



Pastor's Page

Hot Gospel Days

Well according to my car thermometer the temperature yesterday hit the dizzy heights of 25.5 degrees Celsius (78 degrees in old money.) That's pretty hot for a May Day (or any day) in Britain. And with the temperature expected to rise even higher today (you have been warned) my thoughts go back to childhood Whit Sundays when it always seemed to be hot.

The 'Whit walk' was the event that marked out those Pentecost Sundays of my youth. Hundreds of people lined the streets, many taking part in the procession and others just watching. Each church had its own huge banner held aloft by strong men in Sunday shirts, whilst young girls in fancy bonnets clasped the long bright ribbons flowing from it. Mums in posh hats lined up behind their pushchairs as the uniformed groups prepared to march. The Boys Brigade officer then shouted the inspiring words, "**company, by the left, quick march**" Immediately a contingent of military snare drums sprang into life piercing the afternoon air with their explosive anthem announcing to the town, that the parade had begun. For me the excitement was intense as I marched proudly in my squeaky sandals!

I look back with nostalgia but also amazement at what we were attempting on those walks. I didn't realise then, but those processions were making a bold statement to the neighbourhood about the church. In some small measure we were re-enacting the events of the Day of Pentecost 2000 years ago when the Holy Spirit came and the church was born. Before Jesus returned to his Father in heaven he commanded his disciples to stay *in Jerusalem and wait for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5)* *Jesus knew that they couldn't fulfil the awesome task of witnessing to the ends of the earth without the Holy Spirit's enabling. So as the disciples (120 of them) waited, they prepared for the task firstly by choosing a new team member to replace Judas and also by praying fervently about their mission (Acts 1:12-26).* Then when the day of Pentecost came, Luke tells us they were all together in one place when they heard a sound like the blowing of a mighty wind from heaven filling the whole house. And they saw something like tongues of fire resting on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them. Not surprisingly this caused quite a stir in Jerusalem, so much so that Peter had to stand up and explain what was happening. Using this God-given opportunity the apostle spoke powerfully to the crowd about the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ, calling on his hearers to repent and be baptised in His name for the forgiveness of their sins. The bible says that as a result, about 3,000 people accepted the message were baptised and became part of the church. What a sermon! What a day!

Those whit walks of my childhood were the churches attempt at 'going public' in the streets of North Manchester to witness for Jesus. On the day of Pentecost the disciples 'went public' with the gospel as they preached about Jesus in the streets of Jerusalem. God's plan is still for the church to go public declaring the good news of Jesus and his promise is still that the Holy Spirit will empower us to do this. So lets recommit ourselves to the Pentecost mission (Acts 1:8)

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