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Slide 1

Imagine being in Jerusalem on that Day of Pentecost! It would have been amazing wouldn't it? There are the disciples meeting together all in the one place. Around 120 of them. On a Sunday, they have come to worship when out of nowhere there is the sound of hurricane being whipped up. They see tongues of fire come down from the sky and touch everyone. They hear excited people all around them talking in different languages. Peter stands up and speaks probably his first ever sermon and 3000 people become Christians. Imagine that?

Slide 2

Imagine that happening today. We come to worship like we have done so many times before & there is about 25/60 of us. Instead of the sound of the organ we get the sound of a gale force wind. Instead of seeing a power point display we see tongues of fire touch every one present. Instead of me preaching, Trevor/Mr T/Chris stands up and points everyone to trust in Jesus. Then we look around & there are crowds of people everywhere. 800/1500 of them come to the front and put their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Imagine that!

Each one of us would then have about 25 people to disciple. So what would we say to them? What are their first steps of faith going to look like? Would you invite them home for lunch? Would you buy them all a bible? Would you meet up with them each day this week? These are babes in Christ! It's all hand's on deck. What would you do? Actually, when was the last time you did that for one person let alone 25? Well hold that thought for a moment and let us see what happened in Acts 2 to the early Church and then we will have a look at how the Church coped with such phenomenal growth! And it all starts off with

Slide 3

1. The Spirit (verses 1-21)

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

Let's set the scene. It was 50 days after the resurrection of Jesus and just 10 days after Jesus ascended back to heaven. It was the day of the Jewish festival of the first fruits where the people would come to the Temple celebrating the harvest that God had given to them. And God chooses on that very day to send a harvest of souls to the new Church.

Slide 4

The fledgling Church is meeting together in the one place. There are the 12 apostles, their families and a few others hanging on when God sent the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity onto his people. Now it is important to remember that this isn't the first time the Spirit has come into this world. Back in Genesis 1:2, we read that the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. God's Spirit helped out in the process of creating the world.

Then throughout the OT, we read that the Spirit is given to special people in special circumstances. People like Gideon, Samuel, David, Elijah and Elisha had to perform certain tasks and so are given the Spirit of God to help them to do that. In the New Testament we see that when Jesus was baptised the Spirit came down like a dove & descended upon him.

The Spirit has been active in our world before this time. The difference now was the Spirit was not just coming upon individuals but the whole group. Not just for a special time but for all time. Men and women, young and old, rich and poor, from the greatest to the least all now receive the Spirit of God. He is now with them in everything they do. Everything.

Slide 5

But it was quite spectacular how it all came about wasn't it? Firstly, there was a sound like the blowing of a violent wind. Then there was the sight of tongues of fire resting on each of them. Finally, there was the strange speech where they spoke in other languages and the people around them could hear them speak in their own native language.

On this special day God used three natural phenomena (wind, fire & speech) yet filled them with supernatural characteristics. The noise was not wind but sounded like it. The sight was not fire but resembled it. The speech was in languages which the speaker did not know. These things told everyone that on this unique day God was doing something amazing, something supernatural. God was sending His Spirit onto His people. But not just Jews. For the people here who receive the Spirit come from nations in the north, south, east & west.

Slide 6

⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea & Cappadocia, Pontus & Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia & Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome; Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

Slide 7

Luke is saying the whole world was there. Representatives of each nation were hearing the gospel in their own mother tongue. God's mighty acts of grace are being communicated in a language that people can understand to people from every nation! You see if the gospel is for all then the Spirit is going to be given to all.

In Genesis 11, the people of this world can come together to defiantly built a tower to the heavens so that they could live without God. And God had come down and mixed up their languages, so the nations from then on would be separated. But now God has reversed the curse of Babel. God has come down again in the form of the Holy Spirit & unified them given them the ability to communicate to each other. And brought them into the kingdom of God.

Slide 8

You see the Spirit promised by the prophet Joel had now come upon the people and they began to prophesy and tell others about the wonderful of work of God's son Jesus. The Spirit promised by Jesus, who would teach the world about sin, righteousness & judgement had now entered into the life of the Christian. Now with God inside of them they had the power to live the life of faith. Now with the Spirit within them they had the power to grow the Kingdom where Jesus is the King. God has given them power through the Holy Spirit.

Slide 9

Sometimes you hear some Christians talk about speaking in tongues and it seems like they are babbling, speaking in a language that no one seems to understand. That is not what is happening here. These are real words with real meaning and for a real purpose.

