

SUNDAY 18 August July 2024 - Holy Communion 2.3

Hymn 96 -Sing praise to the Lord!

Sing praise to the Lord! praise him in the height;
rejoice in his word, you angels of light;
all heaven adore him by whom you were made,
and worship before him in brightness arrayed.

Sing praise to the Lord! praise him upon earth,
in tuneful accord sing praise for new birth;
praise him who has brought you his grace from above,
praise him who has taught you to sing of his love.

Sing praise to the Lord, all things that give sound;
each jubilant chord re-echo around;
loud organs, his glory tell forth in deep tone,
and sweet harp, the story of what he has done.

Sing praise to the Lord! thanksgiving and song
to him be outpoured all ages along;
for love in creation, for heaven restored,
for grace of salvation, sing praise to the Lord!

Greeting

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

Sentence of the day

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38

Prayer of Preparation

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, at the feast of Pentecost you sent your Holy Spirit to your disciples, filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel. Empower us with that same Spirit to witness to your redeeming love and draw all people to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Ministry of the Word

Old Testament Reading - Joel 2:27-32

²⁸ “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. ²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. ³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ³² And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, even among the survivors whom the LORD calls. This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 104:24-35

²⁴ How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵ **There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number— living things both large and small.**

²⁶ There the ships go to and fro, and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

²⁷ **All creatures look to you to give them their food at the proper time.**

²⁸ When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.

²⁹ **When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.**

³⁰ When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground.

³¹ **May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works —**

³² he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.

³³ **I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.**

³⁴ May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.

³⁵ **But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more. Praise the LORD, my soul. Praise the LORD.**

New Testament Reading - Acts 2:1-8, 12-16, 36-47

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that

separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?” ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off —for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Gospel Reading - John 15:26 - 16:11

²⁶ “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father —the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

¹ “All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. ² They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. ³ They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. ⁴ I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them. I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, ⁵ but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. ⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgement, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Sermon Acts 2 - Equipped to Testify

Question Time

The Apostle’s Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers

Let us pray for the world and the church.

Response: Jesus, friend of the helpless, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

The Lord’s Prayer

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Sentences of Scripture

Jesus said, This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you. John 15:12

Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies, we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

The Confession

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn 538 Feed us now, Bread of life

**Feed us now, Bread of life, in this holy meal;
let us know your love anew: we hunger for you.
Feed us now, Bread of life, come and live within;
let your peace be ours today, Lord Jesus, we pray.**

**Piece of bread, cup of wine: Lord, this food is good;
love and mercy come to us — your promise we trust.
Piece of bread, cup of wine; who can understand
how his mercy works in these? Yet, Lord, we believe.**

**God is here, O so near, nearer than our thoughts.
Stay with us where'er we go; Lord, help us to grow.
God is here, O so near, in this heaven's meal.**

May we always feed on you — on the bread that is true.

Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever.

The Thanksgiving

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, it is our duty, our joy and our salvation, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to you, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ your only Son our Lord.

For he is the true high priest, who has freed us from our sins and made us a royal priesthood to serve you, our God and Father. Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy and gracious God, all creation rightly gives you praise. All life, all holiness, comes from you through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom you sent to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

Hear us, merciful Lord; through Christ accept our sacrifice of praise; and, by the power of your Word and Holy Spirit, sanctify this bread and wine, that we who share in this holy sacrament may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

Who, when his hour had come, on the night before he went up to the cross to make full atonement for the sins of the whole world, offering once for all his one sacrifice of himself, took bread and gave you thanks; he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks; he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant which is

shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Therefore, in obedience to his command, we commemorate and celebrate his saving passion and death, his mighty resurrection and ascension into heaven and we eagerly await his coming again in glory. We thank you that by your grace alone you have accepted us in Christ; and here we offer you a spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable in your sight.

Through Christ, receive this our duty and service, and grant that we who eat and drink these holy gifts may we, by your Holy Spirit, be one body in Christ, and serve you in unity and peace.

In your grace and mercy, bring us to the joy of your eternal kingdom with all the company of the redeemed. May we praise you in union with them, and give you glory through your Son, Jesus Christ. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father eternal, in songs of never-ending praise:

Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.

We who are many are one body, **for we all share in the one bread.**

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord.

Grape juice is available. Please come to the table maintaining social distancing

Living God, in this holy meal you fill us with new hope. May the power of your love, which we have known in word and sacrament, continue your saving work among us, give us courage for our pilgrimage, and bring us to the joys you promise.

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Hymn 105 Let all the world in every corner sing

**Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King
The heavens are not too high, His praise may thither fly
The earth is not too low His praises there may grow
Let all the world in every corner sing My God and King**

Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King

**The church with psalms must shout, No door can keep them out
But above all the heart, Must bear the longest part
Let all the world in every corner sing: My God and King.**

Dismissal

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord: **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Sermon Acts 2 - Equipped to testify

Introduction

How many of you suffer from stage fright? I know I have experienced it in many situations where I knew exactly what I wanted to say, but the words just wouldn't come out. It generally happens when I have not rehearsed what I am going to say, when I haven't fully equipped myself for the sermon I'm giving. In today's sermon, which I hope I have rehearsed sufficiently, I'll be looking at how God equipped the early Christians to proclaim his message.

