

Wind Power

- *Play wind sound effect*
- Can't see the wind, obviously:
 - but see how many ways we can think of that show us that the wind exists!
 - (take suggestions)
- Examples: leaves, trees moving, sound, windmills, clouds moving, waves on sea, feel it directly when walking, grass billowing, sand on beach, kite, kite-surfers at St Andrew's beach...
- Today's Bible passage is all about something truly incredible that happened when a sound like a strong wind filled a room where where Jesus' disciples were meeting
 - it was a short while after Jesus' resurrection
 - he'd left them alone, going back to heaven - what we thought of last week
 - and remember we said he'd **promised** to send the Holy Spirit

And what happened?

- As they met, Holy Spirit came with a sound like a rushing wind and tongues of fire came down on the disciple's heads
 - and as they were filled with the Holy Spirit, the disciples began to speak in other languages
 - and as they did that, lots of other people in Jerusalem, who weren't friends of Jesus, heard them speaking - each one in their own language!
 - and they wondered what was happening!
 - so Jesus' friends began to explain about Jesus' death and resurrection, given courage by the Holy Spirit!
- **And today we are celebrating together God's gift of the Holy Spirit**
 - **not just given to the disciples long ago, but to us today too!**

Power from on High

- We are familiar with this story - one of the "calendar events" of the Christian Year!
 - this is the 3rd time I've preached on this passage in the morning service since I've been in Fintry!
- Like Christmas and Easter, our familiarity with the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost can blind us to the awesome power that was on display that day
 - how would we have felt if one of our congregational gatherings was suddenly blown apart by the sound of a mighty wind?
 - and if what looked like tongues of fire were moving around in all directions?
 - my only experience of tongues of fire was at a CU Carol Service in Edinburgh as a student when we had a few too many tea-lights/candles, and made a pretty good job of setting the wooden floor of the chaplaincy centre alight!
 - we were more interested in extinguishing the fire!!
- **Panic and confusion would be our most likely responses:**
 - we would instinctively recognise that we were in the presence of something more powerful than us
 - but power is not something that is necessarily comfortable to be around, for we like to be in control of what is happening to us!
- That recognition of power is indeed **part of** an appropriate response to the Spirit's power
 - but on the day of Pentecost it was **someone** rather than **something** that burst in on the disciples
 - the Holy Spirit, not merely God's impersonal power
 - one of the Godhead, equally divine, and equally personal, as God the Father and Jesus himself
 - he is indeed to be feared - in the sense that "the fear of the Lord is beginning of wisdom" (Prov 1:7)

- but he is to be known, to be welcomed...
- he comes in the context of relationship, relationship with God, and as part of that relationship
- he comes to those who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour, accepted his death on their behalf, he comes to those who have entered into God's family
- and he comes to equip us to live as God's people
- there is power - and it is power with a purpose

Power with a Purpose

- And what is that purpose?
 - the Spirit comes to bring glory and honour and attention to Jesus
 - and his power is deployed so that this happens
 - here, he gives the ability to speak in other languages so that people can hear the gospel message of Jesus dying for their sins in their mother tongue
 - the visitors to Jerusalem, drawn there for the Passover, could hear this message clearly, unambiguously
 - and what was the message? "the wonders of God in our own tongues!" (v.11)
- And not just the languages spoken demonstrate the empowering of the Spirit:
 - so also the fact of their holy boldness to speak out...
 - where they had been hiding in upper rooms, afraid of arrest, afraid they too might suffer the same fate as their Lord, now they are preaching to the crowds!
- The Spirit is given to us that we might be empowered to fulfil God's purposes for our lives and for his world

Power to God's People Today

- We are living in a post-Pentecost era
 - the same Holy Spirit is working in us and through us today as was working in the disciples that first Pentecost
- There are difficult issues today about the work of the Spirit:
 - should we be seeing the Spirit work in the same way outward ways today as he did in 1st Century Judea?
 - or is the Holy Spirit now working through us in fresh ways because our situation is different?
 - or does the Holy Spirit work in different people and different churches in different ways, so that in one church people sing praise to God in unknown tongues, in another teachers are given prominence, in another workers of miracles?
- These are not easy issues to grapple with:
 - not only are there Scriptural issues to deal with... what are the gifts? what do they look like today? Are particular gifts necessary, or possible? And so on!
 - but there are also personal and historical issues, issues to do with our heritage as individuals and as a congregation, issues to do with how we love one another and have a concern for one another's consciences
- And this is not the passage to really engage fully with those issues from:
 - (1 Corinthians 12-14 is one key place to look, and one I've been grappling with myself recently - our worship here looks thoroughly unbiblical compared to what is assumed there, but I'm not sure how or whether to get from here to there!)
- Whatever conclusion we come to on all of that, what is certainly clear and our responsibility, is to be open to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our own lives
 - not to think things through as a merely academic exercise...
 - not to ignore those promptings and signs of the Spirit challenging us, changing us, chivvying us...
 - so that our lives bring glory to Jesus Christ, our words proclaim him afresh with living spiritual power to our own generation