

## Family Service

### Introduction

- Who has ever been on the London Underground?
  - what do you remember about it?
  - ... *"Mind the Gap!"!!!*
- The history of humanity is the history of a yawning gap:
  - not the gap between a platform edge and an underground train!
  - but the gap between God and humanity, between holiness and sin tainted men and women.
- Since earliest times, people have instinctively tried to bridge that gap, reaching out for the divine, for something or someone beyond mere mortality.
  - the passage we read earlier speaks of the final piece in the bridge over that gap being put in place: for that was one aspect of what Pentecost was all about!
  - in the Cross, Christ has paid the price for our sin, paving the way for humans to come into God's presence;
  - in the Resurrection, he has defeated death, and declared God's victory in triumph!
  - and in the coming of the Holy Spirit he has filled us and marked us as his own - the final piece in the bridge!
- So, as the final act in God's bridging of the gap between himself and us, it marks two things:
  - the completion of all that is past;
  - and the preparation for all that is to come.
- We'll explore each of these two dimensions this morning ...

### Completion

*Acetate for all these...*

#### Creation Revisited

- At Creation, the Breath of God brooded over the waters ....
  - now God's breath / Spirit broods over the chaos of the lives of a group of very ordinary people, and creates a people with new life!

#### God's Presence

- In OT, presence located in pillar of cloud/fire, or later in Tabernacle/Ark, or later in the Holy of Holies in the Temple.
  - now God's presence is not limited to a place, a building, but is within every single of his people (v.3 - on each of them!)

#### Giving of Law

- In OT, God's direction for life, the Law, was given on Mt Sinai with much thunder and lightning, earthquake and fire:
  - but the result was an awesome separation between God and man, because God's standards were impossibly high!
- Here at Pentecost, we have the thunder and the fire:
  - but instead of separation the coming of the Spirit marks God's closeness with his people;
  - not merely guiding by rules and regulations, but walking with us every step of the way - a guide who walks with us rather than a map we have to interpret!

#### Babel Reversed

- In the OT, one of the classic marks of the separation that sin brings, not least between people, comes in the story of Babel:
  - build a tower, bring glory to selves;
  - able, since all working together;
  - pride!
  - God has to separate them into peoples, speaking different languages.
- Here at Pentecost, that separation is reversed:
  - strangers can hear God's people speaking with one, gloriously comprehensible, language - speaking forth God's glory!

- Where the OT pointed out the problem, and began to sketch in God's answer to the separation between God and man - which is the universe's ultimate problem....
  - .... Pentecost marks the completion of all of God's plan of salvation, the sorting out of all the things warped by sin.
  - the pivot (Jesus: life, death, resurrection & sending HS) round which all history hinges.

**More later!!**

## Preparation

*Pictures for younger ones to colour in*

- Just as much as the completion of all that God has started, marks the beginning of the new way of doing things!
- When the Scottish Parliament was started a few years back, there was a lot of talk about there being a new way of politics:
  - consensus rather than confrontation;
  - cooperation rather than competition.
- Whether you believe much of it, it was certainly hyped up as a turning point that marked a new beginning, a completely new way of doing things.
- And that is exactly what the Spirit's coming at Pentecost is too!
  - God is coming and saying, I the Creator Spirit of the whole vast universe am going to come and live in YOU! ... Peter, Andrew, James...
  - a new way of doing things that continues today... He comes to dwell in each and every Christian!
- God is saying:
  - I am with you and in you!
  - I am showing you the way to live!
  - I have reversed the alienation, between you and me, and between you & others!
  - I have recreated you!

## Playing with Fire!

- What a wonderful new start, what a wonderful preparation for all our lives as Christians!  
**BUT:**
- As Donald Coggan, former Archbishop of Canterbury, put it:
  - "I believe in the surprises of the Holy Spirit. Why should we think that God's imagination and love might be exhausted? ... But wind and fire are never safe elements! They are full of risk and danger... What will it mean for me when the wind and fire of the Holy Spirit come upon my sinfulness and selfishness, only I can find out in a personal encounter with the living God."
- Just as playing with fire is a potentially dangerous and always unpredictable business - fireworks!! - so is dealing with the Holy Spirit.
  - for sometimes his desire is to turn our lives upside down and recreate them in unpredictable ways!
- Designers from "Changing Rooms" - would you have courage to let them + neighbours loose in your house?
  - but at their best they can do some amazing transformations!
- **Let God's Spirit loose in your life, asking him to take your hand and lead you forward in your journey of faith, never knowing quite where he will take you, but always sure of the safety of excitement of his presence with you!**