

Power of the Holy Spirit

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Date: 12 April 2026

Preacher: Edward Lobb

[0:00] Now we're going to turn to our Bible reading. Edward Lobb, one of our honorary ministers, is going to do a two-part, two-sunday series in Acts 2. And this morning he'll be preaching to us from Acts 2, verses 1 to 41.

We do have visitor Bibles available, so if you need one, don't be shy. Just give the welcome team away and they'll hand you a Bible. If you're using one of our church Bibles, you can find it on page 909.

Acts 2. Acts 3.

Acts 3. Acts 3.

[4:12] Acts 3.

Amen. May God bless to us his words. Good morning, friends. Very good to see you all. And good morning also to those at Kelvin Grove and Queens Park, who I hope are able to see my face. Not that that's a wonderful thing to see, but at least to hear my voice coming across the airwaves. Well, let's turn to the book of Acts. Well, let's turn to the book of Acts, chapter 2. And I think you'll find that on page 909.

And I think you'll find that on page 909 if you have a copy of the hardback church Bible. Acts chapter 2. And as Joel mentioned earlier, I'm due to be speaking now for two Sunday mornings, this week and next week.

[6:56] And I want us to work together on this unique and dramatic chapter under the title, the Pentecostal gospel. Or as you might say, the gospel revealed at Pentecost.

This week, from verses 1 to 21, we'll look at the power of the Holy Spirit. And next week, from verse 22 onwards, we'll see how the gospel is Jesus.

Well, let me start by asking anyone, please, to put up their hand if they're not breathing. Good. It's a good start. We're all breathing. We're all inhaling through our little nostrils and exhaling.

It's a relief to know that we're all doing this because it means that we shan't have to call an undertaker. We are alive, all of us. The breath of life is in our nostrils.

Now, life and breath, living and breathing, have always been profoundly connected. And this connection between life and breath helps us to understand who God's Holy Spirit is and what he does.

[8:03] He is God's very self and his life breath breathed into Christian people. Now, it's not easy for us to understand who the Holy Spirit is or what his nature is like, because I think it's easier for us to get a handle on the nature of the Father and the Son.

God the Father is the all-powerful creator of the heavens and the earth. And God the Son is Jesus who came to the earth in human flesh.

He spoke human words. He felt human emotions. And because he shared our humanity fully, it's not quite so difficult for us to relate to him.

But the Holy Spirit, how do we conceive of him? Here in Acts chapter 2, he's described in terms of three phenomena. First, in verse 2, a sound like a mighty rushing wind.

Then in verse 3, as divided tongues of fire. And then in verse 4, as having power to enable the Christian believers to speak in languages that they had not known before, to speak in other tongues.

[9:16] But the very word spirit opens up the heart of the matter, because the word means breath or wind. And throughout the Bible, the word conveys

the idea of immense power.

At the very beginning, at the creation, in the second verse of Genesis, we read that the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And there's a wonderful revelatory moment at Psalm 33, verse 6, which reads, By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and all the starry host by the breath of his mouth.

Then later in the Bible, we find that the word of the Lord is none other than Jesus, and the breath of God's mouth is the Holy Spirit. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is not just a junior version of God, or a distant relative of God, or a diluted God-like influence.

He is the third person of the Trinity. He is God, equal in deity with the Father and the Son. He is God expressing himself in powerful action.

God doing things, achieving things, changing situations, sometimes in amazing ways, which is certainly what happens here in Acts chapter 2. The New Testament is full of teaching about the Holy Spirit, and one of the key sections of this teaching is found at John's Gospel, chapters 14, 15, and 16.

[10:48] Now, these are chapters which record private instruction given by Jesus to the apostles, where Jesus is preparing his friends for their future life as the leaders and teachers of the church.

And Jesus tells them that the Holy Spirit is soon to come, that he will dwell with them and will be in them, that he will teach them and enable them to remember and understand everything that Jesus had said to them.

And very significantly for our purposes this morning, the Spirit would bear witness to Jesus. In other words, he would proclaim the truth about Jesus, and that he would enable the apostles themselves to bear witness about Jesus, which is just what we find Peter doing here in Acts chapter 2.

