

United in the Spirit (Acts 1:12-2:13)

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[0 : 0 0] Then apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile. When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying. Here are the names of those who were present.

Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas, son of James. They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary, the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brother of Jesus.

During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them. Brothers, he said, the scriptures had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, who guided those who arrested Jesus.

This was predicted long ago by the Holy Spirit, speaking through King David. Judas was one of us and shared in the ministry with us. Judas had bought a field with the money he received for his treachery, falling headfirst there.

His body split open, spilling out all his intestines. The news of his dead spread to all the people of Jerusalem, and they gave the place the Aramaic name, which means field of blood.

[1 : 1 4] Peter continued, This was written in the book of Psalms, where it says, Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it. It also says, Let someone else take his position.

So now we must choose a replacement of Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus, from the time he had baptized by John until the day he was taken from us.

Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection. So they nominated two men, Joseph called Barabas, also known as Judas, and Matthias.

When they all prayed, Oh Lord, you know every heart. Show us which of these men you have chosen, as an apostle to replace Judas in this ministry, for he has deserted us and gone where he belongs.

Then they cast lots, and Matthias was selected to become an apostle with the other eleven. On the day of Pentecost, all the believers were meeting together in one place.

[2 : 1 6] Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them, and everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages.

As the Holy Spirit gave them this ability. At that time, there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own language being spoken by the believers.

They were completely amazed. How can this be? They exclaimed. These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages. Here we are.

Parthians, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, why did I choose to read this? Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and the province of Asia.

Pygria, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya, no, Libya, around Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans, and Arabs.

[3 : 28] And we all heard these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done. They stood there amazed and perplexed. What can this mean? They asked each other. But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying they're just drunk.

That's all. Cool. So let's invite William up to speak. Thank you so much, Fran.

And yeah, great to see you back in action. And yeah, lovely to see a few more faces as well. And yeah, those who have been missing the last few weeks, we are in a new series through the book of Acts.

And I'd love to pray before we start. Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that your word is alive, it is active, and that as we journey through it, you will change us.

We know that. We know that your word has that power. And so we look forward in faith to see what you will do as we hear and consider your word today. Do help us to understand some of the tricky issues in this story.

[4 : 35] Do help us to see, more importantly, how a united church can be empowered by your Holy Spirit, to declare your wonders to the nations. Father, I pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. So friends, we've just heard from God's word about a pretty important and amazing miracle, right? The day of Pentecost. So it's a wonderful passage.

Some of you know lots about it. Maybe some of you have never heard about it before. So it is an important miracle that we will address. But for me, actually, a miracle recently was trying to work out how on earth they were going to make a better version of Top Gun.

I don't know how you feel about Top Gun, but some of you remember when the first one was out, not looking at anyone's birthday or anyone else in particular. And then for the rest of us, we just heard from our parents, perhaps, what an amazing movie this was.

So I thought, you know, how on earth will they top Top Gun? And actually, a few of us went to find out last weekend. So, yeah, got our wise permission for some of us.

[5 : 44] And, look, watching fighter jets swoop through dangerous missions, yeah, great times. And so as we were hanging out there, Sylvie Park, the last session, while we were watching it, I was obviously thinking, what makes a good sequel?

What makes a good sequel? Why was Top Gun 2 so great? And, I don't know, Frozen 2 so lousy. All right. Okay. Controversial. Controversial. Okay. All right. What makes a good sequel? Well, look, you want good callbacks to the first story, don't you?

But then you don't want it to just rehash everything for the story. I'm looking at you, Star Wars number nine. You want new characters. You want new ideas. And of course, you know, 30 years on, you kind of hope the action scenes will be a little bit better.

And without spoiling the story, it did not disappoint. So, and look, I want to suggest we see a better sequel. All of the above that I've said and more in the book of Acts.

You see, if you want a book about disciples empowered to teach, preach, heal, and pray like Jesus, yeah, here's a better sequel.

