

Address – 23/6/24

'The Fruit of the Spirit'

“Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” (Romans 8:5)

Over these last weeks since Pentecost we have been thinking about the work of the Holy Spirit in us and among us.

We remembered how Jesus took up the words of the Prophet Isaiah - “The Spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor” - and we recognised that the Holy Spirit anoints us also to share the Gospel of transformation with those around us in our time.

We acknowledged the work of the Spirit from eternity bringing order out of chaos, light out of darkness and life from the dust and we celebrated that that same, astonishing creative work is going on still in our world and in our lives today.

We thought about the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing to our understanding the things of Christ and took on our lips that ancient and most powerful of prayers: Come, Holy Spirit, asking that we would be set on fire with the love of God in its fullness.

We recognised the full extent of the kind of transformation that the Holy Spirit brings to our lives if we allow God to take the reins of our lives, setting us free from earth-bound restrictions to live our our heavenly citizenship.

And last week, in the context of the visit of Ruth Jack from MAF, we thought about how the Holy Spirit takes each one of us and appoints us to a huge variety of tasks whether in our own neighbourhood or on the other side of the world so that the Kingdom of God may grow.

In the context of what we have already been speaking about the Fruit of the Spirit with the young folks I want to bring us right back to the heart of the work of the Holy Spirit in the world and to the call that is upon each one of us to enter into a relationship with the living God in Jesus Christ and to grow and grow in that relationship, day after day, week upon week, year following year, for it is in the growing faith and service of individuals that the Church grows and that the Kingdom of God grows in the world.

We return briefly this morning to some verses from Romans chapter 8 this morning and to consider how vital it is for each one of us to open ourselves to the influence of the Holy Spirit every single day in life – in fact, in every moment and with every breath.

We have spoken about the fact that the words the Bible uses for the Spirit are also words for air, breath, wind. The Hebrew word *ruach* which we encountered in the very opening chapter of the Bible in the story of Creation means breath or wind and the Greek word *pneuma* is the word that gives us pneumatic (as in drill or tyre) because it is dependent upon air. As Christians we can no more live without the Holy Spirit than we can do without air to breathe and yet for how many of us are our spiritual tyres completely flat?

What is an apple tree if it has no apples on it? What use are strawberry plants if they do not produce strawberries? What are we as Christians if there is no fruit of the Spirit evident in us? In that passage we read this morning, Paul says starkly that “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ they do not belong to Christ.” (Rom.8:9)

“Those who live according to the flesh, says Paul, have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” (Rom.8:5) And if we allow the Holy Spirit to have His way within us and among us and through us, then like the lung of one who has been given the kiss of life or like an inflated tyre or a yacht in full sail we will find ourselves empowered to fulfil what has thus far only been potential.

If we have our minds set on what the Holy Spirit desires rather than on what our bodies yearn for or our flawed human nature dictates then by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (and that word 'inspiration' even means breathing in) we will find ourselves, almost literally despite ourselves, displaying the fruit of the Spirit: love... joy... peace... patience... kindness... goodness... faithfulness... gentleness... self-control.

Breathe in and let God fill you by the Spirit. Breathe out and let the fruit of the Spirit be seen in all you are. Breathe in and let God fill you by the Spirit. Breathe out and let the fruit of the Spirit be seen in all you are. Repeat.