

Breaking Open the Word

The Day of Pentecost
8th June, 2025



Dreams and Visions – The Essence of Hope

A weekly reflection and
sermon, with study and
prayer guides following the
RCL Lectionary

Dennis Webster



Revised Common Lectionary Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts 2.1-21

Psalms 104.26-36, 37b*

Romans 8.14-17

John 14.8-17 [25-27]

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collect

Introduction

Reflection

Discussion Questions

Five Days of Meditation and Prayer

God,
who as at this time didst teach the hearts
of thy faithful people,
by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit;
Grant us by the same Spirit
to have a right judgement in all things,
and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort;
through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour,
who liveth and reigneth with thee,
in the unity of the same Spirit,
one God, world without end.

INTRODUCTION

In his sermon on Pentecost, Dennis emphasises the transformative power of dreams and visions through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

He draws upon Acts 2:1–21, highlighting that when the Spirit descended, it did not merely fill a quiet space, but ignited hope and understanding among the gathered people, enabling them to envision a future beyond their current limitations.

Dennis reminds his congregation that dreams and visions are not just for the elite; they are inclusive, as the Spirit is poured out on all—sons, daughters, young, old, and even slaves, illustrating God's desire for universal hope.

Dennis further contrasts the confusion of Babel with the clarity of Pentecost, where diversity in language becomes a means of unity rather than division. He urges the Church to embody a spirit of dreaming, encouraging its members to act as prophets and visionaries in a broken world.

By expressing hopes for reconciliation, justice, and community, Dennis asserts that these aspirations are rooted in the Spirit's transformative power.

He concludes by invoking the call to action found in Isaiah, urging all to embrace the Spirit's movement in their lives facilitating peace, justice, and love throughout the world.

Prayer Prompts

- Ask for prayer requests from the group.
- Pray for each other to be open to God's dreams and visions in their lives this week.
- Ask God for courage to act on the hopes placed in their hearts.
- Seek God's guidance in understanding how to be a part of renewing the world through these dreams.

God of Creation, breathe into us, made of clay,
your gift of life so that we, made in your image
may become your eyes, ears, hands and voice.

Dreams and Visions

– The Essence of Hope

Grace and peace to you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

When the Holy Spirit came rushing like wind and fire on that Pentecost morning, it did not descend into a quiet church. It appeared in a room of expectant people who had been waiting—not always confidently, not always clearly—but waiting nonetheless. And when the Spirit arrived, it brought more than noise and spectacle. It brought language, understanding, and hope.

Peter stood up and quoted from the prophet Joel:

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17, NRSV)

Dreams and visions. That’s what Pentecost is about. Not just spiritual gifts or bold preaching, but the renewal of imagination—the capacity to see beyond what is, into what could be. Pentecost is the feast of hope made visible.

1. Dreams and Visions in a World of Limits

We live in a world often marked by cynicism. Some dreams are dismissed as childish. Visions are mocked as unrealistic. And hope? Hope is sometimes treated as naivety.

But the Holy Spirit comes precisely to break through the limitations of our sight, to awaken within us a different kind of perception. Dreams and visions are the language of God’s future breaking into our present.

And notice this: the Spirit is not poured out on the elite, the educated, the powerful. It is poured out on “all flesh”—sons and daughters, young and old, even slaves. In God’s economy, everyone gets to dream. Everyone gets to hope.

2. From Babel to Boldness

We also recall the story of Babel from Genesis 11. In this account, people endeavoured to make a name for themselves by constructing a tower that reached the heavens. However, their ambition led to division; their speech became incoherent.

At Pentecost, God performs an extraordinary act. Instead of erasing

the diversity of languages, God gives it profound significance. Everyone hears the good news in their native language. The name above all names— the one who saves and encourages us to realise our dreams and visions to renew everything— is not confined by language barriers.

God’s voice reaches throughout the earth, and each listener receives it in their language. The Spirit does not eliminate differences; instead, it translates grace into every human tongue.

This is part of the Spirit’s dream: not uniformity, but unity. Not control, but communion.

3. The Spirit Gives Hope, Not Just Power

In Romans 8, Paul says:

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God... and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:14, 17)

To be filled with the Spirit is not merely to speak boldly—it is to hope boldly. It is to claim our identity as children, not slaves. The Spirit enables us to cry out, “Abba, Father!”, which means we are never abandoned, never lost, never without hope.

Hope is not wishful thinking. As the theologian Jürgen Moltmann writes, hope is “anticipation with expectation.”¹ It embodies a vision

of God’s promised future that shapes how we live now.

4. The Church as a Dreaming People

So what does this mean for us today?

