



THY
KINGDOM
COME

NOVENA

from Ascension
to Pentecost

Bishop
Anthony
Poggo

SECRETARY GENERAL OF
THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION



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Thy Kingdom Come: Novena
(Written by Bishop Anthony Poggio)
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INTRODUCTION

‘*Come Holy Spirit.*’ This simple, profound prayer is at the heart of *Thy Kingdom Come*. This worldwide wave of prayer which has spread to over 172 countries around the world is rooted in the practice and experience of the earliest church as they obeyed Jesus’ command to wait for the outpouring of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:14 tells us their mission planning was founded in constant, groundbreaking prayer:

They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers

A new community had been born in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They had been given one task: to be Christ’s witnesses to the ends of the earth. Pentecost would show that in God’s plan of salvation there were to be no barriers of language or culture; everyone must hear the Good News of forgiveness and eternal life in their own tongue, a dialect they understood. It wasn’t that they had to learn the language of the church; but, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the church was sent to learn to share Christ in words the world would understand.

The international nature of *Thy Kingdom Come* has a special place in the Novena this year. We are so grateful to Bishop Anthony Poggo, the General Secretary of the Anglican Communion, for taking on the challenge of being this year’s author. His rich African heritage, coupled with his ease at being at home on every continent, will help us all pray ‘*Come Holy Spirit*’ wherever in the world God has placed us.

This year we focus on the early chapters of Revelation for our daily studies. The troubled world in which we live has much in common with the setting of the last book in the Bible. Violence, oppression, abuse of women and children were part and parcel of life in the Roman Empire as they are around the globe today.

We lift God's world to Him in our prayers and then focus that cry more personally as we each think of five people we know who are not yet following the Lord Jesus. We pray that they would come to enjoy the peace, love and eternal life that are found uniquely in Him.

Christians have often been distracted from fulfilling the Great Commission by focusing on things about which we disagree with one another. We hope that this year's *Thy Kingdom Come* will bind us together in the truth of the Good News of Jesus and the task of taking that news to the whole world.

We hope you will join us as we pray '*Come Holy Spirit.*'

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell

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ASCENSION DAY

Jesus is Lord

Revelation 1:4-5

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

‘*Is anyone there?*’

Nobody answers the phone.

There is no response to the knock at the door.

The text message goes unanswered.

The drums sound but nobody comes.

‘Is anyone there?’ In a world where there is so much anger and violence, persecution and injustice, separation and loneliness where, in so many places, women are mistreated, and children are orphaned or abused; it is very natural, when we come to pray to ask the question, ‘Is anyone there?’

The fact is that the devastating impact of evil has not changed very much since John, in exile on the Greek island of Patmos, had the visions which we see in the book Revelation. Terrorists have replaced Roman armies; but the raids on villages, the abductions, death and destruction are much the same. The weapons have changed but the horrors of evil remain the same.

So, it is to us, as it was to the Christians in the province of Asia (modern-day Turkey) that these words come. They are words not simply from an Apostle in exile but from the throne of heaven! And there is good news.

There is someone there!



Anglican Consultative Council service, Ghana

That is the great assurance of today's verses. Some of the Christians for whom John wrote knew persecution, imprisonment, and the prospect of death for their faith in Jesus. There was the temptation to give up because being a Christian seemed so out of step with the culture.

The one who is indeed there: Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, speaks to his people words of grace and peace, encouragement and challenge, comfort and correction. This is the same Jesus who does not change, he is 'the same yesterday, today and forever' (Hebrews 13:8).

There is an African proverb which says, 'The eagle only dares to take the hen's chick, the lion cub has no worries.' A young lion does not have to be afraid of the eagle because the eagle is afraid of the cub's father. As we remember who we are 'in Christ', confidence replaces fear.

As John sees 'heaven opened' the reassuring picture is that we are addressed by the God who made us and everything, the Lord who shared our life, died in our place and rose in victory over death, the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised to all who believe in Him.

Over the course of these next days, think of five people who are on your heart and who you can be praying for as we journey together. As we pray for our five people today, we bring them to this amazing God who know and loves them. In His love and His will there is eternal peace.