The Spirit, then, is God himself, not just a vapor or an influence, not an impersonal force, but God himself.

And his arrival at Jerusalem, here in Acts chapter 2, marks the final stage in the ministry of Jesus before his second coming. Now, think of it like this.

[11:56] The ministry of Jesus, the wonderful work of Jesus, is described in the New Testament in six stages. Six stages. First, his birth.

Second, his public ministry of teaching accompanied by powerful miracles and signs. Third, his death for our sins on the cross. Fourth, his resurrection from the dead.

Fifth, his ascension to heaven. And sixth and last, his pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the church.

Let's just have a sneak preview of verse 33 in our chapter, which is all about Jesus.

Here is verse 33. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, which means the promised Holy Spirit, he, Jesus, has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Now, that verse gives us a classic statement and shows us the full divine process. It's very clear. Look with me again at verse 33. The Father gives the promised Holy Spirit to Jesus, who then pours him out on the church.

[13:11] It's not that the Holy Spirit has not been operative before the day of Pentecost. Of course he has, from the creation onwards, as we've briefly seen. But Pentecost is the moment when he is poured out on the church.

And the pouring didn't stop on the day after the day of Pentecost. It's a permanent pouring out. The Spirit began to be poured out on that day, and he continues to be poured out on the people of the Lord Jesus.

He is the life breath of God. There could be no church of Jesus Christ without him. And there can be no such thing as the new birth for sinners like you and me without the Holy Spirit.

He brings us to life. If you are a living Christian, it is because the living Spirit of God has taken up residence in your heart and life. Well, let's bend our minds to the text and try to understand what is going on.

But first I want us to give a brief look back at chapter 1. In the first half of Acts chapter 1, Luke tells us about the ascension of Jesus.

[14:18] You'll see it there in verse 9. He was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. But before his ascension, Jesus had given

clear instructions to the apostles about the Holy Spirit, who was to come very soon.

So look at verse 4. And while staying with them, Jesus ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said you heard from me.

For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. And then shortly afterwards, the apostles are with Jesus again, and he says to them in verse 8, but you will receive power.

It's the same phrase. When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. Now the key elements here are, first, verse 5, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Baptism and pouring are two closely related ideas. And second, verse 8, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And third, also verse 8, this power will enable you to be my witnesses, first in Jerusalem, but subsequently right to the ends of the earth, which implies that your work of witness will start with Jewish people, but will eventually encompass the globe from Greenland to Tasmania.

[15:52] Now at that stage, the apostles were 11 in number because Judas Iscariot had died, the betrayer. And the second half of Acts chapter 1 describes the choosing of a new apostle, a man called Matthias, to replace Judas, to bring the number of the apostles up to 12.

So Jesus' final words to the 11 were that the Holy Spirit would enable them, empower them, to be Jesus' witnesses.

Witnesses. Now that is a very thought-provoking word. Why witnesses? Well, a witness is somebody who testifies to the truth of something that he or she has seen or heard.

It's a word from the courts of law. I think we love courtroom scenes in the films that we watch. They always contain a great deal of tension. For example, a lawyer calls a witness to the stand.

I call Mrs. Felicity Peabody to the stand. Now, Mrs. Peabody, you're speaking under oath to tell this court the truth and nothing but the truth. Did you or did you not see the accused, Mr. Joseph Ratcliffe, drop two small tablets into Sir Henry's cup of Earl Grey tea moments before he fell to the ground and expired?

[17:13] Now, there's great tension in a moment like that in a court of law. To bear witness is to be called on to tell the truth in a situation of real pressure.

But the apostles were called upon by Jesus to bear witness to him. He had forewarned them about this back in John chapter 15 at verses 26 and 27 where he said, when the helper comes whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, he will bear witness about me and you also will bear witness.

So when Jesus tells the apostles in Acts 1 verse 8 that they will be his witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, he is reiterating something which he had explained to them several weeks earlier on the night before his crucifixion.

This idea of bearing witness means, in effect, that Jesus is on trial before the eyes of the world. It's as though the whole world is a courtroom and everybody's eyes are on Jesus.

