would be recalling the words of Jesus. What had the Master said?

WAIT ON THE LORD. That's the encouragement often given in the Bible. That means, look to him, rely on him, trust in him, not in your own strength and power, discover his will in his word.

Waiting is what you as a congregation are doing right now – waiting on the Lord. Of course, you are to wait on the Lord at all times, but there are special times of waiting, times of special need. And one of those times for you is right now.

Waiting on the Lord is hard and it's hard work.

It's hard because it recognizes that things are not in our hands but in the Lords. And it's hard because it requires study and prayer and meditation.

But while waiting is an ongoing thing in the sense of dependence on the Lord, it must also only be a temporary thing. Waiting gave way to Pentecost for the early church. Our waiting is to result in moving forward, and eventually moving out of any introversion there might be to getting the word out to others.

Waiting anticipates the outpouring of the Spirit.

Peter stands up and begins by saying, **IN THE LAST DAYS, GOD SAYS, I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT ON ALL PEOPLE.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit, Lord – on us.

POUR OUT. Not a trickle, not an occasional drop or sprinkle, but a veritable flood. **POUR OUT YOUR SPIRIT LORD.** Flood us. Saturate us with your presence. Fill us with your word so that we are filled with you. Fill us with your word so that getting your word out overflows from us.

We should marvel at the sheer generosity and liberality of the Lord that he does pour out his Spirit in rich and full abundance. No half measures from our gracious, giving and generous God.

Equipped by the Holy Spirit with his gifts, those raw recruits told the story of Jesus like their very lives depended on it.

When we prayed the opening sentence at the beginning of the Service, **Come, Holy Spirit, Lord and giver of life**, we are praying that we take seriously the desire for empowerment and equipping of ourselves for discipleship of Jesus and for getting the word of Jesus out.

Recently I ran across a parable that is somewhat related to all this.

Once upon a time there was a piece of iron, which was very strong and very hard. Many attempts had been made to break it, but all had failed.

"I'll master it," says the axe. And his blows fall heavily upon the piece of iron, but every blow only makes the axe's edge more blunt, until it finally ceases to strike and gives up in frustration.

"Leave it to me," says the saw. And it works back and forth on the iron's surface until its jagged teeth are all worn and broken. Then in despair, the saw quits trying.

"Ah!" says the hammer, "I knew you two wouldn't succeed. I'll show you how to do this!" But at the first fierce blow, off flies its head and the piece of iron remains just as before, proud and hard and unchanged.

"Shall I try?" asks the small soft flame. "Forget it," everyone else says. "What can you do? You're too small and you have no strength." But the small soft flame curls around the piece of iron, embraces it and never leaves it until it melts under its warm irresistible influence.

God's way is not necessarily and only the dramatic way of that first Pentecost with its wind and fire and amazing speeches.

We should not necessarily expect the whoosh of the wind to rush through our church or fire to settle on our heads or even to speak in other languages.

But we should expect changed hearts.

We should expect the way of love, melting our hearts.

Perhaps it means that that is our calling - to melt hearts under the irresistible warmth of God's gracious love as we wait on the Lord and get his word out to others. One thing is certain. Nothing will happen apart from the word of God. That's what Peter used, and the Spirit through him, on the day of Pentecost.

So our prayer will always be, Come O Holy Spirit of God. Melt our hearts. And renew us your people by your word as we get that word out to others and point to Jesus. Amen.