

## **Pentecost 2020**

**Acts 2:1-21; Ps. 104:26-36; 1 Cor. 12:3b-13; John 20:19-23**

National Day of Prayer for the healing of the people of South Africa and of the world.

Prayer is a critical part in the preparedness of the church. The instruction and theological imperative to pray is enshrined in the command of Jesus to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

Prayer is an act of faith. Prayer elevates our spirit, accompanied by our emotions to encounter God. Prayer is filled with the emotions of gratitude and often of longing for healing. Healing is almost always understood as a holistic restorative process. Physical illness usually coincides with emotional suffering too.

Covid-19 has not only caused harm to the health of people, but the brokenness of our society. The crisis has caused division among communities and politics. The flourishing that should be happening is the affirmation of wholesome relationships. Our prayers, as a spiritual act, therefore are as much an outcry for the affirmation of God.

The disciples, or Galileans, were a marginal group in the Jerusalem society of the day. They were moreover only starting to experience the persecution that would later increase. They needed healing. The outpouring of the Spirit is however for all. When Joel prophesies that the Spirit of God will be poured out on all ages, genders and classes, his prophecy was made in the context of holiness and the justice of God. For us, as we now fully understand it, it is about the justice of inclusivity in the new nature of Christ. We no longer need to be victims of our past, as we receive the affirmation of God in our adoption and new identities. This process is about repentance, a repentance of disbelief.

Those who speak by the Spirit affirms that Jesus Christ is Lord, where the culture of cynicism makes it second nature and very easy to rather believe a negative report of someone. It attests to our brokenness at the cost of others.

The relationship also between prayer and medicine, between science and religious faith is one of tension. Yet in prayer this tension is unified. Our spirits and emotions enter into the mystery of God whereby the brokenness is healed, and relationships are restored in the perception and understanding of the will of God.

The social dynamics of the outpouring can be understood through the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts can be divided between the phenomena and the message, the ethos of our lives and the logos of our speech, the word and the deed. The gifts of prophecy, wisdom, knowledge and spiritual interpretation establish the social context for the healing, miraculous, faith, speaking in tongues, and discernment of spirits can occur.

It is in the union of the Spirit that this occurs. In this union we become world changers of healing. The church becomes an iconic people, a people of greatness. We become the hands and words of Jesus bringing spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, and social healing.