

Pentecost B

Last Sunday we were told Jesus said to them, "Go out into the whole world, proclaim the Good News to all creation. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved; those who do not believe will be condemned." ... And so the Lord, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.'

The Acts of the Apostles put it this way: 'As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight.'

To understand what is happening here, it is helpful to look at the death of Elijah the Prophet. Elijah knew his time was drawing to a close, as did his disciple Elisha, as did in fact the whole company of prophets. Elijah does his best to dissuade Elisha from being with him at this time, but Elisha will not be put off, for he is Elijah's disciple. So Elijah goes on with Elisha with him, and he says to Elisha, "Make your request. What can I do for you before I am taken from you?" Elisha answered, "Let me inherit a double share of your spirit."

Elijah said, "If you see me while I am being taken from you, it shall be as you ask; if not, it will not be so." The account of his passing tells us that as they walked along a fiery chariot came between them and took Elijah up into the heavens. Elisha saw this and cries out, "My father, my father." The story tells us that the whole company of prophets now recognize Elisha as Elijah's heir – recognizing that the spirit of Elijah had come to rest upon Elisha.

If Elijah had not gone away, Elisha would always have been his disciple and never the prophet. Elijah's going away is essential for the coming of his spirit on Elisha with power

The Ascension and Pentecost experiences are the same – the Lord's going is followed by the empowering of His disciples through the coming of His Spirit upon them.

Jesus has spent Himself

Jesus has given them all He has

Now Jesus is free to go – indeed He must go

In Pentecost they experience His Spirit powerfully upon them

In Pentecost they are empowered to do what Christ did

In Pentecost can now see they are not abandoned in the Ascension but empowered with Holy Spirit

This is what Pentecost is all about

The empowerment of Christ's disciples

Today we celebrate Christ's coming upon US

This is the climax of our relationship with Christ

NB It presupposes a period of prior discipleship

A time where we strive to hear His word and make it our own

BUT now with His Spirit upon us, we are enabled to be His witnesses

We can go about His work because His spirit is upon us

Today we celebrate our coming of age as Christians