

# Sunday Thought

5th June 2022 Pentecost Sunday

## Readings

Acts 2: 1 - 21  
Psalm 104: 24 - 34, 35b  
Romans 8: 14 - 17  
John 14: 8 - 17

## Early Harvest

In Ukraine the harvest is another very important topic of conversation. Both the gathering of this year's harvest and the movement of last year's grain. Not many of us had realised how much a hungry world depends on that fertile, productive land or how grain and fertilizer could become massive weapons of war in the hands of a ruthless aggressor. We celebrate Pentecost today. On the fiftieth day after Passover this festival, known also as the *Feast of Weeks or Shavuot*, celebrates the giving of God's Law to Moses on Sinai and the earlier of the land's two harvest thanksgivings – the feast between the ingathering of the barley and the wheat.



It is several years now since I overheard a conversation between farmers at market. One affirmed positively, *'It's going to be a grand harvest this year!'* He had obviously calculated that all the conditions were right – the weather, the workforce, the markets, and the machinery. His companions were hesitant to agree! It seemed a strong statement of faith to make before the last load of grain had left his farm. I imagine one of Jesus' first disciples, maybe Philip, who was likely a tradesperson, after hearing Peter's Pentecost Sermon and witnessing the enthusiastic response to it, saying *'It's going to be a grand harvest!'* Like the farmer, he could make his claim because he believed the conditions were right. The Pentecost story in our Acts reading today makes that clear. The text gives us clues. The first *'followers of the Way'* were of one mind and heart. Of course, that may not mean they were all happy with each other's company. There were many raw memories which could yet take time to heal. Some had probably been supportive of Iscariot's patriotic views; James and John may have retained aspirations to leadership; Peter had let down Jesus and himself and all of them had deserted their Lord in some way. Fifty days of Upper Room prayer and shared company, hearing and recalling the Master's words, had changed all that. Forgiveness, reconciliation, learning, affirming, and growing together had unified them in the love and power of Jesus. They were ready for the Spirit of God to possess and enable them, beginning with a magnificent *'fireworks'* display which blew open the doors of the upper room to send first Christians tumbling downstairs into a busy city – into a world waiting – even longing for the good news of God's Son – the Saviour.

The rest of the 'right conditions' for receiving the Holy Spirit, like the weather for the grain harvest, were in God's hands - not least the management of 'timing'. The festival had drawn together Jewish worshippers from across the world. Just at that time the city was full of traders, visitors of other faiths and tourists wanting to see the new temple buildings. It was every preacher's dream - a city-centre marketplace crowded with people asking for an open-air sermon!! *'What this all about? What's happening among these Jesus people?'* Peter explained how this was fulfilment of words by prophet Joel, telling how the powerful truth of God's grace would grip all ages. Even children and visionary young people would shout the message while the old folks dreamed of a world under divine rule again. Miracles and wonders would occur among people of every social status and race, proving the message.

The Pentecost experience has been repeated many times in the Church's history and God's people have been ready with the right conditions - prayer, vision, faith, unity, reconciliation, and hearts open to the Spirit of Jesus. Paul reiterates that in his words to believers in Rome. A living, active, meaningful Christian life is a life open to God's Spirit - the Spirit of Jesus, drawing us into the Father's one family as his fearless, free, and blessed children. The Gospel reading today offers a final summary. Jesus had been talking about a personal knowledge of his heavenly Father. Excited, Philip responded straight away, *'Show us the Father. That would mean everything! It will answer all our questions!'* Jesus replied, *'Philip. Just look at me! Don't you understand. The things I do are God things! The words I speak are God words! The father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father! In the same way I will be in you and you in me. By his Spirit all are his children. It's true for anyone who believes in me! Trust me. Just ask me. It will be true for you and bring glory to God in so many ways!'*

Pentecost literally means 'fifty' days after Passover. It doesn't take so many days or even minutes to put Jesus at the heart of my life and know I am a child of God, ready to share some of the sparks of the Christian Pentecost!

A Prayer of Creation Praise (with Psalm 104 in mind)

Lord! Creator God!  
Through Christ Jesus you made and ordered everything;  
Through him you have made all things new,  
in a world of constant death and resurrection to new life.  
We marvel at your wisdom  
causing all things to relate to each other,  
making us dependent upon and careful for all the earth,  
and all its life forms, small and great, seen and unseen.  
We will seek to give you praise and joy  
in our caring, using and sharing of all you have provided for us.  
We will praise you with all our life, for all our life.



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