

Morning sermon: 16th January

The need for some power (Acts 1:1-11)

(Sermon Summary)

No-one likes a power-hungry person, but power is vital for our Christian lives and ministry. Power is needed to change and move things, to make things happen. The risen Lord promises us power: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:8). The Lord had previously promised His disciples that He would send power from on high (Luke 24:49). This church urgently needs that power.

The Holy Spirit is the life of the church

There would be no church without the Holy Spirit. Pentecost, when the Lord fulfilled His promise to the disciples, was a unique event, but we are the results of it! When the Spirit came on the first disciples, they obeyed the Great Commission to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth and eventually it reached us here. The promise of the Spirit went beyond the first disciples to “as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Pentecost was a unique, spectacular, and deeply significant event. There was power in the wind, in the tongues of fire, in the speaking of many languages and in Peter’s preaching. For the first time Peter understood the Old Testament and spoke with great boldness. But the people listening were also changed by this power. They were cut to the heart, and rather than going to the High Priest, turned to the apostles with the question “What must we do to be saved?” After Pentecost the church experienced more of the variety and depth of the Lord’s promise; for example, they were refreshed by drinking of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12). The apostles’ learning process was now complete, and the people devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. The power of the Holy Spirit established the outward-facing mission of the church.

The church has the power to do mission

The church has ebbed and flowed in mission over the intervening years. God has raised up great men like William Carey, Hudson Taylor, and Adoniram Johnson. In times of revival the power has come in remarkable ways, as the Holy Spirit has given boldness and clarity to preachers and worked in the hearts of their hearers.

Where is the power?

We don't need apostles and prophets today, or man-made 'signs and wonders'. Such phony "movements of the Spirit" always have disappointing results, and could well have been sent to test the wider church, exposing its lack of discernment. We have many good books, and we have excellent open-air preachers, but we need that power which cuts people to the heart. We need the Spirit to convict people of sin, righteousness and judgement. Without that, even Peter's preaching would have no effect.

The power is needed!

We need power in our preaching and in our personal witness. Here in Crich, we need young families to join the church. We need power to be holy, to resist temptation, to have assurance, be open and be strong. Preachers need courage, so they do not shy away from hard truths such as hell. And we need power so that our hearers will hear! At a recent carol service, no-one heard the gospel message because they all started to chat as soon as the preacher began.

Pray for power

Pray for a different day, that those who haven't listened will change and will come to fear God and trust in Christ. We want to call the younger generation. We ourselves need power to persevere and press on. We need power so that we don't get swept along with fads and end up denying His name. We need power to be more resilient, wiser and more assured.

So pray these things for ourselves, our church and other churches. We really need the wind in our sails to send us into this New Year.