

“This Jesus, Our Saviour”

14 February 2021 - Led by Rev. Sam Mawhinney

Welcome & Call To Worship

Hymn of Preparation: IPH 233 Praise To The Lord, The Almighty

Prayers of Adoration & Confession

Reading: Acts 2:14-41

Sermon:

We need good news. The virus is still a big problem and it appears we will be under level 5 restrictions until after Easter, maybe even longer. I am aware that life for many of us is tough - pain, illness, home schooling, unemployment, separation from loved ones and death are a reality. We need good news. Of course, we look for a way out, a solution; and with the virus, the way out is through staying apart, good hygiene, and now with vaccination. We are waiting for it and most of us will receive our jabs with gladness. We saw photos of happy nurses dancing in the corridors because it **was vaccination day**.

Did you notice in the reading of *another* day, in v.20: *“the great and glorious day of the Lord.”* What are we to make of v.19-20 in our reading - wonders in heaven, signs on earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke, astronomical signs affecting the sun and moon and then this reality, *“the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord”*? **The day of the Lord!** It sounds significant. What will it mean for us?

There is a lot of debate about what these verses refer to. Some say they are speaking of the signs that accompanied Jesus’ death and resurrection over the first Easter weekend - the darkening of the sky at midday, the opening of graves! Others say that they refer to the time of Jesus’ second coming and the end of the earth, the great apocalypse, the language of Revelation. We know they speak of “the last days” (v.17) and it is most likely they refer to the time covered by the last days from Jesus first to second coming. This would make them catastrophic earthly events, a disruption of the ordered creation. They are, I believe, the events Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 - signs of the last days, the end times, warnings of the second coming of the Lord Jesus, events in the world that remind us of the wrath of God, His anger at sin in humanity and of the impending judgement of the day of the Lord, when He comes to wrap up history. Now that is a significant day.

As with the virus and our need of a vaccination, so because of the coming of the day of the Lord we need the Lord to save us. And the great message of this passage is salvation, for these last days see an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the promise of v.21, *“that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* Peter preaches, pleading with those who hear him (v.40) to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour. “Listen to this Jesus!” (v.22) Let’s look at his impassioned plea for everyone to be saved.

I. The Holy Spirit and Salvation (v.14-21)

Jerusalem is full of people from all over the known world, pilgrims come for the Feast of Weeks, and something crazy and amazing has just happened. God has poured out the Holy Spirit on the fledgling Church and they have been gifted with an ability to speak in other

known languages. Those who hear them speak, amazed and perplexed, ask, "What does this mean?" (v.12)

Some thought they were drunk (v.13), verbose, ecstatic and disinhibited. Ok, we can see the connection, but not everyone thought that; and it does appear to be said in jest as a joke! Peter stands up to speak, backed by the Apostles and declares, "NO! These men and women are not drunk, it is what the prophet Joel said would happen, it is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit." Now we need to know that Peter has changed Joel's words. Joel did not say, "in the last days"; he said, "afterwards"! Joel had just witnessed a devastating destruction of Israel's crops by a swarm of locusts. He had received a word from God, saying this is a judgement from God called a day of the Lord. He calls for fasting and repentance, and then prophesies that afterwards God will pour out His Spirit. Peter takes Joel's words and tells the residents and visitors in Jerusalem they have witnessed the promised pouring out of the Holy Spirit. God's judgement has fallen on Jesus, and now "afterwards" - in the last days leading to the great and glorious day of the Lord - the Spirit has been given. What is promised is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on all people and all people having the gift of prophecy. In the past, it was Israel's kings, prophets and priests who received the Spirit, but now all types of people receive the Spirit - men, women, young, old, servants, all people (both Jews and Gentiles), the whole world.