[6 : 56] But then if you want a bunch of new characters advancing the story of God's grace from Jerusalem, Samaria to the ends of the earth, we've got that too. And we've got action scenes full of miracles like what we read today.

There's, there's more, there's riots, there's arrests, there's even a shipwreck. Check, check, check. Look, Acts makes a fantastic sequel to the gospel of Luke.

So there are four gospel accounts, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And, and Luke, as we have heard about last week, is writing a follow-up to that gospel account. And so I want you to think of Acts as we journey through it.

We're going to look at it in three different mini-series, but the whole book of Acts, it's kind of like the Top Gun Maverick to Top Gun. So this is Luke reflecting on 30 years on from the miraculous birth of the church through the power of the risen Lord Jesus.

So I hope you're excited of journeying through the book of Acts. And look, the titles of a, of a movie are important, help you to understand what's going on.

[8 : 00] And the title of this book, I think is also important or perhaps maybe a little misleading. So my Bible here just says Acts, but some of yours might say Acts of the Apostles or something else.

And on the one hand, the book of Acts gives a good summary of the Acts of the Apostles. But you only have to read on to realize that, well, one, the Apostles don't always act.

And over half the story actually follows not one of these original Apostles, but some guy named Paul. I think he takes up over half of the story of Acts. And yes, you know, some people have suggested maybe what about the Acts of the Holy Spirit?

Okay. He's pretty prominent. Yes, we see the Spirit show up in chapter two. And yet time and time again, actually we see the risen Christ, the risen Lord Jesus.

He cameos at the start of the book, lots of random points during the middle of the book, and even at the end of the book. And so what we will see, I think, is that it is Jesus, right, now risen and reigning, now at the Father's right side.

[9 : 06] It is Jesus who is directing everything. It is Jesus who the early disciples preach fearlessly about. It is Jesus who is promising, or has promised, and then sends his Holy Spirit to equip and empower a bunch of men and women to serve as his witnesses.

So, whatever you want to call it, whether you call it the Acts of the risen Lord Jesus, the Acts of his Spirit-filled followers, whatever you want to call it, for the next few months, we're going to be journeying through the book of Acts.

And so my hope is that, as Luke wanted Theophilus and all who love God to, to know this unstoppable message of Jesus Christ, my hope is that that message sinks into your heart as well, and will be something you will be empowered by the gospel to share, across boundaries, maybe to the ends of the earth.

So that's where we're headed. That's where we're headed. Now, I deliberately asked Fran to read both sections, and now at first glance, you might be thinking, there's two different stories here, okay?

Why are we doing two stories? Are we getting two sermons today? Look, on first glance, the two sections might seem a little bit separate, okay? Two different events. We all know about the famous day of Pentecost, right?

[10 : 22] We want to hear all about that, where the Holy Spirit sparks the birth of the church. But I suspect a meeting to pick a new leader isn't one of your top 10 Bible stories.

Surely it's not something you, yeah, you get out of bed for. Yet look how Luke actually deliberately uses some common language of togetherness in both sections.

Have a look again in your Bibles at verse 12 to 14. And what you'll notice is that, you know, here's, after Jesus ascends to heaven and the Mount of Olives, what happens is that the disciples gather together in the upper room.

They go back to Jerusalem and they meet in an upper room. And verse 14 says, literally, they were devoted, one of purpose, to prayer. Men and women, family in Christ, about to start a new community, one in purpose, okay?

And then, notice then again, in the start of chapter 2, when the day of Pentecost came, again we get that language of they were all together in one place.

[11 : 26] Literally it reads, they were all one, together, united, ready for the Holy Spirit to act. And so, you see, I think the theme in both cases is unity.

The unity of the early church and what difference that can make. And so, I want us to walk through Luke's narrative with that in mind, right? So, there's two parts to the story, right?

I think we see Judas' betrayal that threatens the unity of the church for mission. And then, straight after that, we see how the Spirit's arrival empowers the unity of the church for mission.