Now, many people, as we know, dismiss Jesus as being a person of only relative interest, of relative importance. Think, for example, of some modern, suave, agnostic intellectual who might say, Jesus, yes, Jesus, a person of limited significance, a religious teacher, a moralist, an idealist, to be ranked, arguably, alongside the Buddha and the prophet of Islam and Karl Marx, people who have made a significant dent in the culture of the world, but really no more than that.

[18:56] Now, this is the atmosphere of the modern world, isn't it? And it's in this atmosphere that the people who belong to Jesus are called to be witnesses to him. So just reimagine our Mrs. Peabody as a Christian.

Mrs. Peabody, says the counsel for the prosecution, you must tell the truth to the listening world. What is your opinion of Jesus of Nazareth? And she replies, I believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God, who came to the world as its only Savior and Redeemer, and that it's necessary for every man and woman to repent and believe in him, for there is no other way to eternal life.

Oh, Mrs. Peabody, says the lawyer for the prosecution, have you really taken leave of your senses? She is bearing witness about Jesus when she says those things, but it's difficult for her.

It's going to be challenging to bear witness to Jesus in the courtroom of the world. And it's only possible if the Holy Spirit, promised initially to the apostles but subsequently to all Christians, gives us the power to tell the truth about him to an often hostile audience.

Well, let's turn now to the second chapter of Acts. Verse 1. When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And then Luke, the author of Acts, tells us what happened.

[20:27] There are three extraordinary phenomena. First, a sound. Verse 2. Suddenly there came from heaven a sound, like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

Notice how Luke gently points out the origin of this sound. It came from heaven, he says. From heaven. It wasn't a north wind, a south wind, an east wind, or a west wind. It came from heaven. Where Jesus, now exalted, was already seated at the right hand of God. Then secondly, a sight. Verse 3. Divided tongues as a fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

Each one of them. Now that's not just the apostles. It's the whole company of the believers. And we're told in chapter 1, verse 15, that there were about 120 of them at this stage.

Then thirdly, from verse 4, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now the mighty rushing wind suggests power and life, almost the life breath of God himself.

[21:40] And if the wind suggests power, the tongues of fire suggest purity and cleansing, rather like the burning coal that touched the lips of the prophet Isaiah and prepared his lips to speak the word of God.

But Luke says no more about the wind or the fire. What he concentrates on and develops is the speech that begins to pour forth from the lips of 120 Christians.

I think we can say that the wind and the fire demonstrate the divine power of the coming of the Spirit. But the power is now evidenced in the church opening its mouth and speaking to the nations of the world.

So verse 5, there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. Now we're not meant to understand that these Jews lived permanently in Jerusalem.

There was a widespread Jewish diaspora in those days just as there is today. So they came into Jerusalem in great numbers because it was Pentecost.

[22:44] It was the Feast of Weeks. They were obeying Deuteronomy 16, verse 16, which reads, three times a year, all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that's the Feast of Passover, at the Feast of Weeks, which is Pentecost, and at the Feast of Booths.

Now those were the three great annual festivals. They were all connected with the harvest. So devout male Jews who were seeking to be obedient to the law of Moses would come from all over the ancient world into Jerusalem.

Well, on this particular year, they were in for a big surprise. Verse 6, at this sound, and that's the sound of many voices speaking many different mother tongues.

They all came together and they were, look at the words in verses 6 and 7, they were bewildered, amazed, and astonished. Well, you would be, wouldn't you?

Imagine going into George Square in Glasgow and joining a great crowd of gobsmacked people who were listening simultaneously to dozens of foreign languages, all of them, in the words of verse 11, telling the mighty works of God.

[24:01] Now, look at what these devout Jews are saying in verse 7. They say, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? Now, they would have recognized them by their dress, by their mannerisms, perhaps by their accent.

It's the same with us today, isn't it? We recognize each other. The English recognize the Scots. Donald, where's your truces? The Scots, of course, recognize the English, don't they?

