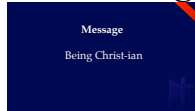


Pentecost Message 2021



When God launched the Church at Pentecost it did not really have a name. Various names and references were applied until something developed in Syrian Antioch north from Jerusalem.

In that place a nickname was coined for the new group. The nickname stuck and we know it as the word 'Christian'.¹

To hear it as it was first spoken it might sound something like 'Little Messiahs', 'Christies' or 'Oily ones'.

That term made Greek-speaking people think about anointing with oil.

People anointed with oil were thought to shine as if spiritually aglow or luminescent with life. They were shining people.

So while this term suggesting 'Little Messiahs' to the Jewish mind or 'Christies' or 'Oily ones' to Greeks may have been intended as a mocking term or pun on the name of Christ the Jesus people in Antioch seemed happy to own it. They did not take offense.

I think it was brilliant from every angle!

This term we know as 'Christian' said two things:

1. It linked these new group of people clearly to the 'Christ' which is the Greek term for the Hebrew term 'Messiah' meaning simply anointed one.
2. It emphasized what made this new group who they were was the anointing of Jesus the Messiah/Christ so that here was a spiritual connection, a flow of anointing from Jesus the Christ to the 'Little Christies'.

At the same time there were some obvious things this new statement did not say:

In being labeled as 'Christians', the Jesus people were not referred to with reference to:

- any special book. They were not 'People of a Book'. There was no agreed 'Jesus book' until a few centuries later.
- a code of law or compliance. They were not defined by a set of rules. This was not about submission as in Islam or a code of behavior.
- They were not being referred to with reference to any code of practice or abstinence being it concerned with caffeine, alcohol or such.
- They were not referred to in terms of organization and governance whether they were episcopal or congregational, or how much water they used in baptism or how long their sermons were and what language they used. All that came later!
- They were not referred to according to race, class or politics.
- They were not referred to according to doctrines such as Trans-substantiation, Predestination or Pre-tribulation millennialism.

Two thousand years later that may all sound quite strange!

They were named with a double-edged reference to the person of Christ and the reality of anointing as evidenced in the way they shone and glowed.

¹ Acts 11:26 - and in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

Part B

As ‘little christies’, Christians were and are people who had been kissed or lovingly touched by the Spirit of God such that the perfume, the shining glow of God in Christ is evident in them.

- God has spoken this love in Words,
- God has given his love in Christ – the Word made flesh,
- God has kissed his love in the Holy Spirit sealing it all in the depth of our hearts.

God’s Words of love and truth are very important. They are the true authority in matters of faith but a kiss from the Spirit of God is something else!



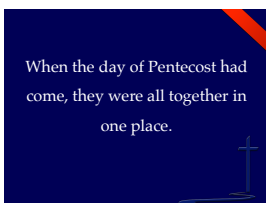
Jesus had told them the Spirit of God was coming to empower, encourage, inspire, accompany those who received and held the Words of Jesus to then be a witness to Jesus as their living Lord.

But when this happened it was like nothing they could have expected.

God’s kiss of the Holy Spirit sets people on fire!
I hope that this is all familiar to you?

Text and Application

So to get to Pentecost.



After waiting for some time in Jerusalem as I described last week, preparing, choosing a replacement for Judas, talking about what needed to be talked about, learning to love one another without Jesus being physically present they got to the point on Pentecost where we read (Acts 2:1)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

Being all together and in one place is not how everyone wants to encounter God.

Many have told me their relationship with God: “Is a very private thing.”
I would say it’s very personal but never private.

Others prefer to keep a low profile and avoid the complexities of close society and shared living. I can understand why as church can get messy so best keep some distance.

Being all together and in one place is indeed not always easy so we typically set things up to avoid too much of that. Western Kiwi culture is quite strong on this.
So life is typically lived individually, privately and with just a few friends, if you a lucky.
So that’s the culture to be aware of.

Yet the Pentecost story of what God did to birth the Church with a baptism in the Holy Spirit begins with a description of being all together and in one place.

There is something essential here I want us to hear.

There is certainly a place for private, individual prayer. Jesus told people to pray in their rooms. He went to lonely places to be pray in solitude.

But:

- If you want a shared corporate meeting with the Holy Spirit of God we need to be “all together and in one place.”
 - Dove not a pigeon
- If you want Church to be the shrine of the Holy Spirit we need to be “all together and in one place.”
 - Will not inhabit a divided house.
- If you want church now to be like church after Pentecost we need to be “all together and in one place.”

That is what the waiting from Ascension in Jerusalem was all about. Being all together and in one place was the necessary prepared state.

Application:

So if we want to be a community of ‘little Christies’ or ‘oily ones’ that the world may recognize as Jesus’ people, we need to be filled with His Holy Spirit and for that to happen we need to be all together and in one place.

I’d like to lead us towards that now: