

A sermon preached on Pentecost Sunday, 15 May 2016, by the Vicar, Martin Tanner, in St Mary's Church, Market Drayton at 10.30am

Readings: Romans 8 v14-17 Acts 2 v1-21 John 14 v8-17

Here we are on Pentecost Sunday, on one of the great days of the year.

### **BUT WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?**

In one short phrase, I say to you, and I believe the Lord says too, Pentecost is all about **HAVING AN ADULT FAITH.**

All three Bible Readings this morning say this. But, in particular, let us focus on ST PETER in Acts 2.

Verse 14 says:

***"Then Peter STOOD UP, with the Eleven, and raised his voice and addressed the crowd..."***

Peter stood up and, no longer with a confused faith or a human faith but WITH AN ADULT FAITH, he took responsibility.

Let us go back and look at the previous times in Scripture Peter "stood up" and acted.

First, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus said to the disciples, *"Who do YOU say I am?"* And all the disciples are silent except Peter who says, **"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"** (Matthew 16 v16)

### **This is a STARTING faith.**

True faith begins when we see who Jesus really is. In 'football speak' Jesus is "The Special One". Not just a good man, or a great teacher or miracle worker but The Son of God, the Saviour of the World.

And we can only come to this understanding if GOD grants it to us.

*"Blessed are you, Peter, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by **my Father in heaven.**"* (Matthew 16 v17)

Yes, we should do our part, and search. In John 14 v8 we see Philip doing this when he says, *"Lord, show us the Father."* *"Seek and you will find, knock and it will be answered to you"* said Jesus but it is GOD who does the revealing and GOD who does the answering.

Next, Peter is with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and he stands up and says, *"Lord, shall we make three booths, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah? For he did not know what to say"* Mark 9 v5,6

**This is a CONFUSED FAITH** *"For he did not know what to say"*

And just like we all need a Starting Faith, so we will all go through times of confusion and uncertainty.

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**Third, comes a HUMAN FAITH**

On the very night Jesus was betrayed, Peter stood up and declared to Jesus,

*"Though the others may fall away, I will NEVER fall away"* Matt.26 v33

But this was Peter trusting in himself. This was the ego speaking. It was faith lacking power. And it WAS human faith because when a waitress girl challenged Peter a few hours later he swore an oath and denied he had anything to do with Jesus.

**The fourth time** we see Peter speaking is when, after the resurrection, Jesus seeks him out and asks him three times if he loves him. And in doing this Jesus gives Peter **A RESTORED FAITH.**

**And it is a restored faith which is an ADULT FAITH.**

And we have to be adults in the faith NOW because Jesus has completed his ministry and left us and gone back to the Father. And all we have is the presence of his Spirit.

When our parents are dead we cannot speak to them or ask them for advice. We are on our own. We are adults. They can no longer tie our shoe laces or comb our hair as they once did when we were small. Yet, they are not completely gone from us. If they were good parents they left us an example and they gave us values and principles to live by. And so they can still influence us, though they may long be dead.

And so we link with Romans 8 v17 which says that we are *"heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ"*. The point about being an heir **is that heirs INHERIT** and inheritance takes place when the person who wrote the Will is no longer with us.

Jesus is no longer with us in an earthly sense. In the Church Year he left us 10 days ago on Ascension Day SO TODAY, the day of PENTECOST, is the day **when we receive our inheritance. We are no longer heirs BUT BENEFICIARIES.**

And so **we must act as adult beneficiaries** and no longer as children. The SPIRIT must give us that bold faith that Peter had.

***"Then Peter STOOD UP, with the Eleven, and raised his voice and addressed the crowd..."*** ACTS 2 v14 (NIV) says:

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**And in just two words I believe this is what God is calling ST MARY'S to do.**

The two words are *STOOD UP*. In other words, take action. The opposite of being a couch potato.

And it is not just me but THE WHOLE PCC. Let me explain, **because I believe that Monday's PCC meeting was very significant indeed.**

The newly elected PCC met for the first time on Monday and the main item on the Agenda was to plan for the PCC Away Day on 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

The question on the Agenda paper was, "***What should be our focus as a Church in the next twelve months?***" That was my question and I was put in my place because the PCC said, and I agree, "***A year is too short a period. We need to plan for the next FIVE YEARS***"

Up until now we have been "vision led".

We have tried to make sure our focus is on doing things that Welcome, that Nurture the faith or that Serve the community in its need"

And it is good to have vision. And God has honoured this vision, which we believe came from him in the first place back in 2009.

Vision has enabled things to happen.

**But we haven't done any planning.**

Just to give one example. In 2009 we didn't say "*it would be good to have a Foodbank, let us take steps and work towards this in a few years' time.*" When the idea of a Foodbank came in 2012 we said, "*Good, it fits in with our vision of serving the community in its need, let's do it!*"

Well now, the PCC wants to change and be more active. We are not ditching our vision **but we are wanting to sit back less and stand up more.**

And the initial way of doing this, AND YOU CAN ALL TAKE PART, is this:

The PCC invites all church groups AND ANY INDIVIDUAL SO MOVED to write a POSITION PAPER by the first Sunday of July (so the PCC have time to consider the responses) saying three things:

1. We are here
2. In five years we would like to be there
3. These are some of the stages to get there

The "We" is any part of the life of the church.

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**Just to give an example.**

The Music Group *could* write a Position Paper saying: We have one keyboard player. In five years we would like to see 3 keyboard players sharing the playing. We hope to do this by ..... If we don't, the options for music on a Sunday morning are .....

By doing this we do two things. We TAKE STOCK of where we actually are at the moment **AND we grasp the future** and don't just sit back resigned or defeated.

**Now this is NOT a human exercise.**

**This is a spiritual one.**

So it is fitting to begin it at Pentecost. And it must be done in a way that is open to the prompting of the Spirit. Zechariah 4 v6 says,

***"Not by might, not by power but BY MY SPIRIT says the Lord"***

Done in the Spirit's power. AND it should be done by ALL OF US:

***"Then Peter stood up, WITH THE ELEVEN, and raised his voice and addressed the crowd..."***

*"With the Eleven"* It wasn't just Peter.

It was something the whole church did.

Let us, in the power of the Spirit, all of us, the whole church, address the issues before us.

**Let us exercise an adult faith and believe the Spirit will guide us.**

**Let us: *"BUILD A CHURCH JESUS WOULD BE PROUD OF"***

**IT IS A TIME TO BUILD!**





St  
MARY'S  
CHURCH

# POSITION PAPER

***"BUILD A CHURCH JESUS WOULD BE PROUD OF"***

The St Mary's PCC invites all church groups AND ANY INDIVIDUAL SO MOVED to write a POSITION PAPER by the first Sunday of July saying three things:

1. "We\* are here" -Our current situation where we are at the present time in 2016
  
2. "Where we would like to be in five years in 2021" -Our hopes and desires
  
3. The steps and stages needed to get from where we are to where we would like to be

The "We"\* is any part of the life of the church.

**Please return to church no later than 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2016**