

5 June 2022 Acts 2:1-21 Pentecost Pastor Fraser Pearce

In recent weeks we've been hearing from the book of Acts.

In the book of Acts we've heard about many unusual

Or what we could call supernatural events,

But we've also paid attention to the fact

That when the St Peter, when St Paul preach and teach,

When the apostles preach and teach,

Their message is that of repentance

And the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name.

More than this,

From Lent all the way through the Easter season,

We've noted how both our Lord and the Apostles

Read the Old Testament as being about Jesus,

About the work of salvation that was done

Through his suffering, death, and resurrection.

Now, in today's reading from Acts

The culminating verse is a quote from the Old Testament,

From the prophet Joel,

And St Peter quotes this verse firstly as a way

Of interpreting what has been happening on the day of Pentecost,

On the day of that great spiritual super-spreader event.

He quotes the verse firstly as a way of interpreting

What the speaking in tongues,

What the hearing in mother tongues,

What proclaiming the great deeds of God, means.

St Peter quotes this verse secondly as way to open up his proclamation

Of what God has done in Christ Jesus.

In today's sermon I'll proclaim Good News from God's word,

That the Lord saves *all* those who call on his name,

And that, as *we* call on his name,

He fashions us into a community of Spirit-filled people

Who gather around his word as it is preached,

Who pray together as one body,

Who receive together the one bread broken for us,

And who share what we have together as God's people.

First of all, let's listen to the culminating verse

From today's reading from Acts: **Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.** Acts of the Apostles 2.21

As I mentioned before,

St Peter is here quoting from the book of Joel.

In that book God's people are facing a devastating plague,

And through his prophet Joel, God is calling his people

To repentance and prayer,

So that they may have hope in the face of ruin.

This is what we hear in chapter 2 of that book: **Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.**

Joel 2.32:

Now in today's Acts reading St Peter is in Jerusalem,
Proclaiming God's message of repentance and forgiveness
To those who are called by God.

In the New Testament it's not only St Peter who quotes this verse,
St Paul also quotes in in Romans,
Where he is talking about that faith which comes
From hearing God's word.

Listen to what he says: **For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.'** For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Romans 10

Notice how in the New Testament *the universal scope* of this promise
Is underlined: God is *generous*; God does not make *human distinctions*;
Everyone who calls on his name, from whatever background,
Will be saved, will have a place in God's kingdom,
Will share in the resurrected life of the Lord Jesus,
And have a fellowship in the Spirit that he gives.

One way to understand *calling on the Lord's name*
Is to think about the very basic spiritual problem
We have as human beings.

We can live pretending that everything is fine,
That we our lives are in good order,
That we basically think and say and do the right thing,
At least when we compare ourselves to other people.
Of course, if we have better self-knowledge
Then we might hesitate to judge ourselves favourably against others,
And we might even have to fend off thoughts
Of our own contemptible status:
That if we watched a movie of our own lives,
We might not be happy with what we see,
And we certainly would not want others to see.

Well, one way to understand calling on the Lord's name
Is to move from comparing ourselves favourably or unfavourably
With other people, *and to bring ourselves before God,*
The true judge of all, who sees all,
And has the authority to declare us guilty or innocent,
Clean or unclean, welcome or excluded.

We call on the name of *this* Lord
When we trust that he is merciful,
And that he declares innocent those who confess their sins,
That he cleanses those who come to him for washing,
That he welcomes those who turn to him in need.

Listen to the way that calling on God's name is put
In Psalm 32, words which are familiar from our traditional liturgy:

**While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**

**Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD',
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Psalm 32**

If in life you are feeling dried up, wasting away,
Then call on the name of the Lord,
For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Now for both St Peter,
As becomes very clear as we read on in the book of Acts,
And for St Paul, to call on the name of the Lord,
Means to call on the name of *the Lord Jesus*.
As Christian people we know that our God
Has revealed himself in the flesh and blood person Jesus,
And that his cross especially reveals the depth of God's love,
As his resurrection reveals the power of God to save.

We also know that it is the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith
So that we can call on the name of the one who saves us.

This is how St Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians: **Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed!' and no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit.** 1 Corinthians 12:3

Luther has this sort of teaching in mind
When he writes in the Small Catechism: ***I believe that on my own I can never come to Jesus Christ my Lord or believe in him, no matter how hard I try. But the Holy Spirit has called me to Jesus by the good news about him. The Spirit has led me to know and trust Jesus, made me holy, and kept me in the Christian faith.***

Now, as it happens, Luther goes on to write: ***In the same way the Holy Spirit creates the Christian church all over the world....***

As people, by the power of the Spirit,
Call on the name of the Lord Jesus,
God is creating his church.

This is what we hear about on the first day of Pentecost,
As it is recorded in Acts chapter 2.

In the book of Acts, after St Peter quotes our verse from Joel,
He goes on to proclaim what God has done in Jesus,
And he also proclaims to the people their own complicity
(And we could say our own complicity) in Jesus' death.

This is what we then read: **Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.'**

To call on the name of the Lord,
Is to call on the name *of the Lord Jesus*,
It is to turn away from sin
– to acknowledge that we are each responsible
For the crucifixion of Christ,
And it is to have our sins washed away in the waters of baptism,
Where we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,
So that our lives as individuals *and as a community*
May be given a new shape.

And this new shape of Christian community
Is how the chapter wraps up: **So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.** Acts 2:37-42
The people who called on the name of the Lord,
Who turned from sin, who were baptised
And received the gift of the Holy Spirit,
Devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship
As we are doing today, even this very sermon;
They devoted themselves to the breaking of the bread,
As we are about to do as we celebrate the Lord's Supper,
And they devoted themselves to the prayers,
As we do every week, as we bring our own needs
And the needs of the world to God our Father in Jesus' name.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
Since our Lord makes himself graciously present to us,
Let us, as his baptised people, call on his name,
And receive the gift of Spirit-filled Christian community,
So that we may share the good gifts that God has given us
With each other,
And so that God's name may be glorified among us.
In Jesus' name. Amen.