THE GOD WHO LOVES

Revelation 1:5-6

To Him who loves us and freed us from our sins by His blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The picture book of Revelation has some challenges for us about how we live for Jesus in a very imperfect world. Some of the pictures can be quite scary. The wonderful truth is that this word to us, begins by setting the Lord Jesus before us and this truth puts our hearts and minds at peace: 'To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins.' What a fantastic combination – love and liberty. God wants us to know that in Jesus Christ we are loved and freed. Individually, we are loved, as one preacher put it: 'As if there were nobody else to love.'

It is easy to feel small and insignificant in today's world. The problems of climate change, hunger, homelessness, war, family breakdown – all of which so often affect the poor most of all – seem so huge.

How can God possibly love us individually? He does.

The Bible tells us this great truth again and again; but, if you find it easier to remember stories, then think of the woman in the Gospels who wanted to be healed and just touched Jesus' robe. She was indeed healed; but Jesus, who was on His way to help a little girl, stopped the crowd and made sure the woman progressed from a touch for healing to saving faith for eternal life. (Mark 5:24-34) Despite all the demands on Him, Jesus had time to stop for this woman. How ready are we to answer God's call to minister to others, in spite of our busy schedules?

Some cultures give great respect to older people but pay little attention to the needs of the young. Others invest in opportunities for young people while undervaluing

those who have given so much throughout their lives but now need help and support. God loves us no matter what our age, background, nationality, ethnicity, gender, education, job, wealth, or status. 'God is love' is one of the simplest and best foundations for how we view God, the world, and ourselves.

Of course, words can be cheap and sometimes meaningless. A proverb from Senegal puts it like this: 'He may say that He loves you; wait and see what He does for you.' That's why the words that follow the assurance of God's love are so full of power: 'He freed us from our sins by shedding His blood for us.' The colour of human blood is the same regardless of skin colour and race. The blood shed on the cross is universal, and signifies the power of Christ's redemptive work over all of God's people, regardless of colour or race.

At the end of book of Revelation, the love of God for us as precious individuals, made in His image, and redeemed in Christ's death and resurrection, is expressed in a very intimate and personal way. We read: 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes.' For someone to wipe our tears we have to let them get close enough.

As you pray for your five people today, hold them in God's presence, and ask that despite whatever challenges they may be facing, that they might allow the Lord close enough to do what He alone can do.



THE GOD WHO SPEAKS

Revelation 1:10-11

I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, 'Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches...'

From the Ugandan trumpet horn known as the eng'ombe, through the great brass trumpets in wedding processions in India to the Maori trumpet of welcome, the Pūkāea, wherever and whenever they are blown trumpets demand our attention. In other cultures, including the Dinka people of South Sudan, drums play a similar role. They are not to be ignored. They may sound a warning, celebrate a long-awaited happy event, proclaim a welcome, or be a call to readiness for battle; but they are never to be ignored.

John, in exile on Patmos, cut off from his friends and church family, no doubt wondering what possible ministry he could still exercise, suddenly has the peace of his Sunday worship shattered by the most glorious noise; the precious sound of the voice of the glorified Lord Jesus. The same Jesus, who was both his saviour and his best friend, reassures the apostle that, far from his work being over, there is new ministry to do.

The result of his listening is the book Revelation which says in its opening verses 'God blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says.' In some parts of the world, that is deeply counter-cultural. As a note in the African Study Bible puts it: 'In many places, Christians are ridiculed, and the Bible is disparaged.'

The trumpet of the Bible, what the Reformation martyr, Archbishop Cranmer, called 'God's Word written', never stops sounding. But whilst it can never be



Renewal Conference, Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago

silenced, we can stop listening. It is so easy to find that making time each day to read the Bible and to ask the Holy Spirit to apply it to our lives, gets crowded out by all the other things that press in on us. These things are often good in themselves – sport, children’s activities, time with friends, and the hours many need to work to balance the family budget – but they can’t be allowed to take the place of God’s word.

In some cultures, the world around us wants us to take a scalpel to Scripture and cut out the bits it doesn’t like: the parts that challenge our selfishness and sin. Let us place Scripture above our culture. For example, where the culture encourages revenge and also the idea of ‘an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth’, we need to teach that God’s word says we should never avenge ourselves but leave it to the wrath of God, for He says that ‘vengeance is mine’ (Romans 12:19). The reality about vengeance is that it promotes a cycle of vengeance. Mahatma Gandhi is quoted as saying, ‘An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.’