So, those are the two kind of main sections that I want us to walk us through and we'll pick up some lessons along the way. So, like I said, verse 14 begins with the church united in prayer.

So important, isn't it? Every great revival is preceded by some great men and women praying. There's no different here. But then, verse 15 tells us, in those days, Peter stood up among the believers, right?

[12 : 30] There's about 200, sorry, 120 there and Peter addresses the elephant in the room. You see, before God's church could fully launch, they had to address this business of what happened to Judas, right?

And those names of the disciples, those present, they named Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus, and so on. There's one person missing, right?

And I think there's a little bit of sadness still among the disciples. The way the one of Jesus' most trusted followers, okay, he was the treasurer of the group, betrayed him to the Jewish leaders for some money.

It must have been a cause for shame and sadness, right? Imagine saying, oh, we're a new group here. Oh, what happened to your treasurer? Oh, and perhaps some in the church were divided over what, why that happened.

Who was to blame? Could we have stopped it? Maybe among the disciples, some took sides. I thought you were close to him. Why didn't you tell us sooner that he was stealing from the treasury? No, hang on, he spent most time with you.

[13 : 36] Surely you could have known. What did he do now? He's gone. When there's an unresolved conflict in the life of the church, it can be hard, right, to move on, to devote yourself to prayer, to be focused on what God will do next, to be empowered for the gospel.

And so you see, Judas' betrayal was a threat to the unity of the church. And so, from verse 15, we see Peter, right, Peter take the initiative and do just that, just address the situation.

We're going to hear more from Peter through the next few weeks, right, but I want us first to notice four very wise things that Peter does to address a situation like this, things that we could learn from too, okay, any time or if or when a crisis comes, perhaps among us.

I mean, first, he's timely and transparent, right? He doesn't hide the issue. Look at what he does in verse 15, right? In those days, Peter stands up and he addresses the issue.

There's none of this, I don't want to lose face, let's just not talk about it, let's hope it goes away. There's none of this, um, letting an issue fester for months or years.

[14 : 51] There's certainly no non-disclosure agreements or, uh, let's just, let's just leave it and not talk about it. You know what, in our friendships and relationships, we want to note problems early and deal with them.

Perhaps you want to speak with a colleague quickly and gently if there is a concern. Perhaps if I've done something to offend you, you want to come up to me and tell me quickly.

That's what Peter does in these verses, right? In verse 16, when he says, look, concerning Judas, yes, he did guide those who arrested Jesus and he did lead him to the cross.

I think that's something we can learn from that, right? Being transparent, not hiding issues, addressing them openly. What are some worst-case scenarios that could happen in a church like PCBC?

Maybe a leader, someone you trust, gets caught in moral failure. Maybe a relationship drama tears apart brothers and sisters. Maybe a well-loved member suddenly drops off the radar and before you know it, oh, wow, they're not even a Christian.

[16:01] When situations like these happen, it can be tempting to hide it, to ignore it, to avoid it, especially in some cultures, just not talk about it.

But if we want to be a church united for God's mission, sometimes we do well to confront the crisis together. So I think that's a wise thing that Peter does, right? He's timely and transparent.

Secondly, I think Peter addresses the shared pain the disciples felt, right? Look at verse 17. He says, he was one of our number and shared in this ministry.

Sometimes a betrayal hurts because the person was close to us, because we served week after week together, because we had so many shared memories together.

Judas' betrayal wasn't just a private affair. I think sometimes we can think that, oh, you know, if we muck up or something, it's just between me and the Lord, but there's always a relational impact, isn't there?

[17:03] Right? It hurt the entire group. He didn't just betray Jesus. He let down the rest of the disciples who were trying to follow after him. And to be clear, in church life, okay, not every issue or leaving in church is due to a sin like Judas' right?

There was something unique about it. But sometimes to move forward, we do need to acknowledge the hurt we feel when something tragic happens.