I'll leave you to fill in the blanks there. But these Jews knew that these linguists were Galileans. And their question has a bit of a sting in its tail because Galileans were regarded as rough, up-country sort of people, rednecks and hillbillies.

So their question in verse 7 really means that we would hardly expect the rough people of Galilee to be so well-trained in modern languages. What have they been doing to their school curriculum?

How is it, verse 8, that we hear each of us in his own native language?

And we then get a colorful list of most of the known areas of the ancient world, starting in the east, Parthians, Medes, Elamites. Elam was more or less modern Iran.

[25:13] Mesopotamians. Now all those are nations to the east of Israel lying to the west of the Caspian Sea. Then in the middle we have five areas which all fall within what we now know as Turkey.

Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia. Asia didn't mean then what it means today. It was just a fairly small section of western Turkey known as Asia Minor.

Then we go down to North Africa, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, and finally back across the Mediterranean to Rome, from which came, Luke tells us, both Jews and converts to Judaism.

That's what proselytes means. And then we have Cretans and Arabians thrown in for good measure. Now we don't need to be too exact on the geography, but the point is absolutely clear. When the Lord's Church is filled with the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Church begins to tell the nations of the world how wonderful are the mighty works of God. The Church begins to speak, its tongue is loosed, and it takes its gospel message in comprehensible language to every nation under heaven.

[26:24] And the vision, the great vision of the book of Revelation, chapter 7, begins to be realized. Behold, a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

People have sometimes said that Acts chapter 2 describes a miracle of hearing. But that misses the point. The miracle is a miracle of speaking.

Now, of course, the Holy Spirit opens ears to hear, but before the hearing can happen, the Holy Spirit opens the mouths of Christians and causes them to speak. Now, this chapter, because it's foundational about the coming of the Spirit, it helps us to understand what is most important about the work of the Holy Spirit.

His work has many aspects to it, and later in the New Testament, Paul will develop important teaching about the gifts given by the Holy Spirit to the church, such as teaching and administration and so on, and the fruit of the Spirit's indwelling in the hearts of Christians, the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The gifts that the Spirit gives and the fruit that he produces in us are seen everywhere in a healthy church. We see them in our own church every day. But what Acts chapter 2 is doing for us is laying the foundation of our understanding of the Spirit's work.

[27:57] Luke is teaching us that the church filled with the Holy Spirit is the church that opens its mouth boldly and tells the world, people from every nation, about the mighty works of God.

and the mighty work of God which eclipses all others is his work in sending Jesus to the world to bring salvation to those who are lost. And Peter is about to demonstrate this in his sermon in the second half of Acts chapter 2.

What we're witnessing in these first few verses here is a reversal of the judgment that God laid on the human race after the Tower of Babel was built. We read of that story in Genesis chapter 11. Genesis chapter 11 verse 1 tells us that the whole earth had one language and the same words. So this meant that everybody understood everybody else perfectly.

If a woman said to her husband we're going to have fish and chips for our tea tonight, darling, her husband knew that he was not going to get roast beef and Yorkshire pudding. They understood each other.

[29:02] Mutual, reciprocal understanding between all human beings was perfect. But when people built a great tower at a place called Babel, a tower designed to exalt humanity and dethrone God, God stepped in because he was not prepared to be dishonored and spurned.

He said, look at this situation. They are one people and they have one language and this is only the beginning of what they will do. They'll do all sorts of other things now.

So I will confuse their language so that they can no longer understand each other. So one language gave way to many languages and people could no longer communicate with each other freely.

It was a judgment from God to subdue the proud and godless schemes of man. The city where this tower was built was called Babel or Babel, a word sounding like the Hebrew word for confused.

But when the Holy Spirit came in Acts chapter 2, the first dramatic mark of his presence was that people began to understand each other and what they began to understand as the Christians opened their mouths was not history or politics or physics or philosophy.

[30:20] It was the gospel, the mighty works of God. And when Peter began to speak, he made it very clear that the mightiest of all of God's works was the sending of Jesus Christ to bring the forgiveness of sins.

So all of this means that the greatest reason for God sending the Holy Spirit to the church was to set in motion the evangelization of the world. That's what the book of Acts is all about.

