

## PENTECOST: THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER (Jonathan David Helser<sup>1</sup>)

- Where have you seen God at work in your life this week? (Share any brief examples and encouragements).
- Was there anything from Sunday's message which you found particularly inspiring or challenging?
- Was there anything else you particularly noticed?

### Acts 1:4-5 (NRSVA)

*[Jesus said,] 'wait... for the promise of the Father... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'*

### Acts 2:1-4 (The Message)

*When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks, and they started speaking in a number of different languages as the Spirit prompted them.*

### Romans 8:14-17 (NIVUK)

*<sup>14</sup>... those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup>The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup>Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ...*

### Romans 8:15-17 (The Message)

*This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance!*

### Matthew 3 (NIVUK)

*As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. <sup>17</sup>And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'*

Jonathan spoke about the Holy Spirit as 'the promise of the Father' – that the Spirit is God's gift of love to us as his beloved children, and 'the Spirit of truth revealing to us our true identity [as] sons and daughters of the Father.' Jesus, at his baptism, was 'baptised in belovedness' – the gift of the Spirit resting on him confirmed the Father's love. Just as the Spirit had brooded over the waters of creation<sup>2</sup> (Genesis 1:2), so the gift of the Spirit inaugurates the new creation as the 'crescendo of the cross', bringing new life to birth in us. Jesus, 'dripping with the baptism waters of his belovedness' could answer the voice of the accuser questioning his identity (Matthew 4:3 'If you are the Son of God...'). Like Simba in "The Lion King", we forget who we are;<sup>3</sup> like an eagle accustomed to captivity, we do not realise that we are free to fly – 'It's not that the bird is in the cage... the cage is in the bird'!

- *What does the idea of the Spirit as 'the promise of the Father' mean to you?*
- *What other names for the Holy Spirit particularly resonate with you?*
- *What difference might it make if we knew how much we are 'beloved of God' as his sons or daughters?*
- *Have you forgotten who you are? Is there someone you are afraid to be? (Who are you anyway?)*
- *What keeps you caged? How do you limit yourself? What do you think God wants you to know right now?*
- *Jonathan spoke about his own father's delight when he wanted to play guitar. Is there something – a particular gift, perhaps – which you suspect your heavenly Father is waiting for you to pick up?*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cagelessbirds.com>

<sup>2</sup> In **Paradise Lost**, the 17<sup>th</sup> Century poet John Milton wrote, "Thou O Spirit... from the first / Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread / Dove-like satst brooding on the vast Abyss / And mad'st it pregnant..."

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byDN8aoR4TI>