Sometimes we need to own up to how betrayed we feel. Maybe when a sister parts ways with us or when a brother rejects the faith you once shared together.

And we want to do this without gossiping, but I wonder if we've ever debriefed each other on some of these issues before. Have you ever made a habit of checking in on past group members?

How's so-and-so doing? Again, you know, we can ask it in clear and, you know, non-judgmental ways. We can just say, look, I haven't seen them for a while.

[18:06] How are they doing? Or, hey, I saw recently something that concerned me about so-and-so. I don't want to gossip about it, but is that person doing okay?

Can we pray for them? Or maybe we can even go direct. Hey, I haven't seen you in a while. How are you doing? We want to own up to the situation because we want to acknowledge sometimes it hurts when people leave us.

And as we share the pain of a brother or sister who falls away or as we grieve together the fall of a trusted leader, maybe the Lord can bring healing. Maybe the Lord can use even something like that to unite us for mission.

I haven't been here long enough, but I know you guys will know who you need to talk to and perhaps what things you might need to grieve over. Thirdly, Peter reminds this group of God's sovereign rule over the matter.

And this is important, right? Because I think here in verses 18 to 19, Luke reminds his readers, including us, how Judas' story ended. There's a bit of an aside, so some of your Bibles will put it in brackets where Luke comments, right?

[19 : 21] And he's reflecting on something that happened 30 years ago. And he says, look, this is how Judas' story actually ended, right? So he betrays Jesus, gets all this money, and he tries to buy some land and profit from his wickedness, get onto the property market.

And here, I think we can combine this with what we know from Matthew's gospel, okay, about how after betraying Jesus, Judas' guilt overtook him, and he actually decides to end his life.

And Luke describes it pretty gruesomely. It's as if he falls head first in a gruesome, bloody end. What is important to Peter, though, right, what he talks about is that all this was necessary to fulfill the Scriptures.

All right, verse 16. And in the first half of verse 20, he quotes Psalm 69, verse 25. It's a psalm of kind of rebuke on God's enemies. And he uses it to point out that God is not surprised when his enemies, you know, attack God's people.

And one day, God will judge them. And so even in that psalm, there's a balance between, yes, Judas is responsible, yes, God's enemies are responsible, but God knows what he's doing.

[20 : 36] He is still in control. God is clearly sovereign, even over a sad affair like this. And I know that's a tension, right?

Some of you will be like, wow, who's at fault? Is it God's fault? Is it Judas' fault? There's a tension, but without saying that Judas was not at fault, okay, God is in control.

And yes, Judas is held responsible. And we can extend this to some other crises that we might meet over the years, right? When we read up about a pastor who has to stand down because they've done something terrible.

Yes, they are responsible for the sin that they did. But God is not shocked. God was not caught by surprise. Maybe there's a ministry leader that is so worn out and defeated, they're burnt out.

Or they need to take responsibility for why that could have happened. And yet, God knew and God is still in control, even over that. maybe there are members of a church who have not talked to each other in years.

[21 : 44] Well, it's up to them to restart the conversations, to pray again together. And yet, God is not surprised. He is still working, even despite these things. Judas' wickedness is still his fault.

And yet, God was and still is sovereign over every detail, every decision, every division that has happened in his church and in a mysterious way for his good purposes.

That's thirdly. And I think, fourthly, I think, a wise thing to learn from what Peter does here, he hands this next decision over to the Lord. It's a pretty weird way to choose the next apostle, I think.

It's only recorded this time and then never again, this kind of strategy. And again, Peter, verse 20, he quotes Psalm 109, verse 8 here, right?

May another take his place of leadership. I think from this scripture, the disciples, they're drawing strength, okay, again, from a scripture of rebuke against God's enemies.

[22 : 49] They draw strength to us and say, yeah, we have permission from God to move on. They're disappointed about losing Judas, but let's move on, let's pick someone else so the mission can keep going.