It's about the work of the Holy Spirit. It starts with 120 ordinary Christians opening their mouths and telling the nations of the world about God's mighty works.

It then becomes powerfully focused up in the words of the apostle Peter who lays before a huge audience the meaning of the life and work of Jesus.

And from that moment the great purpose of God rolls forward powerfully and rapidly. The gospel work begins in Jerusalem. It then moves out to Judea and Samaria and in the later chapters of Acts we see Paul the apostle aided by a small army of evangelists taking the gospel all around the Mediterranean area and ending in Rome the hub of the world's communication.

[31:34] It was the most important city in the world because not only did all roads lead to Rome all roads also led away from Rome and thus the gospel could be taken to all points of the compass including those dark pagan nations in the chilly north England Wales Ireland Scotland.

So the curse of Babel is reversed and the tongues of the Lord's people are loosened and the gospel of Jesus Christ breaks out across the world. But notice this Peter himself the apostle is remarkably changed and this is the power of the Holy Spirit at work in him.

Jesus had been crucified only six or seven weeks before Pentecost and on the night before Jesus died you remember Peter's behavior he crept into the courtyard of the high priest's house because Jesus had been arrested and had been taken inside and Peter wanted to see from a safe distance what was going to happen to Jesus.

Now it was a chilly night and a fire had been lit in the courtyard and Peter sidled quietly up to it to warm himself and there were other people around the fire and Luke tells us in his gospel that a servant girl looked rather carefully at Peter and recognized him as one of the followers of Jesus and she said to the other people sitting around the fire this man also was with Jesus to which Peter immediately said woman I don't know him then a few moments later he denied knowing Jesus a second time and then a third time he was afraid he knew that Jesus was in big trouble and he might have suspected that things were not going to end well for Jesus and he was fearful his bowels turned to water he couldn't bring himself to acknowledge that he was one of Jesus' people so he denied any knowledge of him now you can understand Peter's fear I guess that most of us would have done as Peter did if we'd been in his position and after Jesus had been crucified

Peter and the other apostles were still keeping a very low profile John tells us in his gospel that they met together privately behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem so what has happened to Peter between crucifixion day and the day of Pentecost he has become a transformed man and it can only be the Holy Spirit that has transformed him a few cynical wags in verse 13 jest about what is going on and you'll see from verse you'll see that what they say is they've been on the razzle-dazzle and they're filled with new wine but Peter is not fazed by this jibe he stands up and you'll see from verse 14 that the 11 other apostles stand there with him and he lifts up his voice which he needed to do because we learn later on that there were at least 3,000 people listening to him no loudspeaker systems in those days he lifts up his voice and he launches forth men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem verse 14 let this be known to you and give ear to my words for these men are not drunk as you suppose since it is only the third hour of the day it's nine o'clock in the morning even the most hard drinking tuchlas are not one over the eight at nine o'clock in the morning

[35:05] Peter brushes off that silly jest without a moment's hesitation he's not afraid of a few cynics and it remains true that over these last 2,000 years Christian people energized by the Holy Spirit have not been afraid to talk freely and openly about Jesus and have learned to open their mouths and fill the ears of the world with the glorious news of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus just look at that

final phrase in verse 14 give ear to my words bend your ears in my direction and listen carefully because I've got something to say to you and your life depends upon it you're quite wrong to think that these men are drunk how could they be at this time of day but I'll tell you the real meaning of what's going on here because it was all prophesied centuries ago in the Hebrew scriptures by the prophet Joel now we'll come back to Joel in just a moment but friends let's all of us be gladdened by Peter's boldness because it's an example for all Christians most of us are not naturally very bold we all know the temptation to keep our mouths shut even to be ashamed of Jesus even when we have an opportunity to speak about him

Jesus of course knowing the human heart and knowing its frailties said whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation of him will the son of man also be ashamed when he comes in glory Paul the apostle we think of him as the epitome of courage don't we but Paul the apostle he knew the temptation to be ashamed of Jesus and his beloved colleague Timothy knew the temptation which is why Paul once wrote to Timothy do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord we're tempted to be ashamed of Jesus and to keep quiet because we don't want people to think that we're peculiar or weird we don't want people to think that we're religious crackpots now we're not crackpots we're the sanest people in the world if we love our Bibles and live by the Bible's teaching but the temptation to be ashamed of Jesus and therefore silent about him can be powerful when I was a young Christian