As we pray for our five friends today pray that, for them and us, we would hear God’s word to us distinctly and definitively. As Archbishop Cranmer put it ‘Wherein whatsoever is found, must be taken for a most sure ground and an infallible truth.’

THE GOD WHO CREATES

Revelation 1:8

'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Just this one short verse at the beginning of the last book in the Bible says so much about our God. This is the God who made everything, who reveals Himself, and saves us in the Lord Jesus Christ and who takes up residence by His Holy Spirit in the lives of everyone who puts their faith in Jesus.

The New Testament was written in Greek. The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, Alpha and Omega, used here as a description of God, reassure the Christians enduring Roman persecution that, whatever happens, God is in control and they are safe for time and eternity.

If we think back to the first book in the Bible, Genesis, the book of beginnings, we have a picture of God creating everything, including human beings made in His image. He entrusts to them the care of the garden He has made. Reminding us that our God is the Almighty One is something of a wakeup call. It is so easy for our faith to become just one tree in the forest of our lives rather than the Holy God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, being our foundation, our sustaining power, and our eternal home.

God loves to create and to re-create when things go wrong. When this happens, when our sin spoils and scars the world, our relationships with each other and our relationship with God, He already has a plan of salvation ready. It is a plan that will lead to the crucifixion, the resurrection and the glory of heaven for those who believe in His son, Jesus Christ.



The Anglican Communion Office.

An African proverb says: 'If you want to sit under a shade in your old age plant a tree now.' Almighty God, who wants us to spend eternity with Him in the shade of the new heaven and earth He created has planted the tree in the shape of Jesus' cross. By His Holy Spirit we are His new creation, and His desire is for everyone to share in that.

The current desire of so many people across the world to look after our world is a demonstration of what it means to be made in God's image. We have a hunger to be gardeners even if we don't know the Lord of the garden.

As we hold our five people before the Lord today, thank God for them and pray that their and our desire to look after God's creation will lead us to know and love the one who made it.

THE GOD WHO GIVES

Revelation 3:7-8

These are the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens: 'I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.'

Free gift! is one of the great promises of advertising. Even if it is something you don't need or don't want, the idea that it is free often holds a magnetic attraction. All through history many have promised God's favour if only the worshipper will make certain sacrifices, perform particular acts or travel to selected 'holy' places.

The Christian Good News is utterly and wonderfully different. One of the best loved verses in the whole Bible, John's Gospel 3:16 says, 'This is how God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.' God gives and gives and gives again. If we are Christians, we have received the greatest free gift in the world. We have been given eternal life in Jesus Christ, and we have done absolutely nothing to earn it or deserve it. We can rest; we can relax in the truth that it is not about what we do, but what God has done.

Today's verse from Revelation is from the message to the church in the city of Philadelphia in modern-day Turkey. It was a great centre of trade, where buying and selling was at the heart of everyday life. Jesus writes to give them another free gift. He assures them that they can rest in His character. He is not going to give them something that will do them harm, but rather a gift that will grow and develop the church...

He is giving them an open door!



Trilingual Thy Kingdom Come Event, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Does that sound a strange gift? They might have preferred more answered prayers, more gifts of the spirit, a closer sense of His presence, or a whole host of other things. What they get is an invitation to share Christ Himself with their friends, their culture, their city.

Thy Kingdom Come is simply about praying ‘Come Holy Spirit’ on the lives of people we know, perhaps just five people, so that they come to know the saving love of God in the Lord Jesus. Christ tells us that He has opened the door, what we have to do is go through it.

Whenever we speak or act with God’s love in our hearts for those around us, then we are going through the door that Jesus holds open.

Sometimes we feel that our efforts will make little or no difference. There is a humorous African proverb which sets us right. It says, ‘If you think you’re too small to make a difference, try spending the night with a mosquito.’ This proverb is real to me this week as I am writing in Juba in South Sudan, with many mosquitoes.