And this description on choosing someone, we want to be careful not to over-read this description. We're going to see time and time again, right? So this is a principle I want you guys to remember. In the book of Acts, a lot is described without being necessarily prescribed.

I'll say it again. So there's a lot of things that are described that aren't prescribed all the time. And we need to be careful to distinguish the two. So here, we are described here a very unique way of picking a new apostle, right?

120 men and women. They put forward Joseph, called Barsabbas, but that means son of the Sabbath, and Matthias, verse 23. And then they cast lots for guidance.

Now this is a very specific, culturally appropriate way to divide up important responsibilities. So that's what's described, but there is no way we should then read this and go, ah, that's what's prescribed for us today.

[23 : 59] This is how we should make our church decisions next. I certainly wouldn't write this procedure into our church constitution. I don't know about you, but, yeah, firstly, we need to find lots.

I don't know where you buy them from, so, these days. But what we do see is the church being involved in decision making, right? The whole gathering puts forward qualified people to take on the apostolic office.

And you notice there's some specific criteria here, right? There's three. Verse 21, there had to be one of the brothers gathered there. Secondly, there had to be have seen Jesus' entire ministry from start to finish.

Okay, so that's quite a specific criteria to be an apostle. And then, finally, there had to be witnesses of the resurrected, risen Lord Jesus.

Verse 22, at the end of there. And so, the church are smart and they're able together to put forward two people. But what we also see, right, is when they put forward two people, they, verse 24, they prayed and they commit this decision to the Lord, right?

[25 : 08] Lord, you are the one who knows everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen. There's a dependence on the Lord to bring clarity.

Who is the right person to help the apostles go forward in unity again? This is not a description of a Baptist church meeting. And yet, we see good patterns here, right?

Good principles that we as PCB should follow. Even if we don't follow the described procedure, I think they are good principles, right? We want to make decisions collaboratively.

I don't want to start a ministry because I thought it was a good idea. It should be something we own together. We shouldn't buy, I don't know, a new playground behind the church because two families say, we must have a playground.

We've got to do this together. We make decisions collaborative. Yeah, it takes time to get everyone's opinions, but that's what we do and that's what they do. And then secondly, we need to make decisions by prayerful discernment.

[26 : 12] We don't make decisions by looking up a business case and saying, yeah, this is how we should make decisions. We need to depend on the Lord together. Lord, you know our hearts. Help us.

Give us clarity. And in this case, once the decision is clear, what happens? Verse 26 says, Matthias was counted among the apostles.

There's no, you know, wait two weeks for a cooling down period or there's no, hmm, let's try that again. Look, whatever the decision, they went with it together.

How do we know they accept this decision together as a group and move forward? Because the very next verse tells us when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

I don't know how you feel. Sometimes decisions in church don't always go your way. There are two ways you could respond, two ways I could respond. I could either bring it up over and over again.

[27 : 15] Ah, alright, they didn't like my idea this time. Let me just bring it up two months later and change the name. Or, I could push harder, you know.

I think you guys haven't got this right. Let me give you five more Bible verses why this is the way to go. I don't know. I could do that. I could bring it up over and over again. Or, maybe I just need to trust.

This is what the risen Lord Jesus working among us has decided and we just move forward in unity. God's mission matters most. So, what do we do, friends, when a problem threatens the church's unity?

I think we've had some timely wisdom, right? And we want to be timely and transparent with the issue, not to hide it. We want to acknowledge sometimes pain and loss. And, thirdly, we want to remember God is sovereign.

He's still on the throne. And then, finally, when a decision comes, let's hand it over to the Lord. Let's trust the Lord will do His will. It's amazing that after all this preparation, the early church moved forward in unity.

[28 : 22] And it's after that that the Holy Spirit shows up. And that's the second part, right? The Spirit arrives and empowers the church's unity for mission.

