

Words have power. If the Prime Minister, chatting about nations being 'fantastically corrupt' didn't know that words were powerful, I bet he does now. So does Her Majesty the Queen! I'm tempted to reflect a little on the nature of communication in the electronic age, and the way a statement can be around the world in fractions of a second, but I think the underlying truth is that it's always been the case that something worth listening to has been gossiped about and circulated. People were saying much the same thing about the printed word 500 years ago. Only the timings have changed. When words hit home, people listen. When words and lives tell the same story then people are transformed. That's the story of the first Pentecost, and we are part of that transformation.

This week pupils from the Minster Primary School have been 'Experiencing Pentecost'. There are experience stations all around the Minster - have a look. We began with 'Waiting', because that's what Jesus, just before his ascension, told the disciples to do. Wait. We discussed not being able to wait - like for Christmas or a birthday - but even then the date will come. Jesus didn't say when, only that, if they waited, the Spirit would come.

And, at the end of that waiting a gathering of frightened people, whose leader had been killed because of a plot between the Jewish authorities and the Romans, who might well be next for execution themselves, suddenly became a fearless group of street evangelists who were prepared to die for their Lord. On a world stage - Jews from across the world were supposed to make it to Jerusalem for one of the three great festivals - a story which will transform the world starts its life in a bunch of people who don't quite know what they are waiting for, but were faithful nonetheless. The words they speak then shoot round the world as powerfully as any tweet - and they last for much much longer.

The same power which transformed the disciples has transformed people like us down the ages to keep the story of Christ at the forefront of the world's agenda, and to proclaim good news. The story we tell, in word and action, is part of it too. This is some power and it is worth celebrating. So what are we waiting for, you might ask? How does this power from the Holy Spirit - the energy, the breath of God, work in our lives and in our churches and communities today? The story from Acts 2 gives us some clues, and it is depicted in my favourite Nave window, just by the pulpit.

What comes together to make power happen? What is the waiting like? Have a look at the window. Firstly: Jesus's followers were together in one place. It's a group of people. They wait together, and they pray together, and power happens when they are together. This is just as true now - nothing is more powerful than when Christians of different traditions pray together.

Secondly: they are praying and waiting. Power happens when we know our need, wait and ask. Jesus's followers were told in Luke and Acts to wait, and later in Acts 1 they are described as 'constantly devoting themselves to prayer.' The Archbishops have invited the Church of England to pray for evangelism at this time - and have not said much more than that. The waiting is the thing, not a detailed shopping list.

Thirdly: Power happens when we focus on Jesus. In Acts 1:15 the believers are 120 people, only united by what they have experienced and by their relationship to Christ. That's not

too many, and yet they are the ones who have never wavered, and continue to believe, even though they lost Jesus once when he died and lost him again when he ascended to the Father. They could have lost hope and motivation, but they focussed on Jesus and what he said, even though they did not know when these things would happen. Jesus was more important than what they wanted in the short term.

In none of this am I saying that we can make God do things- for the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills. But stories of revival and great deeds down the years of the church are often based on the united vision of a group of people, sacrificial prayer, and a focus on God as seen in commitment and study. This is hard work, and does not happen by turning up once a week for an hour or so.

And then: What is power for? What is the waiting for?

In the Pentecost window there is a wonderful movement. The wind blows the flames onto each disciple, and they are on fire, blown out into the street from the room where they were praying. Some of us may be quite pleased with what we've got and don't want to be too disturbed. Well - some of the Spirit's work is to comfort and heal and reassure. But if we are comfortable the Spirit will disturb us. Pentecost challenges the church to ask why we keep this good news in, and have such nice services, when out there are people from every nation under heaven. We have something worth listening to, a powerful story, and words which will transform the world.

The proclamation of Good News: forgiveness (Luke 24: 47 - forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations), reconciliation between God and humanity (Acts 2: 38 - repentance and faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit are all of a piece); to be witnesses (Acts 1. 8) and tell and be the story of Jesus, not just here but outside too. Pentecost starts in a room and continues in the market place and ends up across the world.

So are you waiting, with hope? The Spirit is at work, poured out on the Church. We are here because some people waited and were filled and did what God wanted. We are here because someone told us, and their words caught fire in us. It would only take a bunch of people like us to say 'that's fine. I'm sure someone else will do it' to stop that movement in its tracks. It could be our generation which keeps it in. But it won't be, will it?

In the words of a prayer from Holy Communion: 'May we whom the Spirit lights bring light to the world'. Amen.