

SERMON: 2018/05/20 (Pentecost Sunday, Year B) - Acts 2:1-21 & John 15:26-27;16:4b-15\_BTR

[Prepare Pyro-mini. Hide rugby-ball beneath the lectern.]

Yesterday something very important happened;

certainly the people on TV were excited:

there was a wedding in a very old, special church between a prince and an ordinary woman from a country and a background very different to his own; and when two people get married it changes their lives; it makes them, says Jesus - in the Bible - into a new kind of person, forever transformed and forever different

[Mt. 19:6/Mk. 10:8]: a new kind of *creature*.

And today we hear about something similar happening to the Apostles - the twelve friends of Jesus: and this is the story of the events of the Day of Pentecost (in the *Book of Acts*), which is, I think, one of the most important and instructive in (Holy) Scripture;

and certainly *very* memorable!

(I'm sure most of you know it already.)

Peter, Andrew, James, Matthias and all the rest were huddled in a small room.

They had a plan;\*

and they knew that they were supposed to do what Jesus had asked them to do - to be *holy* people [see: e.g. Lev. 11:44a/1 Pet. 1:16] and, specifically, as part of that, to 'proclaim the good news [about His crucifixion and resurrection] to the whole creation', [Mk. 16:15].

But they were nervous.

*Afraid*. [Acts. 5:26]

They were worried about looking different; *being* different.

About what their friends might say.

About the sacrifices of *discipleship* - about trying something new and failing at it.

And they were curious about a promise that Jesus had made them: to send them a *powerful* person that He called "The Advocate" to help them be men that were worthy of God's 'abundant' love.

And they were whispering to one-another, and debated and argued, *suddenly* a 'violent' gust of wind rushed into the room and there was *fire* in the air! [Discharge the Pyro-mini x2]

It was the Holy Spirit!

And He disappeared into each one of them, *sanctifying* them: which means, making them *saints*.

It was wonderful!

Now, to us, the miraculous, fantastical part of this tale might be hard to believe. But if you've ever been baptised, something similar has actually happened to you too - and you mightn't even have realized it! [Mk. 1:8] [n.1]

And this is the point of Pentecost today.

That anyone who loves Jesus and had been baptised in His name and that of His father and the Spirit, has amazing, *transformative* power inside of them, which can make you into a new kind of person too: [Eph. 5:26] [n.2]

[Pause.]

I used to play rugby.

That was my game.

And, for a few years, I was pretty good at it.

But, to you Americans, I suppose it is a bit of a mystery.

Like cricket or scones and clotted-cream: an English "exotic."

But it is quite simple, really.

The idea is to take this ball and place it over the "touch line" at the (far) end of the the opposition's half of the (playing-)field.

And you can get it there by running with it in hand;

by kicking it forward; or, by throwing it backwards to another member of your team.

And that's an important detail(!):

That you aren't alone but have a team with you.

Because between you and a winning score are 15 burly, aggressive "bruisers" intent on stopping you (- like sin and self-doubt in real life).

And they're going to trip you up, pull you down and push you out of play.

And you could try and do everything yourself, but you aren't going to get very far.

How could you?!

No, no one wins this game by themselves: even the very best athletes are

overwhelmed and, eventually, "ground down" into a muddy, exhausted heap.

But a team! A team can do it.

And Pentecost - being baptised - having the Holy Spirit-means that no Christian is ever *truly* alone:

No, from now on, wherever you go, you are - if you have faith - *always* a team:

because you've got God living inside [2 Cor. 6:16a] [tap the chest of a couple of children]. - just like Caroline and Wyatt's mum, Shay.

Footnotes:

\* See last week's message and the (foot-)note about Eusebius.

1. See: Stott, John (1998), 'The Evangelical Doctrine of Baptism', *The Churchman*, Volume 112, No. 1, available at [http://archive.churchsociety.org/churchman/documents/Cman\\_112\\_1\\_Stott.pdf](http://archive.churchsociety.org/churchman/documents/Cman_112_1_Stott.pdf) (accessed May 19, 2018).
2. '...baptism...its basic NT meaning as the decisive transition from an old way of life to a new way of life...' - George, Timothy (2006), 'Foreword', in Schreiner, Thomas R. & Wright, Shawn D. (Eds.), *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, Nashville, T. N.: B. & H. Academic, xvii.