

Acts 2:1-13

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 26 January 2025

Preacher: Andrew Lawrence

[0 : 00] Wonderful. Please grab a seat. Can I just check. Steve, is this mic okay? Are you happy? Yeah? Okay. Sorry, we're trying a new mic, so apologies if we get a few squeaks.

! Well, hi, my name's Andrew. If we've not had the privilege of meeting yet, I very much look forward to hopefully meeting you at our welcome lunch after this meeting. If you're able to stay on, it's a great opportunity to meet other people, connect with some of us as the elders of the church, the leaders of the church.

So hopefully, if you are new here or you've been here for a few weeks and you haven't yet come on a welcome lunch, please stay on for our welcome lunch. It would be great to have the opportunity to meet you. We are in the book of Acts and we're doing a series. We're calling it Devoted and seeing how the early church, which is really the stories in the book of Acts of the early church, how they were devoted to God, how they're devoted to each other and how they're devoted to God's mission. That is reaching out with the love and grace and mercy of God to those God puts around us. And we've come to a key moment, I guess, in the story of Christianity.

It's one of those moments where everything changes. It's the count of what happens at what we call Pentecost. And we're going to read about it from the book of Acts. If you've got your Bible with you, you may want to open it.

[1 : 38] It will come up on the screen as well, though, in Acts chapter 2. Just before we do that, though, I want to say if you've got any questions about what's the preach or anything else to do with Harvest Church, there's an email address there or a text number you can use.

You may want to take a photo of it. There are also cards which look like this over on the information table. You can fill in and pop in the offering box on the information table. Because we recognize that when we preach, we create questions.

And therefore, we want to be able to pick those questions up in subsequent times and work through those and help people to draw closer to God. Acts chapter 2, verses 1 to 13 says this.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

[2 : 48] Now, they were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. Wow! When they'd heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken.

Utterly amazed, they asked, aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene.

Visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism. From Cretans and Arabs, we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, what's this, me?

Some, however, made fun of them and said, they've had too much wine. Okay. Would it be better if I use a handheld? Are we having some issues or are we happy?

Might be better to use a handheld. Handheld. Sorry about that.

[4 : 03] Okay. So, here we have this amazing story in the Book of Acts. I say story, it's history. It's not just a story. It's an account of what actually happened on what we call the Day of Pentecost nowadays.

In reality, it was a Monday, the equivalent of a Monday for us. It was the 50th day after the Passover. It was called the Festival of Weeks.

And it's an important Jewish day, which is why people from the nations of the Jewish world are gathered in Jerusalem. And it's 50 days after the Passover.

And Passover is when what we now call Easter happens, where Jesus dies on the cross for the sinner of mankind. And so, 50 days has passed.

And as Tim, if you were here last week, was saying, what had been going on after Jesus had ascended to heaven after 40 days is probably some sort of glorious prayer meeting. Because he'd say, well, wait for the gift of my spirit.

[5 : 12] And so, they'd done just that. They'd paused. They'd stopped. They'd waited. They were probably gathered in, well, we're told they were gathered in a room. We don't know which room. It may have been the same room that they'd been in for the Lord's, what we now call the Lord's Supper, just before Jesus' crucifixion.

It may not have been. We don't know. But what we do know is something massive happens here. Absolutely massive. This is a promise which has come from Almighty God to his people, which they've been waiting for eagerly.

Now, you could say, oh, they've only been waiting 10 days. But, you know, I struggle to wait an hour. In fact, often I can struggle to wait 10 minutes. So, 10 days is a long time to wait.

I wonder what was going on in their hearts, their minds. Oh, is this ever going to happen? I wonder how long we're going to have to wait for. We've waited for the Messiah for millennia, hundreds of years, certainly.

We're longing for a Messiah, and the prophets prophesied that literally centuries before it happened. How long are we going to have to wait for this? He said to us to wait. So, maybe it will happen fairly soon.

[6 : 28] And you imagine that sense of anticipation, that desire of something to happen. And then, God's Spirit comes.

And we read in this account, as the Holy Spirit comes. And I just want to make this observation, the Holy Spirit comes how and when he wants to. We can't force his hand.

But, we are encouraged in Scripture. Jesus in Luke 11, 11 is recorded as encouraging us to seek and ask and knock and receive the Holy Spirit.

So, it's not something that we've got to twist. He's not something we've got to twist the Father's arm over. Say, oh, well, come on. No, he lovingly, willingly gives his Holy Spirit.

But, this first outpouring, this massive outpouring on the disciples has such a powerful effect on the disciples. And we really, in one sense, you could call the book of Acts the books of the work of the Holy Spirit.

[7 : 36] Because, while we have this Pentecost happens at the beginning of the book of Acts, everything else which happens flows out from that. It's that important today. The history of the world changes.

And so, it's so important for us to consider it. So, the first point I want to draw on is just this. God's Holy Spirit comes how and when he wants to.

But, we are encouraged to seek him, to ask for him, and know that we have a Heavenly Father who loves to give his Spirit. Who loves to give good gifts. And as people are filled, everything changes. Gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. Perspective changes in our lives. An awareness of God the Father grows in us. An intimacy with the Father.