I was very shy of speaking about my faith I wouldn't say boo to a goose in fact I wouldn't say boo to a day old gosling but the Bible teaches us to grow in boldness and to follow the example of Peter and as we read the Bible which is the words inspired by the Holy Spirit the Spirit himself deepens our convictions that it's better to stand with Jesus even if it means that we forfeit the good opinion of the world blow a raspberry friends at the good opinion of the world are you willing to do that that was a very small raspberry I could have made it a bigger one but I didn't blow a raspberry at the world's opinion as Paul once wrote if I'm still trying to please men I am no true servant of Christ back then to Acts 2 verse 16 because it's at this point that Peter explains the phenomenon of all these Christians telling the mighty works of God in many languages so he says in verse 16 what you're seeing here this was uttered through the prophet

Joel now Joel lived about 700 years before Jesus in the last days now that phrase the last days is almost a technical term and in the New Testament it refers to the whole period between the day of Pentecost and the return of Jesus that means that we have been in the last days now for 2000 years so what happens in the last days verse 17 God declares I will pour out my spirit on all flesh now that phrase all flesh cannot refer to every human being in the world it means every human being who is willing to believe in Christ and what will this pouring out of the spirit achieve your sons and your daughters says Joel shall prophesy and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams even on my male servants bond servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my spirit and they shall prophesy in short everybody is going to start speaking about the mighty works of God irrespective of their status in society as Joel 700 years or so BC tells us that women as well as men will find themselves willing and able to speak out young men young men they'll stop thinking solely about sport and music and girls and they'll start to see the truth about God old men grey headed grandfathers do you see any old men will leave their slippers and their armchairs and they will come to life verse 18 even slaves male and female regarded as the lowest form of life in the Roman Empire they too will speak out the tongue of every believer in society will be will be loosened there will be what you might call a democratization of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times the Holy Spirit was given only to certain individuals to prophets and kings even to a roughneck like Samson who was filled with the Holy Spirit and that enabled him to tear a young lion to pieces with his bare hands but it was only a few people who received the Holy Spirit but now he is poured out on the whole church and that verb pour out used by Joel in verse 17 is repeated in verse 33 by Peter who tells us that Jesus has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and Jesus has poured him out on the Lord's people it's a word of lavish abundance it's a kind of

[41:23] Niagara Falls word then in verses 19 and 20 Joel speaks of very dramatic meteorological phenomena before the day of the Lord comes blood

and fire and smoke and darkness Jesus speaks of similar things happening immediately before his return he says in Matthew chapter 26 the sun will be darkened the moon will not give its light the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken and then men will see the coming of the son of man with power and great glory so I think it's best for us to say that we're still waiting for Joel's heavenly dramas to be fulfilled but the prophecy comes to its climax in verse 21 everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved and that word means saved for eternity rescued for everlasting life so what we're witnessing here in verses 14 to 21 is a transformed spirit filled apostle boldly telling a huge crowd of people that God is at work in great mercy he is working out purposes that have been brewing if you like for many many centuries he has before the crowds very eyes and ears fulfilled a prophecy made 700 years earlier by the prophet Joel the day of Pentecost marks not not the birth of the church the church has its beginnings way back in the book of Genesis the day of Pentecost marks the beginning of the evangelization of the world when the gospel of Jesus Christ begins to be told to people of every tribe nation and language well let me draw to a close with one or two practical points first look at the promise here in verse 21 everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved not might be saved shall be saved

