

You've probably never asked this, and I didn't until this week. What's the reasoning behind the Public Holidays we have?

New Year's Day marks the beginning of the year – why?

January 2nd presumably is a day to get over New Year's Day

Waitangi Day when the Treaty was signed in 1840

Anniversary Day to mark the founding of each province – Otago's is 23 March

Good Friday and Easter Sunday – Christian days to mark Jesus' death and resurrection

ANZAC Day – to remember service and sacrifice in war

Queen's Birthday weekend to mark our Queen's birthday which is actually on 21 April – go figure

Labour Day to mark some protections for workers

Christmas Day – a Christian Day on which to remember Jesus' birth

Boxing Day has a particular meaning in Great Britain, from where the second wave of settlers came

The reasons for these holidays are mixed and varied – national and local days, historical days, memorial days and Christian days.

Today is Pentecost Sunday; in Great Britain it's called Whit Sunday an abbreviation of White Sunday which in ancient times was the name given to the Sunday seven weeks after Easter when the birth of the Christian Church took place – I don't believe it's ever been called that here. It's origins are found in the mists of time but for many years the Monday after Pentecost Sunday was a public holiday in Britain – a bit like Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Christmas Day are public holidays here.

Interestingly in Great Britain over 50 years or so ago it was changed to always be the last Monday in May and is now called the Spring Bank Holiday. We can see the same trend here in the way Good Friday, as a day ceasing from commerce, is being attacked. I should imagine Easter Day and Christmas Day won't be far behind.

Pentecost Sunday has never captured the hearts of Christian people that way Good Friday, Easter Day and Christmas Day have. And yet it is the other of the four days on which Christians remember God's great acts in history.

What I found interesting was to read: **'White Sunday, also known as Whitsunday, Pentecost or Pentecost Sunday, is a popular time for baptisms among some Christian churches.'**

So there we have it, we're doing what's being done in many places today. Erin is going to read from Acts 2

ACTS 2:1-8, 11b-21

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues[a] as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: 'aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!' 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?'

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, 'They have had too much wine.'

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ‘Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

**17 ‘In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.**

**18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.**

**19 I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.**

**20 The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.**

**21 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.’**

22 ‘Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.....

Peter went on to say who Jesus was, what he’d come to do, what was done to him and how he broke the chains of death and how God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ or Lord and Messiah.

37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’

38 Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.’

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ 41 Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

And setting aside the figure by about 2999 people that’s what we’re doing today.

We’re saying:

- That the Holy Spirit came in a unique way that day,
- That the Holy Spirit has been active throughout the nearly 2000 years of the world-wide church’s history
- That the Holy Spirit is active in the world today
- That the Holy Spirit is active among us

And what does the Holy Spirit do?

1. Creates spiritual hunger in people, just as he did then - **‘Brothers, what shall we do?’**

2. Points people to Jesus and encouraging them to be baptised - **‘Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.**

3. Gifts people to praise - **'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them..... We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!'**

4. Gives people visions and dreams

**I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.**

5. Creates community

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

6. Works in, among and through us – would need to quote the rest of the New Testament to illustrate this

So this is a day of celebration, this is the day that's the fulfilment of Christmas, Good Friday and Easter Day and we're doing what Christians have done for centuries.

And what's Ebony doing today apart from following the example of those who've gone before?

- She's saying she's a Jesus person and nailing her colours to 'his mast' so to speak – not Team New Zealand or Oracle but Jesus
- She's doing what he calls us to do
- She's giving expression to what God's done in her life
- She's proclaiming that Jesus lived, that he died for us and he lives again for us
- She's saying that she wants to live for Jesus in the future

BUT:

She isn't saying that she's arrived and she'll never mess up again
She isn't saying that she's got it all sorted

At this moment in time, she's standing with Martin Luther and saying, **'Here I stand I can do no other, so help me God.'**

She's standing alongside CT Studd the English cricketer and missionary saying, **'If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.'**

She's standing alongside Ruth from the Bible saying to Jesus **'For I want to go where you go'**

She's standing with Mary, Jesus' mother saying **'I am the Lord's servant'**

So who are you standing with? And when will you decide to make that public?