We find elsewhere in Scripture, Galatians 4, Romans 8. It's the Spirit in us who cries out, Abba, Father. He draws us in to know the Father's love. And to know that affirmation that we are not only loved, but that we're saved.

[8 : 41] We're redeemed from our sin. We're set free from our sin. He loves to bring us into a place where we live in the goodness of that. Ruth was going to share a word.

I stole it. I didn't really steal it, but I've caught, hopefully, the essence of it. She found God was saying that freedom comes from forgiveness. That's right.

Freedom does come from forgiveness. If you want to be free, start by being forgiven. Sometimes that means that we also need to forgive others. Freedom comes through forgiveness or from forgiveness.

Everything changes as we're filled with the Holy Spirit. I imagine it must have felt a bit scary, too. I mean, there was no record of what was going to happen.

There was nothing to warn people what was going to happen. Can you imagine being in a room where suddenly a wind blows through? Just occasionally in this building, if we've got the roof windows open, and then perhaps it's warmer and drier than it is today, and we've got the main doors open, you get that sense of wind blowing through this building sometimes, and the whole building creaks.

[9 : 52] There's been a lot of timber. It all moves very slightly. And sometimes you're aware of it. Oh, oh, oh. That was just a strong gust of wind. Of course, this week, we've seen the most phenomenal winds, record winds recorded in Scotland and Northern Ireland or Ireland.

What sort of wind was it? How did it feel? I would love to quiz one of the folks who were there. What was it like? Was it a warm wind? A cold wind?

Was it a strong wind? Was it a sudden gust that it went? Who knows? We don't know. We're just told this wind blows through. The wind that represents the Spirit of God, the ruach of God is the Greek word used to describe this wind of God.

Blows through. And God wants to blow through our lives. Not just a building, but actually the place where His Spirit dwells. We're told our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

And His Spirit wants to blow in and through our lives. Wants to take out some of the cobwebs, some of the dirt, some of the filth, some of the things we haven't let go of, the sin, the shame, the guilt, the unforgiveness.

[11 : 04] He wants to set us free from these things, to enable us to enjoy fully what it is to be loved by Almighty God, to be His child, to be His delighted one, because He delights in His children.

He's a Father who loves His children, who delights in His children. He doesn't just, oh, well, they're my kids and ignores them. No. Passionately for His children. That's us. If you're saved in Jesus' name, if you've handed your life over to God, if you've asked for His forgiveness for your sin, you can know the Father's love.

And what a great way to know the Father's love as His Spirit blows into our lives and brings that cleansing wind which cleans out the old. His Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us.

And then we've got these tongues of fire. Oh, wow, what? How's that? I mean, flames? But nothing burns down? It doesn't say the building gets set alight or anything like that.

How's that work? What appears to be like tongues of fire. And that may be symbolic of the purifying work of God's Holy Spirit.

[12 : 14] That sense that fire purifies. And the Holy Spirit is holy. Let's remind ourselves of that. He's not just the Spirit. He's the Holy Spirit.

He's pure. He's God. However that works. Still don't quite understand the Trinity. If anybody else can explain it to me another day, you're very welcome.

But what we know is God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit comes as a fire and falls on people. I would like to suggest He comes and purifies and reminds people of Christ's atoning work on the cross.

Imagine it. Imagine it. Maybe He brings conviction of sin. Maybe He brings cleansing.

That deep sense of cleansing going on. Yes, truly forgiven. Maybe He brings an assurance. You're loved. I'm loved by God. I'm His child.

[13 : 17] I'm loved by Him. I'm precious to Him. God's Holy Spirit comes.

How and when He wants. We see this in Acts. But we also see that we're encouraged to seek Him, wait for Him, ask for Him.

And how about you? I mean, this morning was lovely, wasn't it? Just pausing and waiting before God. And yet I feel there was more that the Father wanted to do and more that His Spirit wanted to do.

And we're going to, in a few moments, just a few moments, we're going to open this up and allow Him to continue ministering to us and see where that gets us to. I also wanted to share another picture, which Jan emailed me last week.

I think it was Monday Jan emailed me. She said she had a picture during our meeting last week but didn't have an opportunity to share it. And so she emailed it. She said she had this picture of a dam. And it was a wooden dam and it was leaking.

[14:42] And above the dam there was quite a head of water and below the dam there was parched, dry ground. And the sense was that this was a dam in someone or maybe many people's lives where we were holding back the water.

And in fact, in Jan's picture, she saw us trying to plug the leaks. I don't want those leaks. Whereas the Father wants to lovingly come and let His water, His living water, flow in our lives.

His life-giving water to bring life back to the dry ground. We don't need to worry. Sometimes I think we can worry, well, if I allow this, surely I'm going to lose that.

If I allow the water to flow, will I run out of water? No. You won't. Because God loves to refill us with His Holy Spirit. To go on filling us with His Holy Spirit.

And we can know that day after day, hour after hour even. And so let's not be in a place where we try to control God. Where we try to limit God.

[16:00] But we allow God total freedom. We say, hey, I'm here, Lord. I'm blown away by Your love. Come and do what You want to do in my life.

