

St Paul's Pentecost 2026

Acts 2.1-21. John 20.19-23

Today we are **celebrating Pentecost**, the giving of the Spirit, one of the big feasts of the Church. Yesterday I went on a **March for Jesus** led by Graham Kendrick, which was a gathering to mark it. We are looking at 2 accounts of it: **Luke and John**, Luke giving the classic historical account and John a more abstract account.

Luke's account in Acts begins "*When the day of Pentecost arrived,*". It was a feast in the Jewish calendar when everyone gathered. In fact, it was one of the **3 major feasts** they were commanded to celebrate in the law of Moses. There was Passover celebrating their deliverance from slavery, Pentecost 50 days after marking the giving of the law, and Tabernacles which is the great harvest festival at the end of the year. But the 3 all have much bigger meanings. Passover is when Jesus saved us from our sin and reconciled us to God. Tabernacles is the harvest at the end of the age when Jesus comes again and his people then tabernacle with him forever. So what is Pentecost? When Luke says: "*When the day of Pentecost arrived,*" he is also saying, this is the **fulfilment of that day**.

It is when God **pours out his Spirit on humanity**. Peter explains it, quoting from Joel in the OT, "*And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh*". It is not all flesh meaning everyone in the world, it's the people of God: "*your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*" It will be given to **all God's people** all over the world, young and old. On the day, everyone filled with the Spirit speak in different **languages** so that those around understand them, which is a sign it will be for all peoples around the world.

In the **OT**, the Spirit was **just on a few people**, basically prophets. David was a prophet, Moses, Elijah and Jeremiah. But from the time of Jesus, all God's people were to have the Spirit. So we all have the Spirit. If you believe in Jesus, you have the Spirit. At the end of Peter's sermon, the crowd ask: "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.*" Pentecost is God pouring out his Spirit on all his people.

Let's now look at it in the **John** account. It is the Day of Resurrection. **Jesus has appeared to Mary** Magdalene. In the evening, he appears to the Apostles. He **breathed** on them and said to them, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*"

John often takes a **different angle** to the other gospels. Here he describes the giving of the Spirit as from Jesus. The big giving of the Spirit was on Pentecost 50 days later. But Jesus may well have breathed on the disciples and said these words, and John is picking this up to show some other really significant aspects of it.

Jesus breathing on them I believe is picking up from **Genesis 2**. In the second creation story, God makes man from the dust of the earth, and then it says: "*and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being*". Here in Genesis it was his breathing on man that gave him life. The picture is he was just physical substance, then God gave him **breath** and he became a **living being**. The word for breath is the same as the **word for spirit. Ruach** - spirit, wind or breath. It could be that as God breathed on him, he was also **giving him spirit**. So that all humanity has a spirit. We can say someone is **spirited (lively)** or low in spirit or even crushed in spirit. Spirit is the **LIFE ENERGY**.

At the **Resurrection and Pentecost, it is a new beginning, like** a new creation. As God breathed on man then, Jesus now breathes on his disciples again. And this time he is giving them his own spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. When he **breathes on** them, he says "*Receive the Holy Spirit*". This is **what it was always for**. The first creation is wonderful, but it points to an even greater reality, God and humanity together, paradise.

It is the **first day of the week**, which is symbolic for John. The risen Jesus has come to **Mary in the garden**, which is remembering Eden. And now he comes into the room to his disciples and he says *“as the Father sent me, so I send you”*, and then he gives them the Holy Spirit. The Father sent the Son, with the Spirit, and the Son now gives us the Spirit and **sends us**. There is a **new relationship** and connection with God, and there is a new **LIFE ENERGY**. We have God’s Spirit **empowering us and enlivening us**. You may feel old, and getting tired more easily, but God’s Spirit will give you all the energy you need to do the things he calls you to do. And with God’s spirit is not only energy and power, but **also authority**. Jesus then says: *“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”* We have God’s Spirit, we go in his name, and so we **have his authority**. We can speak against the powers of darkness, we can speak freedom to people, and we can stand strong as the people of God.

Since Pentecost, we God’s people **have his Spirit**. **So let’s learn** to live in the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, and to **have that energy** and authority that comes from the Spirit.

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