They receive the ability to prophesy. Old Testament prophecy had two aspects: foretelling (what will happen in the future) and forthtelling (declaring the words of God, telling of God and His ways). As noted, this ability to prophesy was limited to certain people. Now, knowing God's words and speaking God's words would be gifted to everyone. Calvin noted prophecy was, "*a rare (special) and excellent gift of understanding*"; in other words, the Holy Spirit gives all who receive Him knowledge and understanding of God, particularly in His Word. Every Spirit-filled believer understands the Word of God in the Scriptures, making up the priesthood of all believers. Let us never neglect that gift, but make time to know and understand God in His Word by the gifting of the Holy Spirit. Some might argue that means universalism, the idea that everyone will be saved; but, as John Stott succinctly says, "*Salvation is available to all on the meeting of certain spiritual conditions.*"

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit, prophesied by Joel, happened after the judgement of Jesus on the cross. Following His vindication through resurrection and ascension, Jesus pours out upon His people the Holy Spirit, giving us knowledge and understanding of all that God was doing at the cross and the ability to live as Christians. The Holy Spirit convicts, reveals Jesus and the reality of judgement, and leads to the classic call of preachers for all to call on the name of the Lord, to be assured of salvation through Jesus.

II. Jesus and Salvation (v.22-32)

Keeping in mind the coming day of judgement, the Day of the Lord, we need salvation. The Holy Spirit has been poured out and we now have that knowledge of God necessary to call out and be saved. Peter is filled with the Spirit and he points to the One who saves, Jesus our Saviour. The LORD in the Old Testament was Yahweh and for Peter the LORD is Jesus, so he works through the life of Jesus. John Stott opens these headings well.

A. Jesus' Life and Ministry (v.22)

A man, from Nazareth and accredited by God to you by miracles, signs and wonders. God's Son and accredited to be so (Mark 1-5). Note: Peter's original audience had seen and heard, they knew this. Jesus' life was extraordinary.

B. Jesus' Death (v.23)

To put Jesus to death on the cross was God's will. He purposed it. Therefore, it was always going to happen, because of the sovereignty of God. It begs the question, "Why would He do such a terrible thing?" Yet Peter is clear: the responsibility for Jesus' death lies with you. These are, of course, God-fearing, godly Jews who have come to worship the LORD at the Feast of Weeks. It is not their religion or devotion to God that saves them; they have a deeper problem. They are responsible for the crucifixion of God's Son. Jesus' death was God's purpose, but we are responsible; we are guilty before God. Jesus was not the victim of circumstances; His death was because of our guilt, our sinful rebellion. *"You....put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross."*

C. Jesus' Resurrection (v.24-32)

If you have your eyes on v.24, you will see that Peter proclaims the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as fact by the power of God. He uses a childbirth term - the word agony is the same word used to describe labour pains. Life is birthed. Death couldn't hold life back and Peter uses the witness of the Old Testament, specifically Psalm 16, to confirm that this event was prophesied. Because David the Psalmist died and his tomb can be seen in Jerusalem, he wasn't speaking of himself; *"seeing what was ahead he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ"* (v.31). The Old Testament witnesses to this and so does the New Testament (v.32) - the Apostles are witnesses of the fact. They saw Jesus killed and they saw Him risen! This is the most important and significant fact in history. It is witnessed to us by both the Old and New Testaments.

D. Jesus' Ascension/Exaltation (v.33-36)

Jesus' resurrection proved and vindicated Him; He was therefore exalted to reign with authority and He poured out the Holy Spirit, literally "what you see and hear." Jesus did this and it is again witnessed by the Old Testament, specifically in Psalm 110. It says those who crucified Him are His enemies and He will deal with them appropriately in judgment. The conclusion of this explanation about Jesus is declared with confidence and assurance: *"God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

III. Our Response and Salvation (v.37-41)

As I worked through this teaching about the Holy Spirit and Jesus, I acknowledged that most of us have heard it all before; it is familiar. We know the truth, but the challenge of these verses is the response. Thinking of the threat of Covid, we have been given information, facts and advice; indeed, we are now by law commanded to respond due to the seriousness of the threat. How much more if we fail to heed the gospel message of salvation and the great and glorious coming day of the Lord! Therefore, let everyone who is listening carefully note how we are to respond.