Context

This week we come to the second chapter of Acts. You will remember that last week, following Jesus' ascension into heaven, the disciples had returned to Jerusalem, and were huddled in an upper room, worshipping God, praying, and waiting for the Holy Spirit. Jesus told the disciples to expect the Holy Spirit a number of times, including in our gospel reading today. While waiting in the room, the disciples also made a big deal of selecting the right replacement for Judas, needing to choose someone who had been with them right through Jesus's ministry and had witnessed everything he had done. In other words, God was ensuring that his apostles had the right information to preach.

This week we look at the next stage in the preparation of his apostles. God needed to ensure that his apostles were equipped to preach the gospel. As it is when I speak, it is not just having the right words to say, it is being able to say them, and to the right people.

Receiving the Holy Spirit

The way God equips his followers for this role is through the Holy Spirit. Remember that last week, Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:8: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

In our reading this morning, "the day of Pentecost came and they were all together in one place". Pentecost is an Old Testament festival that occurs 50 days after Passover. In the Christian Church, we used to call it Whit Sunday because of the white clothes that Christians who were baptised on that day

would wear. For Christians, instead of being a harvest festival as it was for the Jews, it commemorates the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Anyway, suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where the believers were sitting.³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there is some debate as to the nature of the miraculous tongues or languages they spoke, whether they were other normal human languages, or if they were what Paul describes as tongues of angels in 1 Corinthians 13. Whichever is the case, whether the disciples were speaking the languages of Parthia, Medes, Elamites and so on, or if they were speaking an angelic language that the Holy Spirit allowed the hearers to understand, the Holy Spirit equipped the believers to proclaim the gospel to everyone who was there and would listen. Obviously some were not listening, or only hearing babble, and these assumed the believers were drunk. Nevertheless, many obviously did understand and believe.

I also hope that you don't think that I am drunk when I preach, even if I do mix up my words from time to time! I can assure you it is just nervousness at preaching to such a distinguished congregation!

Anyway, not only did God ensure the right apostles were selected, he equipped them to speak to the crowd on Pentecost. God particularly equipped the apostle Peter to proclaim the right message that day to the cosmopolitan crowd in Jerusalem.

You may be aware that at the end of John's gospel, prior to Jesus's ascension into heaven, Jesus had taken Peter aside, and asked him three times to feed his lambs. He probably asked him three times, because Peter had three times denied Jesus before his crucifixion. I really suspect Peter was feeling rather unsure of himself, and hurt that Jesus asked him those three times. Previously, Peter had always been the overly confident one who blurted out an inappropriate response. He was the one who asked to put up tents at the transfiguration, who

told Jesus to wash his whole body, not just his feet, who jumped in to walk on water with Jesus, but sinking for his trouble. Yet at Jesus's ascension, Peter was unsure of himself.

Proclaiming the Gospel

Yet that all changed at Pentecost after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Peter there gives a clear explanation of the gospel that was worthy of the most qualified Old Testament scholar, and it was complete with detailed quotes from the Old Testament prophet Joel and the Psalms. We also read the passage from Joel that Peter quoted this morning.

Peter proclaimed to the crowds that "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. And that "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."

The crowds were assured of this message, that God had made this Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Messiah." - that is, Peter confidently proclaimed that Jesus is the one whom God had promised, the one Israel was waiting for, and the one who is their saviour and the one who deserves to rule in their lives.

It seems that is a completely different Peter to the one who had denied Jesus as Lord and saviour only some 50 days before. And this is all because he was now someone who was fully equipped by the Holy Spirit.

And how the crowd responded: ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of

the Holy Spirit. Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

The Holy Spirit allowed the crowds to hear the message of the gospel that Peter spoke that day, the Holy Spirit cut them to their hearts, and the Holy Spirit inspired 3000 of them to repent and be baptised and to be added to the number of Christians on that day.

Conclusion

Peter's message is the same message that I, equipped by the Holy Spirit, proclaim in this place from week to week. It is the same message the Holy Spirit allows you to hear and understand, despite my fallible human speech - that Jesus, accredited by miracles, was crucified, raised back to life, and is the one promised by God, is saviour and Lord, and calls us to turn from our sin to him, to be baptised and be added to the number of Christians today.

The question you need to ask yourselves is whether the Holy Spirit has given you understanding of this message that Jesus is your saviour and Lord, and whether that same Holy Spirit has called you to repent of your sin and turn to Christ, and whether you have yet. If you haven't yet, I beg you to follow the holy spirit's lead, repent and turn to Christ.

And if you have turned to Christ, know also that the Holy Spirit equips all Christians to proclaim the good news of Jesus, that others may also respond to this message. The Holy Spirit equips you to proclaim this message yourselves, no matter how much you may feel you lack confidence, no matter how much you may jumble your words like I do. Be confident that you are fully equipped, and when you faithfully share the good news of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord,, others will in turn respond, and be added to the number of Christians today.

Will you join me in sharing the good news for which the Holy Spirit has equipped you?