As you continue to pray for your five friends, ask God to open more doors for you to share His word with other people so that they come to come a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE GOD WHO WALKS WITH US

Revelation 1:12-16

Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across His chest. His head and His hair were white as white wool, white as snow; His eyes were like a flame of fire, His feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining with full force.

‘Is it really you?’ We might say that when we meet up with someone we haven’t seen for years. They look different somehow. They are wearing different clothes, perhaps they have lost or put on weight, maybe they have changed their hairstyle, but there is a familiarity about them that makes us certain it really is them.

However, for John, he had no doubt that it was Jesus who was speaking to him, the one who has broken into his exile, his memories, his loneliness, his faith and hope. There is so much that is different in this amazing, glorious figure he sees. Old Testament images come to his mind as the person comes into focus.

The long robe and gold sash around the chest would bring to mind the robes of the High Priest and point to Jesus as the one who died for us on that first Good Friday, and who truly is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The white hair and flaming fire come from the picture of Almighty God in Daniel chapter 7. There is no doubt that the one who speaks does so with the character and authority of the Lord of all things. Of course, the language of Daniel 7 has been there from the start of today’s reading in the phrase ‘One like the Son of Man’.



Children at an Anglican School in Fiji

John sees the victorious Lord of the Old Testament who is also his best friend from the Gospels. The Son of Man is how Jesus often spoke of himself.

Imagine: you look around on hearing the voice of God and find your closest friend looking at you. A friend who walked with you by the shores of Lake Galilee and through the streets of Jerusalem. A friend who knew how to party at a wedding in the village of Cana and who had seen all His disciples run away in terror from the garden of Gethsemane. This friend has feet 'refined in a furnace'. The phrase speaks of Jesus' humanity just as the rest of the picture points to His deity.

This same friend of John wants to be our dearest friend too. He offers to walk with us. The Son of God who was born in a stable, who fled as a refugee, who earned His living as a carpenter; the one who loved the leper, had supper with the tax collector, befriended the sex worker and fed the hungry.

This same Jesus continues to offer us a hand of friendship.

Pray that your five people will know more of the Jesus who really understands what it is to walk in our shoes.

THE GOD WHO LISTENS

Revelation 2:9

'I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich.'

It is a wonderful thing when a child tells you their first joke. Perhaps they learned it at school and they have been practising it over and over again in their heads until they get home and can tell everyone else in the family! They laugh every time they tell it. Their family do too... even if it is one they have heard before. The fact that they already know the story doesn't stop them listening intently and receiving it as if for the first time. It is all about the relationship.

When we pray, whether for ourselves, our friends or the huge issues of the nations – hunger, war, climate change, or poverty – we are not telling the Lord something He does not already know. We cannot surprise Him but He loves the relationship and in the conversation and the silence we find our minds, hearts and wills become more aligned to the love and plan of God.

It was like that for the church in Smyrna in today's verse. They lived in the most beautiful city, but its beauty was a backdrop for idol-worship and persecution of Christians. The idols today may take different forms – political ideas, what celebrities think, peer-group pressure – but the persecution of Christians is more prevalent today than at any time in history.

So when we share our difficulties with the Lord we share our pressures, failures and fears with our brothers and sisters down the centuries and across the world.

What we find is that the Lord reminds us of our riches.

Ultimate power is not wielded by armies or politicians; it rests with our loving heavenly Father who never forgets us for a second. He is the Father who knows

everything there is to know about us and who, if we have believed in Jesus, will see us through whatever this life throws at us and then welcome us into the glory of heaven forever.

It was true for Christians in Smyrna two thousand years ago and it is true for us now. As well as praying for your five today, hold before God those who really suffer for their faith in Jesus and whom one day we will meet in glory. Let us remember that God understands what they have gone through, and let us continue to stand on that assurance that He also knows all that we go through. The Lord hears our prayers, and He answers them all with a 'yes', 'no' or 'wait'.

When we tell Him of our doubts and how aware we are of our own sin, He reminds us that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and that His forgiveness is free and full. When we tell Him how powerless we feel, He reminds us of the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit.

When we bring our five friends to him and say that we do not know how to share Jesus with them, He reminds us that he has promised to give us the words and that there is no greater sermon than a Christ-like life.



