

Pentecost 2025

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[0 : 0 0] I'm ready now. I wonder how we know things.

We can read a lot of things, of course.! We see things on TV, on the news, on TV shows. Of course, we're taught so much of what we know at school, or university or college, or your friend can tell you something.

And maybe there's just some things that you know. You don't really know how you know them, but you just do. Take this picture, for example. How can we know God?

That picture, for example. Now, as you can see, one of them is a Viking warrior, and we know that because of the helmet. Quite a scary-looking guy, though, I think you might agree.

And the other one is Napoleon Bonaparte, who, as everyone knows, was very short. Now, I might not be telling you anything you don't already know here, but this next part is going to make Gordon very happy because I never normally mention anything like this.

[1 : 1 1] The Viking horned helmets were introduced. I'll get there eventually. They were introduced by Wagner, one of his favourites, for the epic Ring Cycle Opera.

I don't know if anyone's seen that. Any fans? Go on. Good conversation later. I can't exactly admit to it. Small group, as it might be, but...

I can't... Exclusive, that's the word, yeah. You certainly have to have watched it, I dare say, or listened to it to get in, so that's me out. Anyway, but...

So, Vikings didn't tend to wear horned helmets. I don't... That's very disappointing for some of you, but... Also, though, Napoleon was said to be 5'2", but was, in fact, 5'7", which made him slightly above average height for people of that time.

So, in many years, of course, people have known these facts, but more recent discoveries have shown us that they aren't true. And that's just two random examples, and you might know other examples.

[2 : 2 5] You can tell me later. I'd be interested to hear if you know any other things that people absolutely know that it turned out to not be true. And human wisdom, so we think, is timeless, but, of course, as we've just seen in those two examples, it isn't really timeless at all.

But the wisdom of God, our passage tells us, is timeless. It's mature, changeless, and stable. It doesn't wax and wane with fashion, but has always been there.

Verse 7. People of the world don't always understand this, especially those who are rulers of this age, whatever age that might be.

Maybe when Paul was writing these words, he was thinking about Pilate and the Romans and the Jewish religious authorities. They showed how much they did not understand the wisdom of God and how much they thought of their own wisdom by crucifying Jesus and thinking that would be an end to his power and authority.

At the cross, the two rulers and the two wisdoms collided. Caesar's worldly wisdom of military power and pride met Jesus' divine wisdom of humility, service, and sacrifice.

[3 : 44] On the Friday afternoon, Rome was triumphant. The rulers of this age look to have won as usual. But by Sunday morning, things looked very different.

The Lord of glory was vindicated and so was the wisdom of God. Now, I'm always talking whenever I get a chance about my favorite book, Wonesome Dove, which one or two other people have read and enjoyed just as much as me.

So feel free. Very good book. But for a while there, and this tends to be how I do things, read one author and then read lots and lots of the same stuff. So for a while, it was a Sherlock Holmes book.

Any Sherlock Holmes fan book? More than Wagner notes that. But anyway, Sherlock Holmes is great stories. And the TV shows are good.

This first one was good to start with. I don't know if you watched this one. Sherlock, it got very weird towards the latter end of it and we even stopped watching it. So I'm very happy to stick with.

[4 : 47] Anyone know who that one in the middle is? Basil Rathbone. Very good. And Jeremy Brett. Well done. Yes, thank you. Just a little impromptu quiz there.

Yes, Basil Rathbone and Jeremy Brett. And like many people, one of the things I really love reading the Sherlock Holmes book is when someone comes to see Holmes for help and Mrs Hudson brings him upstairs to his rooms and he immediately tells the visitor a few things about themselves that there's no possible way he could ever have known.

And every time the person and even good old Dr Watson every single time are completely astonished by the things that Sherlock Holmes knows about them and of course they feel that somehow he's read their minds and knows what's going on in their lives.

But of course we know that Holmes is just a keenly observant person and has great knowledge about all sorts of different matters the type of mud in South Essex or something like that all these sort of obscure things that he knows about and that always aids him in these deductions.

