**PENTECOST *MM***

**A happy Pentecost on 31st May to all my listeners and readers, some of whom, I learn are as far away as Zimbabwe! For those who know me personally, I’m still here, but a little bit older since we last met – and, like many of us, a lot hairier!**

**You know, I was thinking about Acts 13:22 recently and it was puzzling me! I wonder if it’s ever puzzled you. Luke is quoting Paul who is speaking on the sabbath in the synagogue in Antioch and Paul is quoting Samuel and Samuel, who was a prophet, is quoting God (got all that?); and Paul says this:**

***After removing Saul, [God] made David their king. He testified concerning him: I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.***

***God’s* own testimony is that David is *a man after [His] own heart*!**

**Which first raises the question, what’s God’s heart like, then? Well, it’s impossible for *us* to know that - unless He tells us. As He said through another prophet, Isaiah, *my thoughts are not your thoughts….As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are….my thoughts than your thoughts (Is. 55:8-9).* And that’s a statement that’s grown even more amazing than it was in Isaiah’s day! Isaiah thought, “The sky’s the limit”. *We* know that the universe is a lot bigger than that – way beyond anything Isaiah could see. And the more we look, the more we find. And God’s mind is farther and higher than the farthest galaxy in the entire universe! I may as well expect one of my chickens to understand rocket science as to expect *me* to understand God’s heart and mind without His help.**

**So, to help us, He’s revealed some of His thoughts – the Bible is His *word* and words come from our hearts and minds and His word comes from His heart and mind, too. But He hasn’t just *told* us – He’s also *shown* us. Because He spoke another sort of Word, too – He sent His Son Jesus, the Word of God (Jn. 1:1), not just to *explain* God’s heart, but to *show* it.**

**So let’s have a look at David and see what evidence there is that he was like Jesus – that he was *a man after God’s own heart.***

**We’ve only got time today for one story in David’s busy life, so where do we find him in 2 Samuel 11:1, *In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war*? We find him at home in Jerusalem. David is at the height of his power by now – in chapter 7 God had confirmed him as king and established his dynasty forever (v. 16), chapter 8 is all about his victories, chapter 9 about his magnanimity to the defeated house of Saul, chapter 10 about more victories, so chapter 11 finds him sending General Joab off to fight for him while he relaxes at home. But this was not a time for relaxation, this was the time *when kings go off to war.* Did King Jesus ever neglect His duty? Did King Jesus stay at home? Well, no, because He *had* no home (Mt. 8:20). Not much similarity there between their hearts….**

**Now, specifically, David was on the roof of his palace at night. Nothing wrong with that – it’s his palace and it was doubtless very cool on the roof. But that’s not why he was there. You see, David was a peeping tom. He was spying on Bathsheba, his neighbour’s wife, while she took her bath (v. 2). And when he saw her, he *sent messengers to get her. She came to him and he slept with her….She….conceived and sent word to David, saying, “I am pregnant” (vv. 4-5).* Now Jesus had many female disciples (Mt. 27:55-6) and His enemies accused Him of many things, but they never made any accusations of sexual impropriety against Him. Like David, He had the opportunity, but, unlike David, *He* didn’t take it. Their hearts weren’t similar there, either, were they?**

**Anyway, David apologised to Bathsheba and her husband, paid for the child’s keep and rode off to war….didn’t he? No: he called her husband Uriah *back* from the war, got him drunk and, when he failed to get him to sleep with her, sent him on a suicide mission and then married his widow (vv. 6ff). Did Jesus ever take advantage of anyone? Did He ever kill anyone? Didn’t He rather offer *Himself* to be killed as a sacrifice (Heb. 7:27)? So how can David be a *man after [God’s] own heart*?**

**Well, after he was exposed, David wrote Psalm 51 in repentance. So, was David like Jesus because he repented? No, not at all. Jesus *was tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin (Heb. 4:15).*  That’s why John was so reluctant to baptise Him (Mt. 3:13-15). Jesus was *unlike* David because He didn’t need to repent. But I think the key to the verse that David was a *man after [God’s] own heart* does lie in Psalm 51.**

**It’s a beautiful psalm, torn from David’s broken heart. In it, he asks God for many favours, but in v. 11 he prays, *Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.* His greatest fear is that God would remove His Holy Spirit from him. He knew God *could* – he’d seen King Saul lose the Spirit (1 Sam. 16:14) and He feared that God would do the same to him.**

***That’s* why he was a** ***man after [God’s] own heart*! God had put His own Spirit in him. That’s why, as the psalm reveals, despite his many sins, he actually wanted the same things as God. And God was gracious and didn’t desert him. How do I know? Well, first, I know he was forgiven: Nathan told him that when he confronted him - *The LORD has taken away your sin (2 Sam. 12:13).* But, when David was an old man, they popped a beautiful young girl called Abishag into his bed – *She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm,* they said (1 Kings 1:2) and we can guess what they meant by *keep warm,* can’t we? Otherwise they could have put a man or an old hag in his bed or even a puppy that he could cuddle! The old David would have found Abishag irresistible and even in his dotage he would have tried something on because, as Jeremiah observed, a leopard can’t change its spots (Jer. 13:23). But, *Do not take your Holy Spirit from me,* he’d prayed. And we’re told: *The girl was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no intimate relations with her (1 Kings 1:4).* Why? Because David was demonstrating that he *was* a *man after [God’s] own heart,* that the Spirit was with himand that, at last, God could say, *he will do everything I want him to do.***

**It’s Pentecost on Sunday, the day God *pour[ed] out [His} Spirit on all people (Ac. 2:17),* not just kings. And He still pours out that same Spirit (Eph. 5:18). You, too, are men and women after His own heart because you have His Spirit. Or, as Paul put it, *We have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16).* Does that mean you’ll never sin again like David with Abishag? Not necessarily - even John wrote, *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1 Jn. 1:8).* No, the Spirit will help us and defend us, but we must work *with* Him. Paul wrote, *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30):* He will strengthen us in the battles we now want to fight against sin because we are people *after [God’s] own heart.* But, as David found, He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5) even if we fail, for He has *sealed* us by His Spirit. And who can break God’s seal?**

**At this time, we need a lot of help. We need doctors and nurses; we need carers and workers; and we need people of vision to prepare for the future. Actually, what I’m saying is that we need men and women after God’s own heart – and that’s you! Pentecost is very timely – it’s a reminder that He is with us always to the very end of the age and, as we’re still here, it’s not the end of the age yet! So, happy Pentecost! Receive His Spirit afresh and let your heart beat in time with His as you play *your* part in these exciting times – *and do everything [He] wants [you] to do*.**