

*Father Ted* is an irreverent comedy series about a trio of truly awful priests living on an island populated by eccentrics. In one episode, we see a plane full of priests, including Father Ted who is terrified of flying; and in a glorious spoof of all aeroplane disaster films, due to the actions of the incredibly stupid Father Dougal, something goes terribly wrong. Father Ted, accustomed to clearing up the mess caused by Fr Dougal, finds himself called upon to save the day by going outside the plane as it flies in mid-air, and somehow holding some vital structures together until the plane lands safely.

So how does this apply to Pentecost? Well at Pentecost, we see a group of people whom we have come to know quite well through the Gospel stories; but now we see them doing things we would never have believed they were capable of.

In the Gospel passage, often called John's version of Pentecost, we see the disciples sitting in their usual meeting place, with the doors locked, afraid that they will suffer some terrible repercussions from Jesus' death. Without Jesus, they don't know what to do. But then, "on the first day of the week", Jesus comes to them. In Genesis, on the first day of the week, God the creator begins to bring life out of empty chaos. On the first day of the week, here in John's Gospel, God the redeemer comes to bring new life out of the empty chaos of the disciples' grief when Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on them. In Genesis, God the creator breathes life into the creature he has made, and human beings come into existence. In John's Gospel, God the redeemer breathes life into people emptied of all hope, and new, fuller life comes into existence. Luke's gospel tells us that the disciples are instructed to wait in the city until the power from on high comes upon them, and on the day of Pentecost, unlike the gentle breathing which Jesus imparted according to John's gospel, the reading from Acts tells of the overwhelming outpouring of the Spirit. The disciples are dramatically transformed and we see them step out, full of the courage and joy of the Holy Spirit, speaking from their own experience of what God has done.

Coming back to Father Ted, after the safe landing of the plane, he is so frozen with fear at the realisation of what he has just done that he just can't move. He went back to being the old Ted he had always been, still terrified of flying.

The disciples, on the other hand, are now genuinely changed people. From Pentecost onwards, these people left their locked rooms and went out, preaching, teaching, healing, courting the danger they had previously feared. As their mission continued the danger was very real. Yet they, and generations of those who believed because of their testimony, were no longer afraid.

Most of us will not need the kind of courage that allows us to face persecution and death. But we all need the kind of courage that takes us out of the rooms in which we have locked ourselves. No, I am not suggesting a Dominic Cummings like rejection of the rules of lock down, instead I am talking about unlocking the doors that prevent us from telling others of what God has done for us. The British reserve, the fear of ridicule, the embarrassment of owning up to how we really feel. How dare we be embarrassed about all that Jesus has done for us. On this celebration of Pentecost, let us pray that the Holy Spirit will fill us with an overwhelming sense of joy and excitement about our relationship with God the Father through Jesus our Lord. As Christians, we are commissioned to go out and share what we have been given, and to call others into God's new creation, free from fear, and full of the life of the Holy Spirit. Amen