It's sort of like what you get at the United Nations where everyone's got their set of headphones on with an interpreter talking in their ear translating what's being said from the front. Except in this case, they don't need the interpreter. Because the Holy Spirit has given the apostles the ability to speak in all these languages so that everyone can understand.

This is a tremendously important day in the life of the Church. As one preacher has put it, "At Bethlehem we see that "God is with us." On the cross of Calvary, we learn that "God is for us." But only at Pentecost do we find out that "God is in us."

Slide 10

You see at Pentecost God provides the Church with the equipment they need in order to do the task that they have been called to do. They can't be Jesus' witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth without God's supernatural help through His Holy Spirit. But equipped with His Spirit, with word and Spirit together, they have all the power they need.

Slide 11

And that is all the power we need as well. Whether we need to grow a Church of 30, 300 or 3,000. In the words of John Stott, *"Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from his fruit and no effective witness with his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the Church without the Spirit is dead."*

Slide 12

The Holy Spirit is the source of the greatest power in the world but how often do we plug ourselves in to it? As individuals and the Church? How often do we ask to be filled with Him? Call upon help from Him? Seek wisdom and clarity as we read God's word through Him? Whether we are discipling one person or 25. Whether we are using our gifts, working through problems, lacking wisdom, healing relationships we all need the power of the HS.

Slide 13

2. The Son (verses 22-36)

Well, we have this supernatural event where the Holy Spirit comes upon representatives of the people of the world & in all the confusion, everyone is asking, 'What does this mean?' ¹⁴ "Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say." He goes onto to quote Joel 2, that God has fulfilled the prophecy of over 600 years ago enabling his people to dream dreams, have vision, call on the Lord through the Holy Spirit.

And we would expect the focus of Peter's sermon to then be on the Spirit. But no. It is on the Son, Jesus. Because when the Joel quote ends with these words, ²¹ "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" Peter focusses in on the need to trust in Jesus. And he begins by witnessing to the Jesus of history.

Slide 14

Starting with his life and miracles. V 22, *"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among*

you through him, as you yourselves know.” His death, v 23, “This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.” His resurrection, v 24, “But, God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” Lastly his exaltation, v 33, “Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”

Peter tells the people it’s all about Jesus. He was a historical person whose life, death and resurrection were seen by many, many people. Jesus is the one who started His Church. He is the one who has given his people power. Jesus is the one who unleashes the power of the HS. If we want to tell anyone about the Christian message, we have to start with Jesus.

Friends how often do we talk to others about Jesus? Not God, that’s too confusing. Not the Church. Not faith but Jesus. We need to be people who gossip the gospel and the gospel is all about Jesus. Sometimes we in the Church have been guilty of emphasising entertainment or ceremonies or structures but it is all about Jesus, the historical Jesus. And so, if we want to disciple people, we talk to them about Jesus. If we want to witness to people, we talk to them about Jesus. But not just about the historical Jesus but also the theological Jesus.

Slide 15

For why is this Jesus important? Because this historical life, according to verse 36, proves that he is both Lord and Christ. *“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”*

You have to interpret history properly. And when you do that you realise that Jesus is the fulfilment of God’s OT scriptures. That God sent Jesus to us as a man and it was God who did the signs and wonders amongst the people of Jesus’ day. It was God’s plan & foreknowledge that Jesus was put to death on the cross. It was God who raised him from the dead. And it was at God’s right side that he is now ruling the universe & running the Church.

God is in control. God is growing His Kingdom. God is moving the chess pieces around the chess board. God the Father, the Creator has sent His God the Son to do the work of salvation and is now sending God the Spirit to enable all people to call upon the name of Jesus to be saved. To empower people for the life of faith. To grow His Church.

Slide 16

This Jesus is not just a historical figure, a theological figure but a contemporary figure. He has to be *our* Lord. He has to be *our* Saviour. He has to be *our* Messiah. And so we can’t afford to ignore him, especially after all he has done for you. We can’t afford to just wheel him out on a Sunday because he is our Lord and Boss. So we need to repent and believe. Be baptised and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Peter tells his hearers that it’s all about Jesus. Now that was the name of the television, radio and print campaign that many Churches held a few years ago across our State. It’s all about Jesus. You see a number of Christian organisations got together, hired some marketers, did some research about how to reach out to our community. And they met with their focus groups and they found out that the Church might have bad press, the Bible is seen as an out dated but Jesus, people were still interested in Jesus.

So whether there is 30/300/3000 it should be all about Jesus. If we are witnessing to some one else it is all about Jesus. If you want them to grow in their faith it is all about Jesus. Revival may or may not come to our Church but the centre of all we do and say as a Church is Jesus. Jesus needs to be the centre of all you do in this Church as well. Is it?