Bishop of Rutana & his wife in Rutana Diocese, Burundi

THE GOD WHO SAVES

Revelation 1:17-18

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if I were dead. But He laid his right hand on me and said, 'Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. I am the living one. I died, but look – I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave.'

There is a story about two miners in South Africa. One was a Christian and the other an atheist. As they mined the rich seam of coal together a piece of the roof came loose and struck the atheist miner on the helmet. Afraid that the whole roof would collapse he cried out 'O God help me!'. His Christian friend smiled and replied: 'There you are, I told you, there's nothing like great lumps of coal for knocking unbelief out of a man.'

There are moments in our lives that make us stop and think about life's big questions. What is the meaning of it all? Is God real? Is there really heaven and, if there is, can I be sure I'm going there? John's vision of Jesus Christ in glory shook him, shocked him, thrilled him and revitalised him.

His first reaction is to 'fall down at his feet as if I were dead'. It is just like Isaiah's reaction, which he reports in Isaiah 6: 'Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man."'

Humanity's natural and right reaction in the presence of our holy and glorious Lord is to realise that He is holy and we are not.

The life of the Lord Jesus was perfect. We read the Gospels and we just know that the one whom we meet there is wonderfully and radically different from anyone else. His is a life as it should be lived.



Delegates at the Lambeth Conference

Realising that we are what the Bible calls sinners, those who fall short of God's standards, is not designed to be a depressing final diagnosis of what it means to be human; but rather an essential step in knowing that God has a rescue plan. That plan was Jesus; He makes an offer and gives us the choice to accept His rescue plan.

For both Isaiah in the Old Testament and John in the New, God's reaction to our need is free and full forgiveness. Isaiah has the symbol of a cleansing coal and John has the healing hand of the Lord Jesus touch and restore him. Remember the story of the Prodigal Son. He has this nicely worked out speech that he had composed in the pigsty; but then finds his father running towards him with a robe, a ring, and sandals, and he is welcomed to a party.

An African proverb says simply, 'Who forgives, wins!' The Lord Jesus who, on the cross, prayed for the soldiers who crucified Him, is the great winner and when we accept Him as our Lord then we share in His victory.

Pray that those whom you especially hold before God may come to know the joy of being welcomed to God's eternal banquet and rest in the forgiving touch of Jesus.

THE GOD WHO CHALLENGES

Revelation 2:4-5

I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

The Lord's letter to the church at Ephesus might have been the most painful one for John to write. This was his church. He is writing home, and although Jesus praises the Church's doctrinal purity and capacity for the hard work of sharing the Good News, there is one devastating challenge. Unless the church rediscovers true Christian love both for the Lord and for one another, their very existence is threatened.

The love of years ago is no use for today.

If love for God has been replaced by mere habit, and if love for fellow church members has given way to bureaucracy and endless committee meetings, then the fire has gone out. The danger is that we become an empty shell with no inner reality.

The African Study Bible puts it like this: 'No one likes to eat stale food or read twenty-year old newspapers. We want fresh food and current news. Let us not give to God a love that is stale and cold. Let us repent of any pretending in church.' It is no wonder then that John's letters are full of encouragements to love each other in the Christian community. The tradition, that in extreme old age John would still urge believers, 'Little children love one another', makes all the sense in the world in the light of today's verse.



Praying women in Barisal Diocese, Bangladesh

Jesus has challenged, as well as encouraged, the church. When the Bible gives us a challenge: something to change, something to work at, something in us that is not as it should be, it is easy to feel, 'I'm hopeless, I don't have the strength to do anything about that. I've tried and failed many times before.' That is not what God wants. That is why He has given us the amazing power of the Holy Spirit so that He can do what we cannot.

If the Lord Jesus were writing a letter to you and me what would He write to encourage us? What transformation, in His grace, has already taken place? In our prayers today let us ask Him to point out to us, in loving challenge, those areas of life in which He wants to see more change, then ask for the power of the Holy Spirit to make those changes possible.

