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"I want to make a real difference in this world, but how?"

My eldest granddaughter just returned from supporting a "Black Lives Matter" march, because she wants to change the world - or better put, she wants to change "her" world, because she doesn't like the world she's found herself in, and what it's doing to her and to others. Not one bit.

So she writes passionate articles too, against the irrational behaviour of people she believes should know better. High School also taught her how awful her own age group can be when they discover the power they have to wreck the lives and relationships of their class mates. So she's really fired up.

Her mother, meanwhile, is all for her daughter's passion, but hopes she won't go overboard with it, because it could turn into bitterness or disillusionment, or worse, into violent protest and jail, if her fired up girl doesn't get the results she's after.

It's a dilemma for both of them, which got me thinking about what the Holy Spirit was given for on Pentecost in the book of Acts. Was it to change the world?

Just one chapter earlier, in Acts 1:8, Jesus told his disciples "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you," which sounds like Christians would be making a real difference in the world. And that would include the children of Christians, because the promise of the Holy Spirit "is for you and your children" too, in Acts 2:39.

So imagine telling my granddaughter: "Hey, kiddo, even Jesus promised you real power." But real power to do what? Would she take the promise of power to mean getting into politics in a big way, or becoming a passionate lawyer fighting for justice, or going on massive protest marches to force change? And is that what Jesus meant too?

But history is chock full of people who are sick of the world they're living in and they've tried to force change by revolution and violence. That was the Jews' approach to getting rid of the Romans thirty years after Pentecost, which resulted in a horrific backlash from the Romans in 70 A.D.

So what was this gift of the Holy Spirit for, and the power attached to it?

Peter's immediate answer to that in Acts 2:40, just after the Holy Spirit was given, was to "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." It wasn't, "Now you and your kids have the power to change the world," because that's been tried by many Christians, but the world's problems continue. Good is being done all over the world, yes, but a virus pandemic or economic collapse can undo years of progress, and remind us that even the best of human initiative and good intentions can only do so much. Meanwhile, hundreds of issues remain unsolved and unsolvable.

So what was the power of the Holy Spirit given for?

Again, it's Peter who answers, this time in 2 Peter 1:4, when he writes, "Through God's great and precious promises you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil human desires."

And there, my dear granddaughter, is the great news of how real change happens, and how you can make a real difference in your world. And it's the same answer Peter gave back on Pentecost too. And again, it's not by human passion, revolution, or writing scathing articles exposing the world's ills. That's not where changing the world begins, my girl; it begins with a change in you. And it's a change that enables you personally to "escape the corruption" caused by unsolvable human greed, lust and - as Adam and Eve demonstrated - our innate ability to self-destruct.

And how does that change in you happen? It's in that "great and precious promise" of the Holy Spirit so you can share in God's very own nature, and it's totally his gift to you for simply believing this is what he sent Jesus to set up for us. And by what that divine nature does in you, you then "witness" to such power being available and what it's for, just as Jesus said in Acts 1:8.

What impact that now has on you and the people who know you, will create a ripple of change in their lives and yours, and who knows how far that ripple will spread? It won't change the whole world, but it will make a real difference in the world where you are. So let that fire up your engine and see where it takes you....

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