It's a pretty incredible moment. Recently, I don't know what you guys watch in your spare time, recently. Our family watched crowds of people outside Buckingham Palace in the UK and they were all celebrating the Queen's birthday.

So, you can see those huge crowds, okay? Very close. Definitely not much social distancing. There's the royal family and there's our dear Queen and some of her descendants, future kings and so on.

And they're all celebrating the fact that the Queen has been reigning for 70 years. And we think our church is old. Well, she's been alive for twice and then some as long.

And what the Queen's birthday is to British people is kind of like what Pentecost was to Jewish people, right? So, I want you guys to think of Pentecost or Shavuot or whatever name you want to call it, a feast of weeks.

[29 : 29] I want you to think of Pentecost as an annual Jewish celebration, kind of like Queen's birthday. A weekend where everyone gathers in, right?

Whether you're from Jerusalem or you live outside, you just come all the way and you want to be part of the crowd. You want to join in the festivities, right? Originally, Pentecost was a time to celebrate the end of harvest season, okay?

It was an agrarian culture, so they would grow a lot of wheat and grain and barley and at the end of it, Leviticus 23 says, celebrate with a feast of weeks or Sabbaths.

And so, over time, this feast becomes developed, right? When you celebrate the harvest, you're celebrating the fulfillment or completion, right, of months of hard work.

Over time, the Jewish people then add on other completions and fulfillments into kind of this ceremony. So, particularly, they start to see giving of the law of Moses as something worth celebrating.

[30 : 28] Finally, we have God's law now. And so, there's all this in people's minds, right? Hundreds of thousands of people pouring into Jerusalem wanting to celebrate Pentecost.

They all go to the temple. That's where they'll hear God's law. That's where they can celebrate with God's people. And yet, 120 people are not joining those celebrations. How come?

How come? Because they are gathered for a greater celebration. They are anticipating a greater move of the Spirit. And they are praying one in purpose together.

And suddenly, all right, verses 1 to 4 tell us, 2 to 4 tell us, from the same sky that the Lord Jesus ascended into last week, God shows up.

And we get this amazing description, right, don't we? Suddenly, a sound like a blowing of violent wind came from heaven, filled the whole house they were sitting. They saw what they seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

[31 : 34] And all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit empowered them. You notice that there's kind of three aspects, right?

What they hear, what they see, and what happens, right? What they hear is a sound of a mighty rushing wind. When the idea of a rushing mighty wind comes in the Bible, often it's when God shows up.

This is definitely something only God is capable of doing here. So that's what they hear. What they see, right, with their eyes, are what seem like tongues of fire. Okay, the word tongues, there's a wordplay here, the word for tongues, right, of fire, kind of resembling kind of a flickering flame resting on their head.

And then later on, not just what they see, what they do is that they speak in other tongues. You see? What they do is amazing, isn't it? They begin, as Luke says, to speak in other languages as the Holy Spirit empowered them.

And in the rest of the verses from verse 5 to 13, it's describing all those pilgrims that were gathered in Jerusalem. And it describes all their reactions. And there's a range of different ones, aren't there, right?

[32 : 45] From all the nations under heaven, verse 5 says, Luke is a very, very creative writer. Okay, he uses lots of different words. Verse 6, they're confused.

All right, verse 7, they're utterly amazed beside themselves. All right, they're perplexed in verse 12. And some of them even mock and jeer. When God shows up like this, it is impossible to be neutral.

When God shows up, nobody is a neutral. They marvel over the miracle. Okay, it is a miracle. 120 Galileans boldly declaring the wonders of God in different languages.

languages, all the different languages and dialects of that known world at the time. That's an amazing thing to pause and consider. I think there, a principle remains.

Anytime people hear the wonders of God in their own tongues, God shows up. Forgiven sinners can be restored.

[33 : 53] Lives can be transformed. The key is that, verse 13, sorry, verse 11, people are hearing the wonders of God in their own heart languages.