A. Conviction

As these religious and God-fearing Jews listened to Peter, they were cut to the heart - stabbed, convicted, broken-hearted - as they realised they had been responsible for Jesus' death and were now His enemies. The one they killed God had raised from the dead and exalted. Having heard and understood that truth by the Holy Spirit, they stood guilty, condemned. They understood the enormity of what was being

communicated and felt it deeply. Do you understand that feeling - when you've done something awful and seemingly can't do anything to fix it? They want to know what to do. The Holy Spirit has taken the words of Peter and brought about deep conviction of sin. They are distressed, heart-broken, uncomfortable *and it is essential that they are*. Are we aware of how serious our sin is, of having Jesus as our enemy? Do we understand the reality and hopelessness of the "the agony of death"? The work of the Holy Spirit is conviction of sin in response to the hearing of the word of God.

B. Repentance

John the Baptist called for repentance and explained its practical response in the knowledge of the wrath to come. "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance," he thundered; and when they asked, "What does that mean?", he said share your wealth, be honest at work, be content with what you have. Jesus also preached repentance and He linked it with believing who He is, what He has done, and trusting in Him (v.44). Repentance is a gift of God (Acts 5:31, 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25). As Calvin rightly said, "*Repentance follows faith and is produced by it.*" We know that it means turning around, recognising your sin, and looking towards Jesus. Having heard God speak, you listen and recognize your heading in the wrong direction. You turn to Jesus and follow Him.

C. Baptism

Whereas repentance is an inward, unseen reality, baptism is a public act of commitment to God and the gospel, a public submission to washing (symbolising forgiveness) and receiving the Holy Spirit. When I first came to faith, I was very afraid to tell anyone and it hampered my growth. Becoming a believer is important and it should be declared publicly.

D. The forgiveness of sins

What an easy thing to say; yet it is achieved at great cost and is incredibly precious. Biblical images describe it as washing (being crimson (blood red) and becoming as white as snow), being guilty and having that guilt transferred to another (scapegoat), having an unpayable debt paid for by another. Death to life, slavery to freedom, exiled to belonging, orphaned to being family. Your guilt is paid for, your stain is removed, your exclusion is reversed and you are restored to relationship with the Creator and Saviour of the world.

E. The Holy Spirit

The presence of God, aiding us with its fruit and gifts to be and live as a Christian from the moment of repentance.

F. For all

The gospel, this good news is for you, it is for your children the next generation, and it is for the Gentile, all nations (Eph 2:17)

G. Accept this message

Peter preached the gospel with urgency and seriousness. He warned them to respond so that they would be saved and escape this corrupt generation, that is this unbelieving generation (as Jesus called them in Luke 9:41).

Let me tell you a true story about two people from the same town in Ireland who drove to a car park in a well-known walking area six kilometres from their homes. In the car park, an

unmarked Garda car sat and as each person prepared to walk, the Guard approached. Details were taken and it was pointed out that this car park was six kilometres from each of their homes; they were breaking the law and public health guidelines. They were guilty and the person with authority was offering them the opportunity to get in the car, turn around and go home. One accepted the advice and went home. The other argued and angrily said to the Guard, "What is the difference between five and six kilometres?" The Guard replied, "€120." And he fined the two occupants in the car.

You have been warned of the great and glorious day of the LORD, when all excuses will be banished with no further opportunity for repentance. Save yourselves! Turn around and accept the loving offer of Jesus to be forgiven and be filled with the Holy Spirit, a brilliant offer given to us at tremendous cost. You have heard the message. The serious calamities within the world show us just a tiny glimpse of the just wrath of God, reminding us of our need to be saved. The person and work of Jesus, particularly His death and resurrection, show us the glorious remedy for our sin and the way to be saved. The offer of the gospel is proclaimed - forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit. And with Peter, I warn us to accept the message and join those who from that time have done so - from every generation and nation - because the great and glorious day of the LORD is close.

Praise: IPH 407 How Deep The Father's Love For Us

Prayers for Others

Announcements

Closing Hymn: Come Behold The Wondrous Mystery

Benediction: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all evermore. Amen.

Discussion & Application:

Reread v.17-21. What do they tell us about the last days and their significance?

Reread Peter's outline of the life of Jesus in v.22-36. Pick one of these (life, death, resurrection, ascension/exaltation) and think through:

- its contribution to the meaning and message of the gospel.
- its meaning to you and in your life.

What is repentance? How have you recently experienced repentance and the forgiveness of your sins by Jesus?