But sadly of course Sherlock is only fiction despite all the numerous letters that are continually sent to 221B Baker Street asking for his help apparently. But we can't really know what's in another person's mind.

[6 : 07] Sherlock can't and neither can we. And we especially can't know what's in God's mind. That's what Paul's saying in verse 11. For who knows a person's thought except the spirit of that person which is in him.

So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. But there's one who does know what's in God's mind as we have just seen there and that is the Holy Spirit and the spirit can reveal God's mind to us.

Now our question at the start was how can we know God? And the answer is we can know God because the spirit makes him known to us and the spirit allows us to comprehend the thoughts of God.

Now it's perhaps important to see what this verse is not saying. That is Paul's not suggesting that the spirit will show us the entirety of God. That's not something that we could possibly take in.

But what the spirit does reveal to us is the entirety of God as revealed through his word. Everything we need to know about God can be found in the Bible and light is shone on it by the spirit.

[7 : 12] God has made himself known to us because he wants us to know him and he wants to know us and the role of the spirit is to make that a reality. What a wonderful promise for a lifelong journey we make as followers of Jesus.

To know God and to be known. To have the spirit at work in us and day by day growing in our knowledge of the Lord of glory. But the spirit does not only work in the lives of people who already believe.

Anyone who comes to know God does so because the spirit works in them as well drawing them to God. Maybe that's you this morning. Maybe you feel that draw, or that work of the spirit in your life bringing you to a knowledge of God inviting you to begin that journey towards God and the life that he offers through the spirit.

Your part is to turn to God and accept that offer and we pray that you would take that step today. And if you do, we would love to chat to you about that later. The spirit came down in that room on Pentecost all those years ago.

They were never the same. Their lives were forever changed and the world, as we read an act, was turned upside down. God promises to change us through the spirit and the blessings he brings.

[8 : 29] Let's pray and open ourselves up to all that he has for us. Let's pray together. Lord, we thank you that your wisdom is made known to us through the spirit working in our lives.

We pray that we will accept all you have for us and that we will grow in our knowledge and love of you. In Jesus' name, Amen. Water, water, everywhere and all the planks did shrink.

And yet, 703 million people, almost one in ten of the world's population, do not have access to clean, safe water today.

Almost one in ten. We get to go home and turn on the tap and clean water comes out and we don't think any more about it than that. And yet, one in ten, fellow humans don't have clean water.

We're going to be talking about how the Bible uses water as an image to help us think about the gift of God, the Holy Spirit. But today, we can't talk about water without being concerned for those who don't have clean water.

[9 : 46] It's good for us to get involved in caring for those in great need and helping them wherever they are in the world and providing clean water for everyone.

Now, I've got some pictures of things that we use water for. Oh, that's the clean water. Right, there we go. If we are thirsty on a warm day, a glass of water is just great for quenching our thirst.

In our reading from John's Gospel, the Lord Jesus tells you and me that if we are thirsty, we should go to him and he will give us water to drink and indeed, living water will well up within us and flow from us into our neighbors, our friends, our family, the community all around us.

God's Holy Spirit to quench our thirst. are we thirsty for righteousness? Do we watch the news and get thirsty for justice in the world?

For people to treat one another with dignity and respect? For an end to stories of cruelty and wickedness?

[11 : 16] Are we thirsty for justice and righteousness? are we thirsty for more of God in our lives?

We're here because we know something of God but are we parched? Are we thirsty? Are we longing for more of God in our lives?

Jesus says, come to him. That's it. Come to him and ask him. Lord Jesus, I'm thirsty. Give me to drink.

And abundantly more than we could imagine, Jesus will pour his Holy Spirit into our lives. All we need to do is come to him and drink.

here's two pictures of the Atacama Desert in Chile and it's pretty obvious what the difference is between the two.

[12 : 24] No, there has not been a team of farmers at work in the desert. There has not even been a team of engineers digging channels and irrigation projects and pipes of water into the desert.