I think we started to do that this morning. I want to encourage us in a few minutes to continue to do just that. Before we do that, though, I just want to go on to my second point.

I'm not going to go to my third point today, but I just want to go to the second point of what happens as the Holy Spirit comes. We have read that all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. Fantastic.

And began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. And we have this amazing description of all these different languages and people from different nations staring on and going, hey, what was that?

How can I hear them speaking praise of God in my own language? And so what do we mean by the gift of tongues? Well, it is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. There are many gifts of the Holy Spirit.

[17:00] You can read more about that in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 14, 1 Corinthians 12 through to 14. Tongues is a God-given ability to speak in other languages to communicate with God, to, as it were, in one sense, take out our head in terms of where our mind may limit us to communicate in worship, in love, in adoration of God.

But also we're told it is something which can strengthen us. It does us good speaking in tongues. Tongues are a strengthening gift, 1 Corinthians 14, 4.

It talks about them edifying themselves through the use of tongues. It draws us close to our Father. And so these languages are a gift from God.

They may be languages which are known on earth today, but they may not. In the account we've got here, lots of people were hearing these Galileans who wouldn't have been well-educated and certainly wouldn't have travelled, speaking praise to God.

They're delighting themselves in God in other languages which they didn't know, but they were known languages. In fact, I've seen that happen in a situation back in my old church in Bournemouth where I bought a public tongue and somebody else bought an interpretation.

[18:20] There was only about 15, 20 people in the room and one of them, a guy called Sitnan, who had only become a Christian, he was from Thailand, been a Christian about six, eight months, goes, wow, that's amazing.

Andrew, you spoke in my home dialect of Thai. Really? Well, of course, I knew that. And Guy, you brought a virtual, perfect translation of it.

Now, in fact, actually, what Scripture talks about is an interpretation. It isn't necessarily a word-for-word translation. It's an interpretation. It's that sense, the essence of it. And he was blown away.

We were blown away too. I was blown away. I mean, you'd think, oh, yeah, so tongues can be known languages, but some of them also are languages which perhaps have been lost over time. They're heavenly languages which have been lost over time, but which God knows and God enjoys and delights in. And so here we have the people receiving the gift of tongues.

[19:14] Now, can I just highlight here, it is a hallmark, a hallmark, of being filled with the Holy Spirit, but not the hallmark. The hallmark is that deep sense of I'm loved by God.

I'm assured of my salvation. And I'm going to live out that love and that joy and that peace and this deep sense of the presence of God in my life. Now, tongues is a gift.

It's one of multiple gifts God can give. It's not the only gift. And to be filled with the Holy Spirit, you don't have to speak in tongues. And if you're not sure about that, you may want to go and have a look in 1 Corinthians 12, 10, and 30, but it's very clear that many do, but not all.

But it's a great gift. It's a great gift to receive from God because it strengthens us. It deepens our relationship with God. And where it's used publicly and then interpreted, it can strengthen us. It can help us draw closer to the Father. I also make this observation. When I received the gift of tongues, I hadn't got a clue really what was going on.

[20 : 26] And I just think that sometimes, for me what happened is I had about three words. And I thought, oh, that's weird. Why have I got these three words? And I remember saying to my youth leader at the time, I was 18, 19, in fact, we were at the Downs Bible Week, for those of you who remember, the Downs Bible Week, 1983.

And yeah, just showing my age here. And I said to him, I've got a few words, but I think I must have made them up. And he, I don't know if it was a word from God for me or just some earthly wisdom. He said, you normally make up words, do you? I thought, no, I don't. Oh, in fact, I've never made up words in my life as far as I can think of. Oh, maybe this is tongues.

And so he said, well, just use those words and God will add to you, add to them. And you'll find you gradually develop in the language of tongues, in the gift of tongues.

And, you know, for some of us, that's how it works. For others, it's like a stream, suddenly just, almost like dam bursting and suddenly, wham! And it's like, oh, wow, I've found a whole new language here to praise God, to delight myself in God.

[21 : 38] But the gift of tongues, as I say, is one of the gifts of the Spirit. There are lots of other gifts of the Spirit. Prophecy, we're encouraged in 1 Corinthians 14, actually, above all the gifts to seek the gift of prophecy.

But we've talked recently in the last term about the gifts of the Spirit. I'm sure we'll do it again. I'm not going to dig into them all today. But there are many, many gifts of the Spirit. And they're there to glorify God, to equip us in the mission he's called us to.

And they're there so that they're to be, they're not a sign of maturity. They're a gift from God.

They're to be received and to be used. And I want to encourage us. Let's be a church who uses, who use the gifts of the Spirit.

And for those of us who use, have the gift of tongues, let's look to grow in that gift as we would in any other gift. For those of us who perhaps don't have that gift of tongues, just check yourself out. Maybe you want to ask afresh. Maybe it's fear or something else which has stopped you actually going for it because maybe like me, you just sort of had a few words rattling around in your head and thought, I've made these up.

[22 : 40] And sometimes it's helpful to talk to somebody else about that if that's the case and allow somebody to minister to you and help you to take that step. Thank you.