

## ***A Slap Round the Face!***

*Acts 21-21; Genesis 111-9; Psalm 104<sup>26-end</sup>; Romans 8<sup>14-17</sup>; John 14<sup>8-17</sup>*

*The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. [John 14<sup>12</sup>]*

Today we miss being in Church - as the Nation has celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D Day we would have marked this significant date with due reverence. That said, the challenge of preaching a sermon tying D Day with Pentecost would have been a challenge!

Traditionally, at a Confirmation, when the Bishop prayed that the candidate received the Holy Spirit as the Episcopal hands were laid on the head, the next act was to slap the candidate round the face! This was a symbolic act to get the candidate up and moving and to do what they had received the Holy Spirit for - to witness to and act for Jesus. Safeguarding, and other considerations, means that it is now deemed inappropriate to slap people in Church!

How like Philip so many of us want to be.

**Show us the Father and we will be satisfied.**

A nice passive, undemanding faith. The 'see and settle back' approach!

You can almost hear Jesus erupt -

**HAVE I BEEN WITH YOU ALL THIS TIME AND YOU STILL DO NOT KNOW ME?**

All that Jesus did and said was in partnership with his Father. He wants that partnership to continue, and that will never be achieved by seeing and being satisfied!

**The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these.**

I am fully aware that some, perhaps most, will now have braced themselves for the 'slap round the face' that this sort of sermon is!

Here he goes again! We'll fasten our seatbelts and it will be over soon.

But this sermon isn't demanding that you (or I) do more - it is to take note of the readings about what God is doing - and to take note that he is gracious enough to include us.

- ✠ Did you note how Acts 2 reverses Genesis 11? Language frustrates what humans want to achieve - just ask any Brexit negotiator! Yet, on the day of Pentecost everyone **hears** in their own language. God breaks barriers down so that all can come to know the Good News. The gifts God gives through his Holy Spirit are for this task - to break barriers down so that all can come to faith!
- ✠ Did you see how Romans teaches us that God doesn't give a **Spirit of slavery and fear** but it is a **Spirit of adoption**. We are accepted, loved and heirs of all that God has. We belong! But being a child of God can be costly - just ask Jesus! Being adopted doesn't give us better seats - it gives us better jobs!
- ✠ Our translation records Jesus as sending **another advocate**. The word **advocate** is misleading - it is usually someone who represents us, especially in a legal case. But the Greek is the composite word, *paraklete* - literally, the one you call alongside. We are never alone - we are never without all the resources of God to assist us. The same Spirit with the same resources has been there beside God's people since the first Pentecost.

We aren't alone, we belong and God has broken down barriers. The question that always remains is, *what are we waiting for?* (that may have been the connection between Pentecost and D Day).

Peter and the Apostles had begun the Day of Pentecost afraid and behind locked doors - and by 9.00 in the morning they had been transformed, intoxicated by God and confident in the task of proclamation God had given them.

I always remember a science teacher in Corby, past the days when corporal punishment had been stopped, getting exasperated with a lad and said: 'I would give you a slap, but it would only improve your looks!'

If I were to give you a slap, would it improve your faith?