**Pentecost Reflection: May 31st 2020**

**Rev Canon Karen**

**Acts 2:1-21, John 20:19-23**

First things first – hello and how are you? Peace be with you!

It is very strange to be apart at the time of a major Christian festival – especially a festival that happens at a time when in Acts we hear people from the known world were gathered in Jerusalem! The very word ‘festival’ summons images of family, friends and people in general being together – and we can’t be, not in that ‘altogether’ way. It’s tough and we need to own that.

So what can these readings teach us and say to us, given that the context is so different?

Ah! Pause a second – is it really so different?

Let’s turn the readings round, put them in chronological order, John first, then Acts.

The context of John, the writer tells us, is that after the Resurrection, the disciples were locked in (not dissimilar to lockdown) for fear of the authorities. Now I’m not sure our lockdown came from fear – it has been more about the need to save lives and protect the NHS – but there has been a huge amount of fear and anxiety generated by Coronavirus and flowing from how we have had to respond – isolation, loss of freedom, the loss of the physical presence of friends and family, loss in death for some – all can lead to an increase in fear and a sense of mental locked in-ness as well as being actually locked down.

But what happens? Jesus comes, through a locked door (get that, through a locked door) and stands among them. Peace be with you, he says … and then He breathes on them, the very breath of God, the Holy Spirit … and then says, as the Father sends me, so I send you. Comfort, strength, a sense of purpose, God in them and with them – the metaphorical door is no longer locked and you would think – boom! they’d be away …

But no – Wait! 50 days … until the dramatic, public, amazing out-pouring of the Spirit we read about in Acts.

Jesus still comes through locked doors, still says ‘Peace be with you’, still breathes his Spirit into us as He re-assures us of the depth of His love for us, eases fear and anxiety AND gives us a sense of purpose. Prayer, reading, staying in touch, reaching out to people in new ways at a greater depth – that’s as much about being sent as physically moving is. And then – yes – a different filling can follow as God builds on all He has been doing as we wait (slightly longer than 50 days it has to be admitted).

In His eternal faithfulness, compassion and mercy God, through the Holy Spirit, offers us ‘strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow’. Jesus gave his disciples strength for that day when he breathed on them – strength to rest in His covenant and eternal love, strength to understand that nothing could ever separate them from that love and strength to know that this wasn’t it … he gave them hope as He filled their lives with His assurance and purpose. The assurance came first, the power came later and rested on that assurance – an assurance that came as Jesus met with them in a locked room.

May you know the assurance that comes as Jesus breathes on you, in lockdown, the gentle power that enables you to be sent, even as you wait, and the hope for tomorrow – a new infilling of the power and presence of the Spirit that will speak to whatever our world looks like in the future. Peace be with you.

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