

Chat with the Children: Power

- Batteries!
 - chat about batteries, about power, about what happens when the batteries are not in something, about how you can get new batteries (shop, recharge...)
- Chat about torches/lights:
 - what are they meant to do/help with - casting light...
- *Christians are lightbulbs without power if we are not filled by the Holy Spirit*
 - *we cast no light, we don't show people Jesus....*

Introduction

- There is an intense feeling of **anticipation** in this passage at the start Acts:
 - something is on the way, and though it is nearly here it has not quite arrived yet!
- Not unlike a couple of experiences I had **during the process of coming here**:
 - during the process of applying I felt a strong sense of excitement and anticipation; not quite a certainty that things would work out as they did, but certainly very positive!!
 - the week running up to the first interview was **General Assembly** week, and I was a commissioner;
 - **during the course of the week I met at least two people who had strong connections to Fintry, who I really wanted to tell, but couldn't!!**
- Sense of **excitement, anticipation**, but what was coming had **not yet come to fruition**, to completion, to the point where it could be talked about openly
- That's where the disciples were as we come to the beginning of Acts:
 - **Jesus has risen, there is good news to share, and yet it isn't quite the time!**
 - Jesus has told them to wait...

Why not the time?

- **Because the Holy Spirit has not come yet**
 - and Acts 1:1-11 sets out Jesus own reasons why the disciples should wait for the Spirit's coming
 - there are several things this passage highlights about the work of the anticipated Holy Spirit, which we'll look at just now:

Spirit Clothed (Acts 1:4, 5)

- First is that the disciples were to be **clothed in the Spirit**:
- Not all that many here have had the misfortune to see me in my **cycling gear**:
 - doesn't just change way I look (**RoboCop!!**)
 - also **changes what I can do** - cycle comfortably, safely, in wet weather...

Spirit clothes/covers/changes disciples

- The coming Spirit will have a profound effect on the disciples:
 - v.5 "**baptised with the Holy Spirit**"
 - He **immerses, deluges, covers, fills** and **cleanses** them
- They became **spiritual people**, full of the dynamic of God and the character of Jesus
 - **changed in who they are**, in their innermost beings;
 - and also **changed in what they could do**, take on
- The Spirit's clothing, deluging, immersing us also changes who we are and what we can take on:
 - **small congregation, large parish....**

Spirit Motivated (Acts 1:8)

- Second aspect of the Spirit's work that is highlighted is that the Spirit **motivates**
- **Have you ever met someone motivated by some clear goal?**
 - studying for exams, to get entry into a College course, or to get a degree;
 - to get a promotion;
 - to save for a holiday or for an extension on the house...
- That **motivation** changes the way they **behave!**
 - work hard, get up early, self-discipline not to spend, or whatever...

Spirit Motivates disciples

- "You will be my witnesses"
- The Holy Spirit puts in us a desire to **share** and to **be good news** in word and deed (Acts 2:14; 1 Cor 9:16)
 - (Acts 2:14) *Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say...."*
 - (1 Cor 9:16) *Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!*
- There is a compulsion that changes our behaviour
- A number of years ago I **witnessed a robbery** in a small corner shop near where I stayed; the robbers were detained, and in time the **case came to court:**
 - I was called upon to **bear witness** to what I had seen
 - extremely nerve wracking experience!!
 - responsibility to **tell what I'd seen!**
 - not to do so in an eloquent way, or to add my own spin!
- I was a witness, I couldn't do anything about it, I had seen what I had seen:
 - and as a result **I was constrained to speak**
- Like it or not, **we are witnesses to what Jesus has done in our own lives**
 - the Spirit **motivates** us, **constrains** us, to tell our story, to say what the Lord has done in & for us
- We no longer seek our glory, but that of Jesus

Spirit Empowered (Acts 1:8)

- The third thing the Spirit does (after clothing & motivating) is to **empower us:**
- There is **electrical equipment everywhere**, very used to it...
 - remarkable how easy it is to go wrong, to not plug it in and wonder why it isn't working...
 - baby-sitter, bulb blew, tripped circuit, side lights on but main lights off - left sitting in semi-darkness because they didn't know how to restore power to the circuit!
 - **or us flooding washing machine and tripping out power in Motherwell when we'd just moved in - didn't know where to reset the power!!**
- Hidden power we all rely on

Spirit Empowers disciples

- The Christian gospel is powerful - it changes people
- It is demonstrated as well as preached, both in lifestyle and at times in mighty acts
- Without the Spirit's power, our mission is limited
- **We cannot:**
 - speak effectively for him;
 - bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (**love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control**)
 - nor use the gifts of the Spirit - gifts of words of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, prophecy, spiritual discernment, tongues, administration...
 - *....without his aid*
- But **the Spirit is given to empower us**, to give the ability to take on what would otherwise be impossible

Spirit Directed (Acts 1:8)

- Finally, the Spirit **directs us**:
- Folk came to visit Helen in hospital shortly after Mark was born - **got lost!!**
 - **asked for directions**, but maybe no one in Bellshill is any good at giving them directions, or they weren't listening very well...
- Without direction, you won't hit mark!

Spirit directs disciples

- Starting in Jerusalem, the **commission is to take the good news everywhere**
- This is not a nationalistic mandate (v.6) but a world mandate
 - the book of Acts tells how the Spirit directed the believers to fulfil that commission
 - **tells the story of the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem, first through Judea and Samaria, thence to the ends of the earth**
- We do not need a fresh call to take part in that mission; the world awaits our response to the commission already given
- The call here is to take the message not just to those **physically at a distance**, but also to those **"beyond the pale"**, outside our **comfort zone**
 - not just to China or Nepal or Peru or Ethiopia...
 - but also to **Dundee**, to **Fintry**, to **neighbours** who don't see things our way, to the **youngsters** who we struggle to know how to cope with as they muck around in our church grounds...

Conclusion

- *G K Chesterton said: "We do not want, as the newspapers say, a Church that will move with the world. What we want is a Church that will move the world"*
- **How do we become such a church?**
 - by the Spirit at work in us: drenching our lives, motivating us, empowering us, directing us
- *Martin Luther King said: "Most Christians are thermometers that record or register the temperature of majority opinion, not thermostats that transform and regulate the temperature of society."*
- **How do we become world movers, thermostats, agents of change???**
 - by **letting the Spirit fill our lives**, allowing him to motivate us, direct us and empower us
 - may God grant us such an openness to the Spirit that he will transform us!