I imagine that some listening this morning either here or elsewhere have never yet called upon his name calling on his name simply means coming to him and saying to him Lord Jesus I am a lost soul save me if you do that you lose hell and you gain heaven let nothing prevent you from doing it you only have to lift up your voice and call on him he is merciful secondly if you are a Christian and most of us here this morning are Christians it means that you are born again by the power of the Holy Spirit or to put it another way you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit is at this very moment with you and in you there are sometimes odd misunderstandings about this people have sometimes said of course there are two types of Christians there are ordinary Christians and there are born again Christians or they might say there are ordinary Christians and spirit filled Christians friends that is not the Bible's teaching nobody can be any kind of a Christian without being born again and filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit I pointed out at the beginning today that there is no life without breath and there is no Christian life without the breath of God the Spirit of God filling us with himself and transforming us from inside Paul puts it very clearly in Romans chapter 8 when he says anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Christ in other words a human being without the Spirit of God is a dead man walking if we have become Christians it is because the Spirit of God has come into us and he inhabits our hearts and souls now we might ask are we supposed to feel his energy and life-giving power in some measurable way should we feel like Popeye when he's just eaten a can of spinach making his muscles bulge and putting power into his fists so that he can fell his enemy with a punch in the bread basket the answer from the Bible is very different think of the Apostle Paul a Spirit-filled man if ever there was one he often felt weak and drained and fearful for example he went to Corinth and preached the gospel there and once he'd been away from them for a couple of years he wrote back to them and said this about his initial visit he said when I was with you back then I was in weakness and fear and much trembling trembling and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power he felt weak as he spoke to the Corinthians he did not speak freely and confidently he didn't have an endless gift of the gab he probably had to sit down on a chair while he delivered his gospel teaching in a stuttering and hesitant voice humanly speaking he was a picture of weakness and yet his words demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit and many of those pagan Corinthians became believers in Christ how then can you and I ordinary not very confident men and women how can we demonstrate the power of the Holy Spirit we know that he's changing us we know that he's bringing us new life and understanding and joy but how can Joel's prophecy be fulfilled in our very ordinary humdrum lives well look again at verses 17 and 18 I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh says God and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy now prophesy simply means speak in this context it doesn't mean that you become an acclaimed

prophet or that you go into trances like a fortune telling gypsy oh Miss McConaughey you're going to meet a tall dark stranger before the end of next week it's not that sort of thing at all to prophesy in this context is simply to start speaking about God and especially about Jesus commending Jesus to other people by your words it's not weird it's not complicated and it applies to all Christians whatever our station in life high or low look at verse 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit and they shall prophesy even people who occupy the most ordinary and lowly places in society people with the most poorly paid jobs people with no jobs because of long term health problems no Christian is excluded how then do we speak what are we to say well how about this for a start

[48:41] Jesus Christ is Lord imagine you're imagine you're a middle aged man and you have a middle aged sister you're a Christian and she is not you've never discussed your faith with her but one day you're having a cup of tea with your sister at her house and you say to her Maisie Jesus Christ is Lord there's a silence she says would you like another biscuit she can't cope with it she doesn't know what to say but later on that day she's thinking I know my brother has been going to church for all these years but why did he say that to me today she thinks about it and she keeps thinking about it now the brother you probably felt nervous as you said those few words a bit like

Paul in Corinth trembling a bit but you have borne witness to Jesus in saying those few words you've testified to him in the courtroom of the world your sister representing the world has listened to your testimony who knows where your few words might eventually lead her and that was a very short sentence wasn't it of prophecy four words Jesus Christ is Lord can you say that friends I'll tell you what let's say it together in unison should we do that just those four words Jesus Christ is Lord after a count of three say it boldly one two three Jesus Christ is Lord let's say it once again a little bit more boldly Jesus Christ is Lord well he is and it's good for us to tell each other that and it honors him we have just testified in those few words to the greatest truth in the world and the Holy Spirit poured out on every Christian 2000 years ago continues to be poured out today God who never breaks his word gives us a sure promise through his servant Joel in those days I will pour out my spirit and they shall prophesy well let's pray together we thank you our dear heavenly father that all over the world today your people are speaking the truth about your son Jesus Simon Peter who had so recently denied the Lord Jesus became a transformed man and he began to speak so we ask you dear father to take us also and to help us to bear witness in the power of the spirit to your mighty works and above all to the eternal salvation that you have given us in our Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray amen who who who who who who