It means the Church must not just be a remembering community—we must be a dreaming community.

We are called to be:

- Prophets, not prognosticators— naming God’s justice in a broken world.
- Visionaries, not simply managers—seeing what God longs for in creation.
- Dreamers, not escapists— anchored in the Spirit’s promise of renewal.

In John 14, Jesus says:

“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit... will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” (John 14:26–27)

This is not merely about personal comfort; it concerns equipping disciples to bear witness—to live as though resurrection is real and peace is achievable.

5. What Are We Dreaming Of?

So I ask: What are your dreams? What visions has God placed in your heart?

- Are you dreaming of reconciliation in a divided family?

- Are you longing for justice in your community or country?
- Are you envisioning a church that welcomes the outsider, shelters the vulnerable, and listens to the Spirit?

These are not naïve dreams. They are Pentecost dreams—Spirit-drenched, rooted in Christ, sustained by hope.

Conclusion:

“Here I Am. Send Me.”

When Isaiah heard the Lord ask, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”, he responded:

“Here am I; send me!” (Isaiah 6:8, NRSV)

The same Spirit that moved over Isaiah’s lips now moves through the Church. Pentecost is not just history—it is the ongoing call to dream and act in hope.

So may we say with courage and joy:

Here we are, Lord.
Fill us with your Spirit.
Renew our dreams.
And send us with hope. Amen.

or
Pentecost Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit.
Translate our lives into love.
Shape our speech with fire
and truth.
Make us your sent ones
—carrying peace, justice,
and joy to every corner of your
creation. Amen.



Discussion Questions

What does it mean to have dreams and visions as expressions of hope in our daily lives?

- The sermon describes dreams and visions as the language of God's future breaking into our present, encouraging us to imagine beyond what is.
- Can you think of a time when you had a dream or vision that inspired you or someone else? How did it impact your outlook or actions?

How can we challenge the cynicism in our world towards dreams and hopes, as mentioned in the sermon?

- The sermon highlights that the Holy Spirit helps us break through limitations and brings hope to everyone, not just a select few.
- What steps can you take this week to encourage someone who feels their dreams are unrealistic or childish?

In what ways do you see the church acting as a dreaming community today?

- The sermon emphasises that the church should be a dreaming community, not just remembering the past, but actively envisioning a hopeful future.
- How can you contribute to creating an environment in your church or community where dreams can be shared and nurtured?

How does the idea of receiving the Spirit in our language connect to understanding and sharing God's message?

- The sermon explains how, at Pentecost, everyone heard the good news in their native language, demonstrating that the Spirit's message is for all people.
- What is one way you can share God's message with someone in your life who may not speak the same 'language' as you do, whether it's literal or metaphorical?

What are some examples of 'Pentecost dreams' you might have regarding your community or family?

- The sermon invites us to think of dreams for reconciliation, justice, and welcome as examples of Spirit-inspired visions.
- How can you take actionable steps towards one of these dreams this week? What resources do you have to help make it happen?

¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (Fortress Press, 1967), p. 16.

Walking Gently on Sacred Land

5-Day Devotional

This five-day devotional will take a deeper dive into the sermon from this weekend. We will explore the themes of dreams and visions as expressions of Spirit-given hope, reflecting on how they influence our lives and our community.



THE NATIONS OF PENTECOST ACTS 2:9-11

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https://visualunit.me/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/pentecost_map-1.png

Day 1

Acts 2:17, NRSV

Dreams and visions are more than mere fantasies; they are God's whispers to our souls about the future he envisions for us. In today's world, dreams are often dismissed, and visions are viewed with scepticism. However, as we reflect on Pentecost, we are reminded that it is through the Holy Spirit that we regain the capacity to dream boldly.

The arrival of the Spirit signifies hope—that we can rise above limitations and embrace the possibilities of God's plan.

As we engage with this theme, let us recognise our role as recipients of the Spirit's gifts. By allowing ourselves to dream, we open our hearts to the profound ways God can use us for his glory.

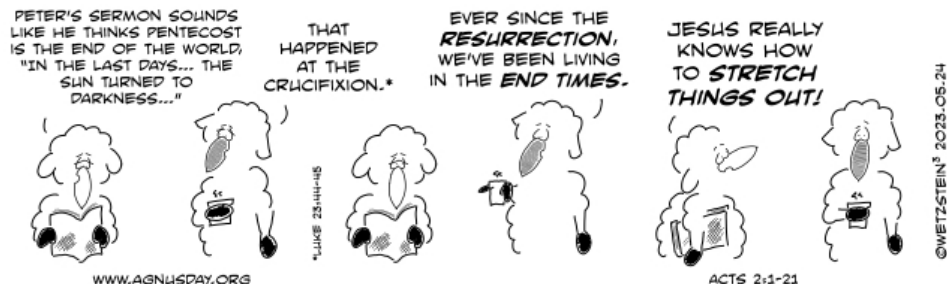
Reflect on the dreams God places in your heart, for they are landmarks on the journey of faith, guiding us toward his promised future.

