

O the temptation to stand in this pulpit and announce a sermon with 6 points in honour of a certain football match that happened last week! Never fear, we did manage to watch it in Uganda – and even have the Manchester United supporter amongst the group to thank.

Yet that match, as well as the England vs Scotland women's world cup match this afternoon – showcased the hype and expectation around big games of football. It also got me to thinking about Pentecost – the churches birthday – that we celebrate this morning.

Because, like fans before a big game – the disciples too were feeling a sense of anticipation, excitement and expectation in our reading from Acts. They were expecting a promise to be kept.

In the weeks following their experiences at Easter, they had prayed together, and the result had been a gradual growth in wisdom and understanding and a deepening sense of peace and joy. God was at work in them and through them, bringing work a long time coming to fruition.

We hear this morning the words of the doctor Luke, author of the gospel that bears his name also, who saw this moment as a moment of transformation for those who had been gathered in that upper room with Jesus at the last supper, and all that had followed. At Pentecost, the certainty of what they had witnessed, that death had not overcome Jesus, had hardened into a certainty – releasing in them an outpouring of joy. **(Hold up the Liverpool shirt again)**

Did you notice in the reading from Acts that at the confirmation of the Holy Spirit divided tongues of fire are used for one enterprise? That language becomes no barrier to sharing the gospel – the good news – of Christ.

And speaking about good news – Jesus also talks in our gospel reading about great works.

We can run the danger of forgetting the message of Pentecost – and spend too long looking back on what our fore-runners in faith saw as God's power. That is not to dismiss our history – like Luke, who must have struggled to put Pentecost into words – we reach back into our history to give our present meaning. Luke reaches all the way back to the Old Testament, to Mount Sinai, with his language of 'a sound from heaven as of a rushing wind', his description of the tongues of fire evoking the thunder crashing around the mountain top as Moses ascended and descended with the 10 commandments above the cautious eyes of the Israelites gathered below. Our history is a rich resource, but only if it prompts us to use it as a springboard. The virtue of celebrating Pentecost each year is to have the opportunity – again - to listen for God's direction of his people afresh, and so continuing to seek the Holy Spirit in the witness we show as a church.

This church has just supported 18 people – materially, physically, spiritually- drawn from all over our community to reach out to another community in need in Uganda. It grew from 11 last year, by word-of-mouth, by people investing time, donating, talking. That, I suggest, is just one example of the Holy Spirit continuing to be at work among us. There are others, each one that may prove a Pentecost moment for someone.

The promise of Pentecost is that God's works still continue with the spirit he has given us – at our birth, confirmed in our baptisms, renewed at confirmation, that we continually discover throughout our lives, even here, even today.

When we act for others, seeking to model the love of God – we are being the work of Holy Spirit and God's mighty deeds for someone. Even if we aren't in the best place to act, our actions and words speak of God. From such small seeds grow - to be noticed by others. The deeds of God that we know to be worthwhile – compassion for the poor, the outcast, the refugee, love for our neighbour -

should be done courageously, confident as our gospel reading says 'the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father'.

What an encouragement for each of us!

I'll be at the cathedral next week for the Leaver's service of schools around the diocese – including our own children from TSP. They do a song from the Lion King 2 which always ends up as my ear-worm and it says: 'There's no mountain too great, Hear these words and have faith, He lives in you, He lives in me, He watches over everything we see. Into the water, Into the truth, in your reflection, He lives in you'.

Archbishop John Tillotson (1691-1694) once said 'the soul of humanity is an active principle and will be employed one way or another; it will be doing something'.

For the apostles at Pentecost, they were compelled into doing something. The active part of their soul became aligned with the energy of God, and they were able to proclaim the gospel to the crowds gathered – in all their different languages. To their surprise as well as the crowds, I suspect!

The story of Pentecost should become our ear-worm – where do you come into contact with the energy of God? How do we show God's love to people in all of the myriad places we visit? Where is a holy spirit that encourages, equips and prompts us both in and outside our church?

I'll finish by summing it up like this – the Spirit of Pentecost dwells in us and prompts us to continue the work of God – wherever and who-ever we are. The story of Pentecost should be the ear-worm that reminds that the Holy Spirit, as we recognise it working in ourselves and in our fellow Christians results in the continual fulfilment of Christ's promise to his disciples his promise to his disciples – that, not limited to Liverpool fans, they never walk alone, and will continue to do extraordinary things.

Amen.