The difference between the two is that it rained. The life generating water has poured down from heaven and re-energized the life that was already in the desert, bursting it into flourishing a colorful life in a place where previously there was sand and dust and emptiness.

This is like the picture that Jane read for us from Revelation 22. Something is sent from the Father and the Son.

And our creeds tell us that what was sent from the Father and the Son is the Holy Spirit. In Revelation 2, picture there's a river of water of life flowing from the Father and the Son and generating life on its banks.

The trees of life flourishing. Not that we might simply look at them and be delighted by them, but that these trees might bring life and healing and well-being to all the nations.

[13 : 56] are you weary today? Are you just tired with the bad news that constantly seems to sweep at our door?

Have you lost strength in the struggle to keep going? Not so much the financial cost of living, but the emotional cost of getting through the day?

Are you running out of steam? Today is the day of the Holy Spirit rainfall. Today is the day when God opens the floodgates of heaven and pours out his life-generating Holy Spirit upon us and into us and through us.

Today is the day when the desert flourishes into beautiful bloom the day when we can be refreshed by the presence and work of God's Holy Spirit.

Today is the day to throw away your umbrella and to get outside and stand in the rain and get drenched right through. Jump right in.

[15 : 16] God is pouring his Holy Spirit out upon you. Stand under the downpour of God's grace. Be drenched in his life-giving presence. Come to Jesus and be renewed in the Spirit.

Here's a picture from history. Does anyone remember having one of these? Yeah? Hands up. We had one of these.

A twin tub washing machine. Who would rather have one of these? You don't have to stand and watch it all the time.

Although the first time my mum got one she did stand and watch it until it was finished. Just to make sure it wasn't going to leak. To live is to get dirty.

You might as well say it. It's true for all of us. You walk down the street, you go in the garden, you go to the park, you go to the shops, whatever it is you're doing, we seem to be dirt magnets.

[16 : 29] We need to get clean. We need to clean our clothes, our utensils, our pots, and our pans, and all the things we have in our home.

Here's a wee by the way thought. For too many people in our world, the only water they have to wash in is already polluted. How can you clean yourself or your clothes or your pots or pans in dirty water?

Don't we feel the need to help those folks get the clean water that we take for granted so that we can clean our stuff and ourselves? we are like magnets for God denying dirt, which we somehow suck towards us and then it clings to us and entangles us until we trip up, trying to run the race of following Jesus.

us. we hear God's words of grace inviting us to come to him, promising us the clean water of the Holy Spirit, and somehow we turn away.

And rather than going to the life-giving river of the water of life, we seek out the muddy pools, and we wallow there. We choose the dirty water of God's absence.

[18 : 10] In the presence of the Spirit, we become aware that we are not clean, and we need to be clean. It isn't pleasant.

Nobody likes that news, but we need to hear it. We need to not turn away. We need to stick with this news.

Compared with Jesus and the presence of the Spirit, we are not clean, but the next part of the news is we can be clean.

We can be made clean. Not by something we do, but by the work of the Holy Spirit and the cross of Christ and the resurrection of Christ.

the Spirit does not make us aware of the dirt which sticks to our lives so that he can condemn us, but so that he can cleanse us, wash us, and make us shiny and clean.

[19 : 14] sin. What is that sin that you've been struggling with for years? You know it's sin, but you keep going back to it and you can't give it up.

What are those words that you spoke last week that have troubled your heart since you spoke them and you can't forget them?

what is the selfishness in your life that makes everything about you and what you want? Where are the things in your life that you long to have washed clean from you and removed from you?

This is your day. Today is the Holy Spirit washing day. today is the day God is cleansing our lives from the inside out.

Not just on the surface, but deep within. You can be washed clean. Why would you not run to Jesus for this?

[20 : 30] Why would you not come to the living water and be made right with God through his spirits work within you? And you can do that right now. You can have God at work within you.

That's what today is all about. Here's the grey mare's tail. Gordon had this earlier in the year, didn't you? What was the name of that loch again?