I mean, that is why we have an English service, right? Because for many of you, your heart language is English. And that is why we preach the gospel in Cantonese because for many of our friends and family, their heart language is Cantonese and so on and so on.

That is why we have brothers and sisters who are missionaries and they spend decades translating the Bible, making them available to people who don't have a Bible in their language so that they can hear the wonders of God in their heart language.

That's why sometimes, you know, I was chatting with a brother here and one time, you know, I think someone was on the phone and he just burst into Korean and greeted them in Korean.

Why would you do that? Because we can connect with people in their heart language. It makes a difference. Lives can be transformed. Whenever people hear the wonders of God in their mother tongue, God shows up.

[35 : 08] And look, I don't want to overstate things but we've just had a really nice long weekend. I want to say Pentecost is more special than Queen's birthday. I'm sorry, Queen. But think about it.

Think about it. Pentecost is when selfish unity, a judgment of Babel is completely turned upside down.

Right? Here we have like an anti-Babel, a reverse of Babel, right? The Spirit of Christ empowering His gathered people to speak the gospel in different languages to the nations.

That's exciting. Pentecost is exciting. This is where the promised son of David, King Jesus, He is now through His Spirit calling out a new people. He is now enacting a new kingdom.

He's now drawing nations to Himself. Pentecost is where God who promised, right, to live in His people fully and forever in the closest way possible.

[36 : 06] He doesn't go show up at the temple in Jerusalem. He says, I'm going to show up on you, in you. Isn't that amazing? Making every believer a temple, as it were, where His Holy Spirit can dwell.

That is remarkable. That is remarkable. Pentecost is the church's birthday. Pentecost is where the Holy Spirit empowers every single believer to be a witness of the kingdom of God.

And so make no mistake, because of Pentecost, every follower of Jesus is fully and forever equipped by the Holy Spirit.

whether you are a woman like Mary, whether you are a man like Jesus' brothers that were gathered there, whether you are a leader like Peter, whether you are like one of the unnamed people in the upper room, whether you got picked for leadership like Matthias, or maybe you didn't, like Joseph, son of the Sabbath.

Friends, Pentecost means everyone in that room and every follower, therefore, of Jesus, everyone who trusts and relies on Him for forgiveness and friendship.

[37 : 16] Every follower of Jesus is sealed with the promised Holy Spirit permanently. God lives in every believer.

God lives in you if you trust Christ. That's amazing. Never forget that. Never lose your wonder over how significant this moment is.

Of course, some of you would love to know, right? Should I look for the same kind of miraculous power that these hundred people, twenty people receive, right? Should I now, if I'm filled with the Spirit, have the same kind of boundary-crossing language ability?

Is that a proof that I'm filled with the Spirit? And I want to say in a good kind of interesting way, no and yes. Okay? I want to say no.

No because, firstly, we need to remember how unique this experience was at Pentecost. It doesn't ever happen again in this way. This is a unique salvation historical moment.

[38 : 20] The 120 people who believed in Jesus Christ, right, they believed in Him when? Before He ascended into heaven. All right? So actually, they're kind of a little bit out of the timeline as it were.

And so He has to promise to pour His Spirit to them in this special one-off way. But from that moment, right, all the believers afterwards receive the Spirit as soon as they believe in the Lord Jesus, pretty much.

And so with Acts, again, much is described, but not everything is prescribed. Okay? Pentecost is a unique one-off moment where the gift of the Holy Spirit comes after people believe.

But we don't want to say then that there must be some subsequent gift of the Holy Spirit all the time for people who believe. I want to encourage you, you do not need to speak in tongues or languages to know that you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Because, we'll see this next week, right? When 3,000 people repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Verse 38. It's the same language.

[39 : 27] They receive it by responding to something far different to what happened to those 120. They respond to a preacher calling them to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus. And perhaps, if you've never believed in the Lord Jesus, never repented of your sins, today can be that day that you could be filled with the Holy Spirit fully, finally.

