

## NOTES FROM STEVEN DRIVER'S SERMON- 28th April 2024 am

**TITLE: "A transformed people with a transforming message"**

**TEXT: Acts 2 verses 1-13**

**Series: More on Mission**

**Scripture references from the ESV**

**Acts 2: 1-13** When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested<sup>[a]</sup> on each one of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup> And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, <sup>11</sup> both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." <sup>12</sup> And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup> But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

Why do we spend our time thinking about overseas mission?

- 1. To increase the church's awareness of our mission partners.** The More on Mission focus pushes us to see the gospel work in which we are all involved in the wider context of God's worldwide church. We can pray for our brothers and sisters across the world, and hopefully we have been, not just informed, but re-invigorated as we have considered the church's call to mission worldwide.
- 2. It reminds us of the incredible scale of the work to be done.** Jesus himself said: **The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.** There is so much need across the world. However, it also reminds us that there is missionary work to be done here. The church is more and more marginalised. Traditional methods of outreach no longer work as they used to because people do not trust the church. Indeed, the church in the UK is in rapid decline.

In the Broadstone area there are 10,300 people, most of whom do not call on the Lord as their Saviour.

- Something needs to be done.

So we duly consider all the missionary work across the world, all the felt needs, all the people who desperately need to hear the gospel, and then read of Jesus' command to go and make disciples as his witnesses to Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

- If we are not a little overwhelmed by the enormity of the work that is before us, then it might just be that we have not grasped it particularly well!

When we start to take on board what is needed, we might well respond that this is surely work for other people who are more qualified. The question is - what other people? It is easy to think that someone else needs to do something about that, because as individuals, our thought is 'I can't do that'.

We have ready a list of all the reasons why, even though God has drawn our attention to this, he could not possibly be considering using each and every one of us who already call on his name for the extension of his kingdom.

- Surely God could not possibly be intending me to be a missionary, regardless of my age and stage of life?

However, our calling is precisely that – to be missionaries. You may now be feeling nervous and unprepared!

The first people who heard this missionary call were with the resurrected Jesus, and before he ascended to his heavenly throne, he commanded them to be witnesses.

Surprisingly, the first thing he tells them to do is to not do anything! **He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with<sup>[b]</sup> the Holy Spirit not many days from now."** (Acts 1:4-5).

The disciples were not to depart – they were to wait. Why? There were already 120 of them – surely they could get started on spreading the good news that Jesus died and rose again, setting us free from the curse of sin.

Jesus knew that they would be useless on their own at sharing the good news, and over the next 10 days as

They waited and pondered his words, it is very likely that the disciples agreed with him.

They stayed in one place, displaying their confidence that they needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit and remembering Jesus words '**apart from me you can do nothing**' (John 15:5). These men were Galileans, who were considered country bumpkins with strange accents, and they certainly were not educated enough to be bilingual.

- If you feel underqualified, nervous or daunted by the prospect of sharing Jesus with the world around you, Jesus will tell you that you are indeed underqualified – on your own. To all the reasons we can think of – too old, too young, not educated enough – Jesus says this is true. You are not able to obey my command.

**The day of Pentecost transforms everything.**

**The Holy Spirit transforms Jesus's people and the message they bring.**

Passover was a day when God's people recognised that the fruit of the harvest was only possible because of God. Unless he provided sun and rain, and continued to sustain the universe, there would be no fruit. When the day of Pentecost came (50 days after the celebration on Passover), the recognition that only God can provide what is needed happened again. This time, however, it is people who will bear fruit.

- The Holy Spirit, who is always at work, came uniquely to provide a brand new harvest (vv 1-4 above).

There are two images here -the sound of rushing wind and fire, both signifying the presence of God.

- The reviving wind of the Spirit gives life where there once were just dry bones (Ezekiel 37 – please read in your Bible)
- Fire has always indicated God's presence, but until now as separate from his people. Here the fire rests on his people who are no longer separate from God. Because of Jesus, they can have a personal relationship with the living God.

The people were filled with his presence, experiencing an intimacy they had never known before. They were divinely empowered to speak in other languages, which enabled them to communicate the wonders of God to those who did not know him.

