

Scott Peck, an American psychiatrist, once wrote a book 'In Search of Stones.' It describes a journey he and his wife took around Great Britain stopping and examining stone arrangements (such as Stonehenge) and letting them speak to him about his own spiritual pilgrimage.

In some ways Trudy and I have been on a pilgrimage.

As I wrote in the Newsletter a couple of week ago Friday 26th May was the 50th anniversary of my father's death – we were there on the anniversary and we spent some time at the cemetery where he was buried and where we placed my mother's ashes 32 years later. His gravestone reads:

**IN MEMORY OF
ESMOND SCOTT
LOVED HUSBAND & FATHER
'Seek him that turns the shadow of darkness into morning....
The Lord is his name.'**

In Christchurch on the way back after having unsuccessfully tried to find her grave once before we found Trudy's maternal grandmother's grave at the Bromley cemetery. It reads:

**Memory
ANNIE GERTRUDE
LOVED WIFE OF B A UNDRILL
CALLED AND CHOSEN JUNE 26TH 1939
'A LIFE OF UNSELFED CHRISTIAN LOVE
AND
NEVER FAILING HELPFUL CHEERINESS'
*Faithful unto Death***

I've always been relieved Trudy is only partly named after her. We found other ancestors close by – it was quite a morning of discovery. We feel that in some way though both have been dead a long time the message of their lives still speaks – what would you like to have written on your gravestone? How would you want to be remembered? This is by way of introduction and explanation.

On the 27th of May I woke to the news that 28 Christians had been slaughtered in Egypt; on the previous Sunday night at the 5:00pm service in Collingwood, we'd heard the NZ representative from Voice of the Martyrs speak about places around the world where Christians face terrible, life-threatening and in many cases life-ending persecution.

I couldn't help comparing what he spoke of with the minister who was once asked what the purpose of his ministry was.

He replied: 'I mainly go around the church and put out fires, soothe hurt feelings, and try to keep people comfortable.'

I felt ashamed as I listened to our new friend from Voice of the Martyrs as I thought of the pathetic things I get upset about as a Christian and as a pastor; and of the trivial things we debate and discuss in our Christian community; the things that 'upset' us; the things we think are important but in the greater purposes of God are of no consequence at all.

Churches need leaders to be around fires, this church needs leaders who've been disrupted by the Holy Spirit. According to Acts 2, the Holy Spirit loves to disrupt and heat things up.

Acts 2:1-21

2 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 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? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – 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.'

As Christians we're nothing without the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the 'more' that makes our lives, our deeds, our faith more than we could make it on our own. A highlight in believers' baptism is when we lay hands on the head of the newly baptized and pray for the filling and reception of the Holy Spirit. The promises God makes to us in baptism, as well as the promises we make to God in baptism, work only through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit isn't optional equipment for a Christian. We're nothing without the Spirit's work.

A young man emerged from church and said to the preacher, 'Thanks for a good sermon. God really spoke to me today.'

The preacher, naturally delighted, asked, 'How?'

'Your sermon gave me the guts to contact my father and tell him I'm not going to do law at university next year. And if he doesn't like it – tough!'

The preacher startled said, 'don't you mention where you've been this morning!'

The point I make is that the preacher didn't do that. Something, some mysterious but undeniable power had entered the exchange between the preacher and the listener and took the sermon in a direction not intended. Something had taken hold of that young man's life.

Has this happened to you? There you are, going about your life, and something strange happens that clearly isn't attributable to you or your efforts. Something happens that didn't arise from within you but from outside you; something more [I'm nearly 17 and I'm standing at the piano talking to Cliff Reay - where did that come from?].

Or maybe you have some thought or experience in which you sense more is going on than you can adequately describe. Where did that strange thought arise? Why did that experience happen to you?

Someone makes a remark about the current political climate, a comment that's a hurtful put-down of someone or some group. And you speak up. Even though you're not a courageous person by nature, you speak out. You're surprised by your actions. Where did you get such courage?

In such moments you realize that there's more going on in the world, more going on in you, than you first thought. You know that the world is more than that which can be touched, tasted, or defined.

As Christians we believe that this strange experience of 'more' is a typical, everyday experience of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the one God has three aspects, three unified but distinctive characteristics: God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, despite all Lloyd Geering and Stephen Fry are reported as having said in the Listener.

The Holy Spirit is the 'more' of Christian life — that unseen but undeniable power, the presence of God the Father and God the Son.

We read Acts 2; believers had gathered for a meeting. The risen Jesus had been with them for the fifty days after Easter, but now Jesus had ascended. What now? Does anybody have any good ideas for how we can keep this Jesus movement going? Jesus has commissioned us to go everywhere and let people know the good news that God is redeeming the world, but how are we going to do that? [Someone pipes up, 'we could do a series on walking across the room' — another comments — 'that's a good idea.']