If you turn your life over to Him, to submit to the risen Lord Jesus, I guarantee you, today, you can be fully filled with the Holy Spirit. And for most of us, our experience of the Holy Spirit is similar to that moment, right?

And yet, that is no less miraculous. Can I say that? And so, because of our question, right, is, should I, or should we, look to God to miraculously equip us to declare the wonders of God outside our comfort zone and our languages, that kind of miracle?

then actually, we want to say, yes, yes, God does that for every single believer. The Bible says that every believer is miraculously equipped, you are, I am, with God's Holy Spirit.

What the exact experiences look like differ. But we must remember, when we are followers of Jesus, His Spirit lives in us and is empowering us to do bold, miraculous things.

[40 : 54] I find it interesting, right? At Pentecost, Jesus did not drop a constitution from the sky. Jesus didn't drop, I don't know, a leadership manual to start the church.

He didn't drop an amazing worship set and said, play this and the church will be born. What did He drop? He gave His Holy Spirit. Living and ordinary people who are united for mission, who are empowered to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings.

That is a miracle. That God would provide that for every single one of His followers. That is what Pentecost reminds us and we need to remember that. We need to remember that.

After all, sometimes we go through life and we feel like we are doing things on our own steam. And I want to say, God promises far better.

Rely on the Holy Spirit living in every believer, living in you. And after all, here too, in Auckland, just like in Jerusalem, is a city full of international people.

[42 : 02] People streaming in. How on earth will we go about sharing the good news with them? If it were not for the Holy Spirit in us, I think none of us would have anything to say.

God's Spirit makes our meager efforts possible. And that's what we do as Christians. We tap into His power. We make the most of the different ways of being filled with the Spirit.

Okay? Through prayer like we did earlier. Through singing and speaking God's Word to each other. Even giving thanks can help us be filled with the Spirit. Submitting to one another can do so too according to Ephesians chapter 5.

And all of this is just to tap into what God has already given us. I love the moment in Elijah's story on Mount Carmel, right?

He works hard at getting the logs or the servants, building the altar. And at the same time, when God shows up, it is totally His work.

[43 : 08] We can be the same. We know the Spirit is working and so we serve faithfully. We play our part in building the altar here at PCBC. And we plead that the Lord shows up, lights the fire, transforms lives.

I think of how bold some of you are, have been. I've heard so many amazing stories of some of you who have just patiently prayed for your family or your friends to come to know Christ.

You have been declaring God's wonders outside your comfort zone. You have been Spirit-filled and Spirit-led. Even if you have to use a language you're not great at. Surely we need the gift of tongues when we want to share with our family who speak, you know, great Cantonese and we don't, for example.

I think of how bold some of you are, living for Jesus in very secular workplaces or among family who do not believe or turning to Jesus in your hardships.

That kind of grace, persistence, we can't measure that by a growth plan. We can't measure that by KPIs. It can only be the Holy Spirit at work.

[44 : 20] and church, that you and I and everyone are gathered together each week in the name of Jesus. That is a miracle just as powerful as flaming tongues of fire.

Never forget that. This is a miracle in itself, week after week. To tweak a line that we sing often, I think Acts reminds us that when the church of Christ was born, there His Spirit lit the flame.

And so we want to do that. We want to lean on our Lord Jesus together. We want to unite in prayer. We want to use all the means of grace, follow His leading, and yet we know that it is God's Spirit at work in us that will transform lives, that will write a better sequel to our stories, that will empower us to declare God's wonders among the nations.

Let's pray. Jesus, You are the King of kings. Father, You are the mighty one seated on high.

And Holy Spirit, You empower each and every one of us in our weakness. You are strong. So help us to celebrate that. As we reflected on the church's birthday, remind us that united in Christ, You can do amazing things.

[45 : 45] Not because of us, but sometimes in spite of us. So we want to give You all the glory as we sing together now. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.