### **They were praising God.**

Those 120 people were now transformed people. They were united in one Spirit, communicating the wonders of God to one another. **And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.** <sup>43</sup> **And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.** <sup>44</sup> **And all who believed were together and had all things in common.** <sup>45</sup> **And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.** <sup>46</sup> **And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,** <sup>47</sup> **praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.** (Acts 2:42-47)

The people were joyous. They had generous hearts to one another, and were full of thanks and awe at the wonders

Of God. They opened themselves up and submitted to one another.

### **That is the work of the Holy Spirit in us.**

### **The Holy Spirit transforms Jesus's people.**

These people were the ones who had argued about who was going to sit next Jesus, but now they are not the same people. The Holy Spirit had transformed their hearts and he is doing the same for us today. If you are in Christ, you are not the person you once were.

- You can be continually transformed by the Spirit of God and can live out a Spirit-empowered life – a life of uniting joyous praise.

**Because we are a transformed people, the message we proclaim is a transforming message**

### **The Holy Spirit transforms Jesus' message**

Devout Jews from every nation heard the overflow of the Spirit in the rushing wind and the sound of the Galileans praising God (vv5-6). Hearing this in their own language

was a sign to them that God was coming to them. They did not need to come to him by works. Language was no longer a barrier as it had been since God had scattered the peoples at the building of the tower of Babel, when the people had set themselves above God in their pride.

Now God was coming to them and transforming their hearts, emptying them of pride and filling them with his Spirit.

### **The Holy Spirit transforms hearts**

- God's chosen instrument for his transforming message is his church – a rag-tag bunch of ill-equipped, underqualified people, starting with a bunch of country bumpkins!

A wind instrument makes no sound until it is breathed into with living, powerful breath, but then it cannot help but release its beautiful sound. This is, in a way what happens to us when the Holy Spirit breathes life into us.

Peter exemplifies this. He had publicly denied Christ and was known for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. Yet he suddenly stood up and preached a great sermon (Please read **Acts 2:14-36**). How was this possible? Only 50 days earlier, Jesus had been crucified by the very people Peter was now speaking to. It was possible because of the Spirit.

- Peter speaks the message of the Gospel because he knows it contains the power of salvation. When the Spirit-empowered word is proclaimed, we can be sure of a response, whether positive or negative. There is questioning and mocking in response to the praise of God (**v12-13**). The Spirit prompts a response.

With regard to mission, the question we need to ask is not whether we are qualified to do it. Rather we should ask '**What shall we do?**' as those who heard Peter asked.

**What does this require of us?** It requires emptiness and the acknowledgement that we need Christ.

Peter told the people: **Repent and be baptized 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).**

That is how you become a Christian and how you continue in the Christian life. You cannot do it in your own strength. We so often feel it is all down to us, and that our ability to witness depends on our own strength and ability.

- The Christian life is a life of repentance, of turning away, from that way of living. We must turn away from wanting to make a name for ourselves. We still have the Babel instinct in us.

Instead, we are called to acknowledge our inadequacy and accept how unqualified and underprepared we are. Then we are to put ourselves under the headship of Christ, recognising our desperate need for him.

- When we really start to do that, Christ fills us more and more with his Spirit.

Then we can live for him and carry out our missionary calling, making his name great. If we want to become more like the church as described in Acts 2, we need to be relying on his strength, not our own.

Once we do that, missionary work becomes just a natural overflow of who we are in Christ, because we have been transformed and are being transformed by being filled with his Spirit.

### **Our confidence is not in ourselves but in Christ.**

- We are more qualified, more prepared and more empowered than we could possibly imagine because of Christ.
- We can share the good news of Jesus in our work places, our schools, with our friends and family and with people all over the world.

We are called to continually repent and empty ourselves of areas of our life that we have not yet given over to Christ. Many of us struggle with the idea of sharing the good news with others. It is because we are still relying on our own strength, and underlying this is the hidden sin of wanting to make a name for ourselves.

- We need to be emptying ourselves of our pride every day, so that we can be filled once again with the Spirit of the living God.

**The mission before us is overwhelming, and we are weak and useless, but God is greater.**

**The Holy Spirit transforms hearts**

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