

## Sermon: 2020/05/31 (PENTECOST, Year A) - *John 7:37-39 & Acts 2:1-11\_BTR*

Something *very* exciting has happened.

Do you know what it is?

Well, you might be thinking that I have in mind current affairs.

Specifically, the fact that, for the first time in *many* years, America has flown / is in a position to fly, from the homeland, its own rockets with astronauts to space.

This hasn't happened since 2011.

We've been using Russian-made equipment, lifting-off from the wide, flat, high-altitudes of Kazakhstan and such like.

Of course, many people have been "up there."

In that dark, cold yawning vacuum above the atmosphere.

566 people from 41 countries, in fact: [n.1].

So, that's "old news."

What *is* historically unprecedented - a first - is that Americans will now go into orbit using a 'commercially provided' vehicle (created by a private company): [n.2].

A "vehicle" - a rocket - that is reusable!

It goes up vertically, as you'd expect; *and then* comes back the same way!

As if somebody put the tape-recorder in rewind.

And this is thrilling to think about, isn't it?

*Spaceships...*

*Space travel...*

The "Final Frontier" (as Captain Luc Picard calls it on the long-running TV show, *StarTrek*.)

And doing things this way - this collaboration between the government (NASA) and profit-driven entrepreneurs like Elon Musk - is *genuinely* embarking on a new era.

NBC calls it a 'cosmic-size shift' for humanity: [n.3].

But I'm not *actually* thinking of any of this.

No, I'm referring to what was described in our *Acts* reading.

Something *much* more consequential took place that day.

And I'm *not* (even) meaning the tongues of flame, which hovered over the heads of the Apostles, enabling them to speak in a multitude of non-native languages - though that is, patently, amazing.

Indeed, when I think back to how I struggled at school, learning French, I *wish* that God would have done something similar for me.

But I digress!

No, the *real* miracle is something more subtle.

*Deeper.*

You might even miss it given the dramatic, eye-catching pyrotechnics of the episode.

In fact, it wasn't even visible straightaway; you only really notice it as time passes.

But it becomes *extremely* obvious - "obvious" and unmistakable - later.

The "real" miracle, on Pentecost, was the creation of a brand, new species.

For this "brand new species" the raw material, on that occasion, wasn't dust of the ground - as (the Book of) *Genesis* describes Adam being made.

Nor was it some sort of monkey, as evolutionists would have it.

It wasn't "natural selection."

There were no random genetic mutations over millions of generations, interacting with environmental stimuli.

The "raw material" was the Apostles.

12 god-fearing Jews.

12 god-fearing Jews who had witnessed astonishing things.

12 god-fearing Jews whose lives had been transformed by God in human flesh.

12 god-fearing Jews who realized that everything was meaningless without Jesus at the centre of their lives.

*They* were the beginning of a "brand new species" that reproduces itself not by sex - though that can be part of it - but, *really*, by the sharing of a promise.

Members of this "brand new species," to be clear, *look* like human beings.

They *sound* like human beings.

They move like them (on two legs).

They *feel* like them.

(Some more squishy than others.)

Hair on the top - usually.

About 32 teeth, more-or-less.

Red blood.

A vivid, marvellous array of skin colours and textures.

But the difference - *and its massive!* - is that when the (divine) Holy Spirit infused those 12 biological men that day, it made *real* the promise of the Cross.

The "promise" of the Cross - of Jesus' sacrifice, absorbing our sins - was of a sinless "Elect."

(Capital "e.")

A royal priesthood of servants for the Lord who would shine - by exemplary moral conduct - as a "city on a hill."

(This project was *thousands* of years in the making.)

Trusting in Christ's sacrifice, confessing my need of it cleanses not just my soul but my past; my history:

it declares I'm a new person in the eyes of God: justification.

That I'm part of that Elect.

One of those royal, "priestly" servants.

Perfect.

Like Eve and her husband *before* the Fall.

Now, I hope that I'm part of this group.

But of course, if you know me, you'll be aware that there's something of a disconnect - a...dislocation.

You might think, on occasion, that my Christianity; my *faith* is of little significance.

My habits and so on probably, *certainly initially* - stepping out on the journey of discipleship, will seem greatly like those outside of the Church.

Indeed, you might think that being filled with the Holy Spirit is a bit like what happened on Wednesday - the first attempt to launch Falcon 9:

*That* rocket stayed on the ground.

I know: I watched - *live*.

The astronauts - having been driven all that way in those expensive, electric cars, having climbed that tall tower, having been strapped in by a whole team of technicians - dressed like ninjas with little American flags on their shoulders - got out again.

(Of the capsule.)

Looked sheepish.

Waved at the cameras.

And went home.

I saw it all.

Like an excited young boy.

Their rocket didn't move.

Nothing happened.

I watched hours of TV with no result.

But in *that* room - 'th[at] room upstairs' in Jerusalem - among those men and women - something really *did* change.

*They* did.

They weren't themselves after.

Despite appearances.

The multilingual thing was cool to be sure; *and* useful.

Very much so.

The "groundwork" for the worldwide Church we see today was "laid" that day.

The tool that was needed for its sudden and unprecedented transmission to all the nations of the earth that Jesus has *commissioned* us to preach the Gospel to, and call to repentance - was provided in one fell, 'rushing' swoop.

But the *vehicle* is you and me - a willing "heart."

(Not a rocket.)

It's a person with enough conviction and a modicum of passion to actually open our mouths and tell of the empty tomb and what it suggests lies ahead after death.

And when we do such a thing we demonstrate our belonging to the new species I've been taking about.

A "new species" that is not just *declared* to be free from sin by the Cross, but *shows* itself to be free by the power of God working in them.

It just begins with an invitation.

An *expectation*.

Born of a love.

A love for the Lord.

And a belief in His word.

Let us pray: ...

#### Footnotes:

1. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_space\\_travelers\\_by\\_name](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_space_travelers_by_name)
2. See: <https://www.fox10phoenix.com/news/asu-professor-talks-the-significance-of-spacexs-launch-on-may-27th>
3. See: <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/space/nasa-spacex-bringing-astronaut-launches-back-home-turf-n1212781>