



Greeting for Pentecost Sunday 2020

I greet you today from the UK in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord we serve!

This morning in my devotions, I came across this verse: "Lift up your tired hands then, and strengthen your trembling knees!" (Hebrews 12:12). I wonder whether you are feeling tired and in need of energy, or trembling and in need of courage?

I love this season of Pentecost. I expect you will be sharing in worship and hearing again from Acts chapter 2, how the Holy Spirit came on those first disciples and they poured out into the street and started speaking about the Lord Jesus to all who were there. Thousands heard the gospel message in their own language and were convinced of its truth. Thousands became Christians that day.

I was imagining the Galilean fisherman Peter standing up in front of that great crowd. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, he explained so courageously how the death and resurrection of Jesus was all part of God's plan to rescue the people from the power of sin and death. He quoted from one of the psalms of David, which would have been familiar to the Jewish audience – a psalm that we can read for ourselves in full (Psalm 16). It struck me as I read it that I usually gloss over that part of Peter's speech, and yet now I see how relevant it is for us today as we face up to the rising number of deaths through COVID-19. Surely it describes so well why our relationship with Jesus gives us hope even in the hardest of times.

David said about him: 'I saw the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, you will not let your holy one see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.' (Acts 2:25–28, NIV)

While we acknowledge that the passing of our loved ones causes separation, pain, and grief that are very real, our Christian faith tells us we have no need to fear death, for even death cannot separate us from the love of God. Our faith tells us that we shall go through death into the eternal presence of Jesus our risen Lord and Saviour, who has gone before us and waits to welcome us into eternity. Our faith gives us reason for hope – and even for joy – in the midst of death.

I pray that through your worship and witness this Pentecost many will hear, as if for the first time, that God loves them and invites them to follow the way of Jesus. May the Holy Spirit energise you and inspire each one of you this day and every day to walk courageously in his way.

Lord, give us the courage of Peter
by anointing us with your Holy Spirit.
Give us joy in believing.
Keep us in the presence of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ,
secure in the love of God for ever.
Amen.

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