- What dreams or visions has God placed in your heart?
- In what areas of your life do you feel limited, and how can you invite the Spirit to transform that perception?
- How can you encourage others to share their dreams and visions?
- Pray for the courage to dream beyond what seems possible.
- Ask God to reveal His dreams for your life and the lives of those around you.

Day 2

Genesis 11:1-9

The story of Babel reflects humanity's attempts to achieve greatness through power and ambition, which ultimately lead to division and confusion. In contrast, Pentecost showcases God's desire for unity through diversity. The Holy Spirit empowers us to



hear and proclaim God's message across languages and cultures, demonstrating that our differences are not barriers but avenues for grace.

Embracing this truth challenges our perception of community and our role within it. We are called not to uniformity but to a beautiful symphony of voices—each contributing to the whole. As we meditate on this, consider how God is calling you to engage with those whose experiences and languages differ from your own, fostering a community where everyone's voice is heard and valued.

- How can you appreciate and celebrate the diversity around you?
- What barriers or biases might you need to confront to promote unity in your community?
- How does God want to use your unique voice in his story?
- Pray for understanding and compassion toward those who are different from you.
- Ask the Spirit to guide you in fostering unity through diversity in your community.

Day 3 Romans 8:14-17

The Spirit gives us not only boldness but a profound sense of belonging as children of God. By welcoming the Spirit into our lives, we shift from a mindset of fear and limitation to one of inheritance and hope. We can cry out, "Abba, Father!"—a declaration that reassures us of our identity and fills us with expectation for what is to come.

When we embrace this identity, we are reminded that our dreams are tied to God's promises. Hope becomes the lens through which we perceive the world, transforming our vision into one filled with anticipation of His faithfulness. It encourages us to live boldly, knowing we are heirs to a promise greater than ourselves.

- In what ways do you struggle to view yourself as a child of God?
- How can recognising your inheritance in Christ change your daily outlook?
- What steps can you take to cultivate a hopeful spirit in your life?
- Pray for a more profound revelation of your identity as a child of God.
- Invite the Spirit to infuse your hopes and dreams with his vision.

Day 4 John 14:26-27

Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit highlights the importance of teaching and peace. As we reflect on this passage, we recognise that the Spirit does not simply comfort but equips us to embody and share the peace of Christ in a tumultuous world. Being a dreaming community involves not only remembering God's past faithfulness but also actively seeking his guidance for the future.

The church is called to be a beacon of hope, actively participating in the renewal of creation.

Through the Spirit, we are inspired to dream boldly, envisioning a community where justice and love reign. Let this call encourage us to work together, empowering one another to live into the reality of God's Kingdom here and now.

- How can the church fulfil its role as a dreaming community?
- What steps can you take to contribute to peace and justice in your surroundings?
- In what ways can you support others in their faith journeys?
- Pray for creativity and inspiration in the ways your community can serve others.
- Ask God to lead you to individuals who need hope and encouragement.

Day 5 Isaiah 6:8, NRSV

Isaiah's response to God's call, "Here am I; send me!", underlines a profound willingness to act in faith. It emphasises the essence of responding to God's dreams for us with eagerness and courage. Pentecost invites us to engage actively with God's work in the world, rather than passively observing from the sidelines.

As we conclude our devotional journey, may we embrace this call to action. Reflect on how you can respond to the Holy Spirit's prompting in your daily life and be willing to go where he leads, knowing that each step taken in faith brings us closer to realising the fullness of God's dreams for His creation.

- What is your response to God's call in your life today?
- How can you practically live out the message of Pentecost?
- What dreams do you feel the Spirit is urging you to pursue?
- Pray for the courage to say "yes" to God's calling in your life.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you discern the specific dreams and actions she desires for you to take.

End notes and further reading

Sacra Pagina:
Paul's Press)

The Gospel of Luke (St
The Gospel of Matthew
The Gospel of John

The following authors as featured at
The Worship Cloud

www.theworshipcloud.com

N. T. Wright,
Jane Williams,
P James Woodward,
Paula Gooder
Mark Pryce,
David Perry

Rev Dr Andrew McGowan: Andrew's
Version: <https://substack.com/@abmcg>

¹ Jürgen Moltmann, Theology of
Hope (Fortress Press, 1967), p. 16.



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