

I found this extraordinary clip on the internet showing the disciples in the upper room at Pentecost. And it was all in Lego and the tongues of flame were bits of red paper on string dangling down. All a bit comical, but it is effective.

In some ways we have become over familiar with the story of Pentecost, but you can say that about so many other stories and parables in the Bible. There is always the need to try and step back and hear scripture as if it were for the first time. Also, to put ourselves in the position of the original recipients of the gospels and epistles. What was their reaction when they first heard it being read?

So the scene is this: the disciples are gathered in a room and all of a sudden, a violent rush of wind bursts into the room and flames descend upon the heads of the disciples! The commotion in the house where the disciples are gathered is so loud that it quickly draws the attention of the people outside. As a crowd gathers and sees what is happening, many are amazed.

“What does this mean?” some wonder. Others approach the scene with a healthy dose of scepticism: “They are filled with new wine,” they scoffed. In other words, “They’re drunk.”

Just then, Peter jumps up and says something to the effect of, “Hey, we’re not drunk. It’s only 9 o’clock in the morning. What has happened to us isn’t because we’re full of wine, it’s because we’re full of the Spirit!” Peter continues, repeating the prophet Joel’s foretelling of the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh.

In the two millennia that have passed since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that first Day of Pentecost, Christians have associated this day with the beginning of the Church. Although they continued to be seen and consider themselves to be a Jewish sect. But one with a difference because they were experiencing God doing a profound new thing.

Through the centuries, this day has become a celebration of that new thing – a celebration of something that

happened a long, long time ago. And after all those years we still gather to hear those words from the book of Acts again.

However, if we let Pentecost become just another nice, neat conclusion to a story that began thousands of years ago; or just another nice, neat liturgical celebration of something that happened a long, long time ago, it loses its ability to speak to us in the here-and-now. It loses its power.

Imagine a Sunday, in the good old days when we could actually meet together in church. The weather is getting warmer, the flowers are blooming and final plans are being made for summer holidays. We gather in the church for the annual observance of Pentecost and are looking forward to maybe a picnic or BBQ in the churchyard afterwards.

The music begins to play, the choir and people begin to sing, when, all of a sudden, a violent rush of wind bursts into the nave and flames descend upon the heads of everyone who has gathered for the Sunday service. And

just as the faithful attempt to put the experience into words, they realize that everyone is speaking a different language!

Of course, we can be assured of two things: If that happens here today, all of us will make the six o' clock news and somebody is going to be having a lengthy chat with the bishop. Things like that just don't happen anymore. It's just not English as John Stott once remarked. All this stuff about rushing winds and tongues of fire, and spontaneously learning to speak different languages – the whole bit – that just doesn't happen anymore, does it? It's something that has now been confined to video clips with Lego characters.

Well *maybe* it doesn't happen anymore quite like it did in the book of Acts.

But that's not the question that Pentecost is asking us.

The question Pentecost asks us is, *Could* it happen?

*Could* a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit happen?

Well, chances are that if we sit and wait for the Holy Spirit to send fire and wind and all of the trappings we've come to associate with the first Pentecost, we are going to be

disappointed. But if we allow ourselves to imagine what a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit might look like, we may be surprised at what we find.

Maybe a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit causes us to approach a broken relationship with a loved one with new hope and fresh patience. Perhaps a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit nudges us to commit to a ministry – either here at the church or in the community. Maybe a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit is helping us find our feet as a Church in the so called “New Normal” in the weeks, months and years ahead. Or it could be that a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit draws us into a deeper, stronger, more life-giving relationship with God.

The Day of Pentecost calls us to keep watch – to imagine what a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit might look like in our own lives. Of course, if we sit and wait for the same old thing to happen, we’ll always get what we ask for. But if we allow ourselves to imagine something new, something fresh, something holy, then anything is possible.

God promises, not that the Holy Spirit was poured out a long, long time ago; not that the Holy Spirit might be poured out a little bit, here and there, on a chosen few; but that the Holy Spirit *will* be poured out upon *all* flesh and that *everyone* who calls on the name of the Lord shall be heard!