When an artist paints a portrait, the first sketch or outline is added to with beautiful colours and fine brush strokes until the picture is clear. We are to be the image, the picture of Christ to the world, so we pray the divine artist may paint His likeness in us. The words of the old song *Keep Me Shining, Lord* are a reminder to us to live in a way that people may see Christ through us: *'keep me shining Lord, keep me shining Lord, in all I say or do; that the world may see Christ lives in me, and learn to love Him too.'*

Pray that our five may see the Lord Jesus in the lives of His people.

THE GOD WHO EMPOWERS

Revelation 3:20-22

'Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. ²¹ To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.'

Don't you just love these wonderful verses? They are amongst the most precious verses in the New Testament to so many Christians around the world. One of the most famous paintings of Christ by Victorian artist William Holman Hunt shows Christ knocking on a door that has no handle on the outside and can only be opened from within. He said that he painted it, '...with what I thought to be divine command, and not simply a good subject.'

In these verses the Lord Jesus writes to Christians at Laodicea who thought themselves to be spiritually rich, better than others, and needing nothing. He invited them to realise that they were, 'poor, blind and naked'; and to open the door of their church and the doors of their hearts, so that Christ could make them all they were meant to be.

Laodicea was known for its rich cloth, its eye medicine and its wealth; however we are not called to focus on materialistic things. We are called to be like the Lord Jesus. We are never to be defined simply by our nationality, our wealth or poverty, our education or our occupation but by our being, to use St Paul's expression, 'in Christ.'

Inviting Christ to share our life is not just a conversion decision, though it is that 'great transaction' of which baptism is the great illustration and symbol. It is a daily essential, no matter for how long we have been a Christian.

There is an African proverb which says, 'A canoe is never too big to capsize.' There are times when it is our pride, our determination to be self-made men and women, that gets in the way of our becoming more like the Lord Jesus. We are never too big, too old, too mature, too clever, too important to need to be carried by Christ.

Pray that your five may also have the humility to hear Christ knocking and calling at the door of their lives and open the door to welcome Jesus as He waits to welcome them.

Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24, we find that when we open the door to Christ, the guest becomes the host. May we show hospitality to all, for by so doing some people have offered hospitality to angels (Hebrews 13:2).



The Very Reverend Bob Key with Leaders from South Korea

PENTECOST

‘Come Holy Spirit’

Revelation 3:22

‘Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.’

There is an African proverb which says, ‘Listening is the most difficult skill to learn and the most important to have.’ At the end of each of the letters to the seven churches at the start of Revelation we read, ‘Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what He is saying to the churches.’ The message to each church is different but the urgent command to listen and understand what the Spirit is saying is equally important for each one.

We have prayed for our five people, loved by God. We have prayed for our churches and ourselves ‘Come Holy Spirit’ throughout these days of Thy Kingdom Come. Now the day of Pentecost is here, it’s a good time to ask, ‘What is the Holy Spirit wanting me to hear, to understand, to take to heart and to act on?’

When the Lord Jesus wrote to the Revelation churches through John, He wrote with a perfect knowledge of the situation, the hopes, fears, dreams, challenges, faults and failings of every church and of every believer. The letters spring from a holy love which longs for the Christians to know comfort in adversity, strength in opportunity and power in weakness.

The Lord longs for the churches, as he longs for us, to be all we are meant to be, all we can become in the power of the Holy Spirit.

On the first Day of Pentecost, which Luke describes in Acts chapter two, the disciples who, like us, had been praying since the day of Christ’s Ascension,



Church Service at St John's Cathedral, Hong Kong

got far more than they ever imagined. The wind of the Spirit carried them into the streets of Jerusalem to share the Good News of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The fire of the Spirit began to change them from within giving them new gifts and enabling them to do new things and conquer old temptations. The languages given by the Spirit were a sign that Jesus was for the whole world.

Our world needs different languages from those spoken that first Pentecost. There are new needs, new cultures, new generations to reach, but the Gospel of Jesus never changes. He died for sins once. He rose again once. He will come again as Lord and judge.

Like the first disciples, we live in the gap between the mountain peaks of the first and second comings of Christ. We live with that one command ringing in our ears, 'Go and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19). We go forward with the certainty that what the Lord commands in His word He will empower by His Spirit. We do this by being reminded of the saying that we share the word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit and we leave the results to God.

'Lord, help my five people to hear Your call, respond to Your love and accept the Lord Jesus. Amen'



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