Slide 17

3. Spirit, Son & Salvation (verses 37-47)

Because as a result of the day of Pentecost, 3000 people were saved. That's a 25 fold increase in one day. Jesus spent three years building up the Church & when he ascended to heaven it had reached just 120 people. But in one day, one day, the Spirit of God has moved that figure from 120 to 3120. But what did this salvation actually look like in practice?

Firstly the people at Pentecost had come to Jesus and encouraged others to come to Jesus. Peter says *"the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call. So repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."*

Come. Come to Jesus. Don't stay on the edge. Don't look on from the sides. Come. The Church can't grow if those in the Church are not growing in their faith. And our faith is all about Jesus. So come and be involved in the body of Christ. Come to him in prayer each day. Come to the word of God every morning. Come and also commit.

Slide 18

⁴¹ *"Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. ⁴² They **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching & to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*

Because once they came, they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching. They committed themselves to fellowship, to group prayer and to the breaking of bread, most likely having meals together but this would certainly have also included the Lords Supper. These people were committed. They realised that the Holy Spirit had come on them individually, a series of tongues of fire had come down from heaven. But it had happened when they were together as a group. God was working through His Church.

Now there are many analogies for a Christian disconnected from a church: a football player without a team; a soldier without a platoon; a tuba player without an orchestra; a sheep without a flock, a child without a family. God does not want his children growing up in isolation from each other, so he created a spiritual family on earth for us. These Christians were so committed that they were fully devoted to the family of God.

Slide 19

Come, committed and community. Pentecost birthed a community not just a collection of people who each had an individual spiritual experience. ⁴³ *"Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common."* They were well and truly in this together.

Come. Commit. Community. Contribute. ⁴⁵ *"They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."* They cared for those in need. They were generous in how they dealt with one another. Their money or their homes or their time was not their own. Some people opened up their homes for small groups and large and others sold their homes to finance

the work that was being done. But all were generous. All lived sacrificially. All shared with one another so that there was no needy person among them.

Wow. What would that have been like to be a part of that Church? This was not communism where you are forced to share. This was community where you want to share what you have with others. It reminds me of the story of the kindy class who was asked to bring a symbol of their faith to class for "show & tell." The first child stood up & said, "I am a Muslim & this is my prayer rug." The next stood up & said, "I'm a Jew & this is my Star of David." A third child stood up to show and tell stating, "I am Catholic and this is my rosary." The last child got up & said, "I am a Christian and this is my casserole dish."

Slide 20

Come. Commit. Community. Contribute and Connect. They connected with each other and cared for one another. They connected with God in worship and prayer. And they connected with their community because each day, each day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. They didn't remove themselves from the people in their wider community. They knew their job was to witness to their friends and family.

And so they did just that. Not just on special occasions or when they had time. No people came to the Lord daily, so their praise and prayer and proclamation was daily and so was their witness. Being filled with the Spirit, made the Church a missionary Church because the Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit. It is given to give us power to witness to Jesus. And the Lord blessed their witness by adding people to the Church daily.

Slide 21

That was how the early Church responded to God's offer of salvation. They came to Christ, they committed themselves to Jesus. They formed a community of faith, that contributed to the needs of others connected to those around them through witnessing. And so whether we have 30/300/3000 that is what we are called to do as well. To roll up our sleeves and get involved in the work of the Church. To follow the early Churches example, whether God blesses us with revival or continues to grow us in faith, hope and love.

Friends do we want our Church to grow? Then this is the blueprint. It's all about receiving the Spirit of God. It is all about trusting in the Son and it is all about responding to such a glorious salvation. It's about being the Church that God has called us to be.

Slide 22

So, let me end by quoting Bill Hybels: "I believe that only one power exists on this sorry planet that can (transform the human heart). It's the power of the love of Jesus ... & what grips my heart every day is the knowledge that the radical message of that transforming love has been given to the church." **Slide 23** "That means in a very real way the future of the world rests in the hands of local congregations like yours and mine. It's the church or its lights out. Without church so filled with the power of God that they can't help but spill goodness and peace and love and joy into the world, depravity will win the day; evil will flood the world. But it does not have to be that way. Strong, growing communities of faith can turn the tide of history. They can!" "Don't bother looking elsewhere. The Church is it."

So imagine Pentecost happened today. Each of us were given 25 people to disciples. What would we do? We need to be open to the work of the Spirit of God. We would point them to the Son of God. And we point them to the example of the church of God. Actually that is exactly what we should all be doing every Sunday, if we want to be a growing Church.