Then! There's a rush of wind, tongues of fire descending. They're speaking in many different languages, and there are signs and wonders. Here's a meeting that's more than a meeting. Here's a gathering of people that's more than a gathering of people who think and act the same.

The Acts of the Apostles makes clear that the Holy Spirit induced this disruption. Disruption, embodied in the words and deeds of Jesus, now accelerates, goes worldwide, infects his followers, and pushes them out of their comfort zones all the way 'to the ends of the earth' (1:8). Christ's body, the new visible presence of the Trinity, is God in motion into the world.

At Pentecost, Jews from all nations were convened, and suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house, flames of fire alighting on each person. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak in other languages, enabled by the Spirit. They spoke of God's deeds of power. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and all the rest of the far-flung Jewish diaspora heard in their own languages a new thing. That new creation by the surprising work of the Holy Spirit would bear the name **CHURCH**.

Church is what happens when the Holy Spirit creates more than we could have or even can create on our own.

We're nothing without the Holy Spirit. Little in the Christian faith is self-derived. Jesus commands us to live courageous, countercultural, demanding lives – did you know that? He orders us to love each other; to love our enemies, to take up the cross and follow, but never are we left to our own devices.

The Holy Spirit is more than a personal, vaguely spiritual experience; the Holy Spirit is who God is and what God does as the Trinity, whether we feel it or not — God's anything-but-vague self-presentation. **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE MEANS BY WHICH GOD THE FATHER AND SON GET INVOLVED IN HUMAN HISTORY.** The Holy Spirit is the primary means through which God becomes real and present to you in your life, enabling you to be more than you could if your life hadn't been grasped by the Holy Spirit.

Some who witnessed the gift of tongues at Pentecost mocked those who were possessed by the Spirit as drunk, under the influence, out of control. Peter, however, denied they were drunk, saying, **'it's only nine o'clock in the morning!'**

Then, under the power of the Spirit, Peter preached, drawing on Joel's dramatic imagery to indicate that a new age was breaking out.

His sermon would become the model for Christian preaching in Acts, proclaiming that Israel's messianic hopes were now fulfilled, even expanded, in Jesus Christ.

Remember where Peter had been; he was unable to say one faithful word when confronted by people in the courtyard before Jesus's crucifixion (Luke 22:54-62). Now he boldly preaches! No exclusively human explanation accounts for Peter's courage. Peter's preaching is solid evidence that Peter was under the influence of a spirit other than alcohol....., the Holy Spirit!

According to Peter, this was the new age. In former days, the Spirit was given to a few individuals; people empowered to speak God's truth. But there would come a day, prophesied Joel, when God's Spirit would be poured out on all. That Spirit flood would result in prophetic sons and daughters, visionary young people, and old folks daring to dream. From the lowest to the highest, men and women alike, would speak words from God.

All, even those who were previously voiceless and hopeless, would be enabled to speak up and speak out in God's name. Thus Peter boldly proclaimed that the work of the Spirit is no different from the work of Jesus Christ. To have the Spirit is to have Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit doesn't enable us to say more than Jesus; the Spirit enables us to speak of Jesus, leading us to say things we would not venture on our own.

The Spirit disrupts settled power arrangements, transforms ordinary people into courageous witnesses, and kicks down boundaries we've erected between each other. All these signs and wonders are accomplished through the 'more' called Holy Spirit.

When we pray, 'Come, Holy Spirit!' it's as if we ask, 'Bring us more, Holy Spirit! Shake our foundations, send us forth, kick us out, set us on fire, and give us something more interesting to say than we would have said on our own!'

So here we are - another Queen's Birthday Weekend; another Sunday at church; another service of worship. We've gathered to seek consolation for our aches and pains, confirmation of our illusions, a purpose-driven life - maybe, additional aid in the preservation of the status quo, or whatever it is that we worship rather than Jesus.

And then something intrudes. Something stirs our moderate meeting, the place seems to shake, there's smoke and fire, there are tears that you can't explain, you're given a vision beyond what you currently see; a thought comes that didn't arise from within your mind.

Would that it were so! Pray that it might be!

One of the consequences of the Holy Spirit coming on that group of Jesus' people is they met to do certain things; one of those things was

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

In some small way we'll do that now and as we do let's sing two songs of invitation to the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of Pentecost.

COME HOLY SPIRIT..... hear us calling

HOLY SPIRIT COME, HOLY SPIRIT FALL, HOLY SPIRIT FLOW