

Gal. 5.22, Neh. 8 THE PASSIONATE CHURCH:LIVING LOVING & JOYFUL LIVES, MB, 6.10.19

On Pentecost Day one Spirit-anointed sermon brought 3,000 people to faith in Christ. Today we all too often preach 3,000 sermons to bring one person to Christ! *Why the difference - especially since we in the 21st century have the same Holy Spirit? Perhaps this is the answer: it's one thing to have the Holy Spirit: it's another thing for the Holy Spirit to have us!* Our daily prayer needs to be: *Come, Holy Spirit, renew your church, begin with me.*

These 5 weeks we are focusing on Passion. This passion centres on Christ who passionately loved us and died on the cross for our sins, so he could save us and our community and all the people of the world. Then Christ sent the Holy Spirit to fill us with the same passionate love of Christ, to worship and pray to the Lord with great joy, and to bring the Gospel to the whole world. Today we focus especially on the love and joy the Holy Spirit fills us with.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE. God is love...loves comes from God... and so it should not surprise us that the first fruit Holy Spirit grows in us is love. **God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.** The first and clearest mark of the presence of God in the church and in our lives is love – love for God and love for people. **By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.** Last week we said that people will be led to Jesus as they see how passionately and joyfully we sing our love for God. This week we focus on how people will be drawn to Jesus when they see how passionately we love one another. In the early church a Roman philosopher reported to the emperor what good people the Christians were and how much they loved one another. Love is the great mark of God, and of the church, and of Christians.

How do you love people? James helps us: **Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.** When we listen to people we learn what is hurting and upsetting them, and we are in a better position to help them. Instead of being angry with them and judging them, we put ourselves in their position, and do what we can to support them and lift them out of it. We can all do this. Bonhoeffer says: *the first duty of love is to listen.* Listening can be tiring work, but it is something we can all do. Sometimes after we have listened, people will say: *thank you for listening. I feel so much better.* And we haven't done anything, but listen to them. *A burden shared is a burden halved,* they say.

We can love people through small things. A woman didn't have quite enough money to pay for what she'd brought to the checkout and so was trying to return some of it. The person behind her said they'd pay the small difference. The woman said: *Nobody has ever done anything like that for me,* and then she started to cry. Such a small act of love, made such a big difference to this woman. Small acts of love can have eternal value. (Mrs Atkinson). It could be a smile, or a friendly greeting, or a word of appreciation, or a card, or a plate of food for a sick neighbour, or an unexpected dinner invitation or....

Sometimes we love people through big things. A person picks up an elderly person to go shopping or to go to church for year after year. A wife cares for her sick husband for year after year. **Love is patient and kind... love is not self seeking ... love always perseveres.. love never ends.** Paul says in today's reading from 2 Tim. 1: **God gave us a Spirit of power and love and self control.** Whether love is listening or doing small or large things, love is the fruit of the Spirit, and it gives us power to persevere and control ourselves for the good of others. Love is not just things we do. Paul speaks of **the way of love**, and calls on us to **do everything in love.** Paul's prayer for his people is: **May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.** Here is a good daily prayer: *Lord help me to grow in loving others as you have loved me. Come Holy Spirit and grow in me the fruit of love. Fill me with passionate love for you and others. Amen.*

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS JOY. I will see you again and you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy. When the Lutheran Church celebrated its union on the Tanunda oval in 1966, the 10,000 people present that day saw this verse in big print on the front of the grand stand: **the joy of the Lord is your strength.** Then we all went home and most of us forgot those words. But I didn't. They took hold of me. **The joy of the Lord is MY strength.** Rejoicing and celebrating what Jesus has done for me is **my joy and strength.** My chief passion is not debating and arguing over doctrinal differences, but rejoicing in and gaining strength from what Jesus has done for me. My chief goal is not getting every little Gospel point right, but it is getting the Gospel out, so people may believe and be saved.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy... Love and joy follow one another and belong together. Mother Teresa once said that love is not true love unless it is given joyfully. When the joy of the Spirit fills our hearts love is not a burden, but a delight. If *a burden shared is a burden halved*, then it is even more true that when love is given joyfully, *a joy shared is a joy doubled*, for giver and receiver. Nehemiah was reading to the people parts of the OT which they hadn't heard for years. As he read people **mourned and wept** because they were convicted by the Word of God. But Nehemiah said: **do not mourn or weep... Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Then all the people went away to eat and drink and to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy.** Here love and joy are wonderfully combined. The people celebrate with great joy at hearing God's word, and in love they go and share their food with those who have none.

The fruit of the Spirit is love and joy. When we joyfully celebrate the love of God in worship, the Holy Spirit leads us out to share this love and joy with others. And when people see our passion for God and others, H S will work through us to draw people to Jesus. May Holy Spirit fill us with such passion that we out love and out rejoice the world. *Come Holy Spirit, renew your church; begin with me. Amen.*