

## The Word on the Streets



Social distancing, for the disciples, ended on the Day of Pentecost. After the death of Jesus, the core group of eleven men had literally been in lockdown, because they feared the authorities who had had their Master crucified might now be coming after them. That changed once they knew Jesus had been raised from the dead, but still they kept a low profile, going back to Galilee, where they were much safer than in Jerusalem. Now, following His ascension, they were back in the city again, with more than a hundred other followers of Jesus, continuing to keep out of the public eye, waiting, as He had told them to do, for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

On the Day of Pentecost the Spirit came, and the disciples went public about the resurrection. The time for avoiding the crowds and staying silent was over. Out they went into the streets, and Simon Peter, who a few weeks before had been denying that he even knew Jesus, stood up to declare that God had raised Jesus from death, setting Him free from its power.

Nobody, it appears, said “Prove it!” There would have been local people among the Jerusalem crowd who knew all about the crucifixion of Jesus, but, had any of them challenged him, Simon Peter could have retorted, “Show us where His body is, then!” He, and they, knew that the tomb was empty. Some people might try to explain that fact away

by claiming the disciples must have stolen the body, but if he had known it was a hoax, why on earth would Simon Peter be risking his own life now by openly declaring that Jesus had been raised?

In fact, the response of the people to Simon Peter's words was to ask "What shall we do, brothers?" The answer they received was, "Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit." About three thousand took those words to heart, and were added to the early church that day. This was a new beginning, not only for the disciples of Jesus, but also for those who heard their message and believed.

Simon Peter announced: "God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away – all whom the Lord calls to Himself." We can give thanks because that includes you and me.

**A prayer:**

*Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we remember how on the Day of Pentecost the followers of Jesus were gathered together in one place. We are sad that we cannot gather together with our fellow believers at this time. Assure us that the same Holy Spirit that came to the Church on that day is still with your Church now. Help us believe that although we are physically separated we are still united in the fellowship of the Spirit. May your Spirit, powerful and unpredictable as the wind, be the driving force of our lives. We ask it in the name of your Son, our living Lord, Jesus Christ. AMEN*

- **Rev John Barnett**

**Image:** origin unknown.