That'll do. Close enough. All over Scotland, almost everywhere you go in Scotland, the landscape has been reshaped by water.

The effect of water, whether frozen as ice or flowing as rivers, has profoundly shaped and reshaped and recreated the Scottish landscape all around us.

Valleys have been carved out, rocks have been hollowed, oxbow lakes have formed as rivers meander from side to side. Water is powerful, patiently insistent.

[21 : 46] That waterfall there, if it doesn't shape the rock the first time, it's not bothering because it knows it's just going to keep on going until it shapes the rock the way it wants it.

It is the work of years and decades and centuries to carve a river valley. We might say the effect of water on our landscape is a never-ending transformation.

God's purpose in saving you is to transform you, to reshape your life in the likeness of Jesus. us. And the tool that God uses to achieve that transformation is his Holy Spirit.

Constantly, moment by moment, working a way on your life and mine to make us more like Jesus.

And he's not going to give up if we are not reshaped like Jesus in the first 30 seconds. If it takes him 30 years or a whole lifetime, he will have his way among us and will change us and renew us and make us more like Jesus.

[23 : 09] And so today, if you love Jesus, if you long to follow him, the Holy Spirit is on your side. That's what he wants for you. That is what he is already at work doing in your life.

Knocking away all the rough edges so that you love Jesus more. Shaping and reshaping and recreating you so that you follow Jesus more closely.

The Holy Spirit is on your side that you might live more like Jesus. I think it's pronounced the Joloteca Bridge and it's in Honduras.

This is an astonishing true story. It was built in the 1990s and was opened and for a few weeks it was well used and then a hurricane came and the river moved.

When it was built, that river was under the bridge. But then the hurricane came and the river moved. It's like imagine a hurricane came in Edinburgh and suddenly the water of loch didn't go through the dale but it went down over the merchant's golf course.

[24 : 31] Wouldn't be great for chipping a seven iron onto the fourth tee. It's an astonishing story. The whole river moved and the bridge is left standing beside it.

of no use, of no contact with the river or doing anything useful at all. Too often as Christians we try to build our lives as disciples beside the river of the Holy Spirit's work in us.

We move ourselves away from the river of the water of life and we imagine that we can build a useful Christian life somewhere without involving the Holy Spirit in it at all.

We end up stranded, unable to fulfill our potential or any useful purpose. We need to get ourselves into the river of the Holy Spirit.

In the picture of a bridge we need to be engaged with the river, have it under us or through us or over us or whatever we want. We don't need to be alongside the Spirit but with the Spirit, in the Spirit, have the Spirit work through us and in us.

[25 : 50] We need to come to him and receive God's life giving power within us so that we can live as disciples of Jesus. And the good news is Jesus smiles at you today and says okay come.

all you need to do is come and ask me and I will give you of the streams of the water of life. You cannot buy the Holy Spirit.

You cannot earn the Holy Spirit. All you need to do is ask Jesus and he will freely give.

once Jesus gives you his Holy Spirit he's not going to stop. He's going to give you the Holy Spirit again and again and again and again.

All you need do is get yourselves under the rainfall of the Spirit into the middle of the river of the flowing Spirit and stay there.

[26 : 56] let the Holy Spirit work within you and do his work and transform your life. Nothing else, nothing else will enable us to follow Jesus and to live for him.

Let's pray for ourselves and for one another that we would get in touch with the Spirit. Lord we thank you for your great love for us.

we thank you for your generous provision of your Holy Spirit. These things we've spoken about as we have thought of how we use water and how your Spirit will work within us.

Pray that the one that especially struck us today you would focus us on that. Whether we're thirsty or needing cleansed or needing to relocate ourselves into the presence of your Spirit.

let us stay with that thought till you bring us into that life-giving work and presence of your Spirit. All over this place pour out your Holy Spirit.

[28 : 11] Right now fill us anew with your Holy Spirit. Change our lives in this moment as your Spirit moves within us.

We pray this for ourselves and for one another. Bless us we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.