

New Life, New Community

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[0 : 00] I find where you can bring your own personal requests and prayers. So let's pray together now, let's talk to God.

Our Father, we thank you for the world in which we live, for the beauty of your creation, for the provision of all that we have every day.

We thank you for your control, for your rule. We thank you so much for the things that we can enjoy in this world.

But yet we recognize when we look out into the world, as we listen to our news, we see that not only is it a place of beauty, but it is a place that is terribly broken, where people are living in rebellion against you, which we see in wars, we see in famine, we see in so much destruction.

And so today we pray especially for the country of Syria. We pray for an end of the violence and the bloodshed.

[1 : 21] we pray for an end of the rule upon the people that is causing so much pain and so much suffering.

And we pray that in its place, there would be a new leadership, a new government that would not only seek justice and peace, a government that would not only seek what is right and best for the most vulnerable, but leaders who would seek to follow the way of God and would lead people towards the Lord Jesus.

We pray for the church in that country, for all the believers, for all those who know you and love you, that you would give to them courage to be peacemakers, to speak the truth of peace rather than taking up arms.

So we pray, Father, that you would intervene into that land and the many nations surrounding that area too.

Not only that, we pray for our own country. We thank you for all the privileges and the benefits that we enjoy. While we recognize there is hard times and economic difficulties, we praise you and thank you for the things that we do have, for our education, for our health, for benefits, for care, for the freedom that we have to meet together without fear of any authority, coming to shut this meeting down or telling us that we cannot talk about Jesus.

[3 : 08] We thank you for all that we have and we pray for our government and for our leaders that you would continue to give them wisdom in leading us and helping us.

And again, we pray that it will be for the best of those who are most vulnerable and most in need within our society and our community. Now let's just take a moment, quietness, to bring our own personal requests to God.

Let's just use the quietness to do that now. God bless you.

So, let's go.

Thank you, Father, that you are kind, generous, always listening, always caring.

[4 : 57] Thank you for this privilege that we can talk to you about all of our needs and concerns.

And we pray that we would be a people who live for you, who follow you, and who trust you in every circumstance of life.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to hear God's Word, so if you've got a Bible...

I've got a Bible, and one will be brought to you.

Put it up nice and high. And turn to Acts 2. As you're doing that, just for those who are going away on the church weekend, next weekend, I've been asked to announce that if you could read, if possible, all of Philippians.

It's only a short book. In preparation, the book of Philippians. It will take you about 20 minutes, I reckon. Less. It doesn't take very long at all. Kirstie.

[6:07] Thank you. Our reading is from Acts chapter 2, starting from verse 37. That's on page 1094 in the church Bibles.

So page 1094 in the church Bibles. That's Acts chapter 2. Starting from verse 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? Peter replied, 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call. With many other words, he warned them and he pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

[7:26] Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common, selling their possessions and goods.

They gave to anyone as he had need. 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, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Well, if you've got the Welcome to sheet again on the back, and also on the screen there's an outline of the talk, you can write notes on there, or even on the back there.

I'm not sure where the pens are, there are pens around, I think at the back there. If anybody would like a pen to jot down notes again, put up your hands, and you can get one there. Well, let's pray and ask for God's help as we hear his word.

Let's pray together. Father, again, we thank you for this opportunity to come and to join with Stephen and with Shane as they get baptised.

[8:59] Help us now as we think about that, that not only would it be something they are doing, but it is something that we also understand and respond to.

We pray that by your Holy Spirit, you would help us to see the good news, the wonder of who Jesus is, and all that he has given to us.

In Jesus' name, Amen. So, baptism. What's it all about? Well, I'm quite sure the idea of baptism is not new.

In fact, I'd say that most people who are here have been baptised either as a baby or as an adult. And depending on your background, we all have a different idea of what baptism is.

But whatever our tradition and our experience is, we want to hear what the Bible has to say. In other words, you and I don't get to decide what baptism is or what it is not.

[10:09] We need to let God's Word, the Bible, tell us what it is. And that's why we're going to be looking at this section here in Acts chapter 2, which is on page 1094.

You can follow along there. In the book of Acts, which is really a great big story of how the good news of Jesus began to spread in the early years, we hear people talk about Jesus, and then in response, people get baptised.

So let me show you a few examples of that from Acts. So look at verse 41 of chapter 2. It says, Those who accepted his message, that's the message of Jesus Christ, were baptised.

Then have a look at chapter 8, verse 35. This is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. Philip had been, or the Ethiopian had been reading something from Isaiah, and then Philip explains what it is. So in chapter 8, verse 35, it tells us there that Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

[11:26] As they travelled along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised? And he gave orders to stop the chariots.

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptised him. Then in chapter 10, over the page from me, not sure where it is for you, but chapter 10, verse 36.

Again, we're back to Peter, as somebody who went around telling people the good news about Jesus. We read in verse 36. He says, You know the message that God sent to the people of Israel,

and this was the message, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, whatever country or nation you are from.

And then at the end of his talk, look at verse 47. Then Peter said, Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water?

They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have, so he ordered that they be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. So, baptism is related to hearing about Jesus, and then responding to Jesus.

[12:46] In fact, baptism is actually a visible picture, a demonstration of the good news about Jesus. Two things, the new life that we receive from Jesus, and the new community that we enter because of Jesus.

New life from Jesus, and the new community we have from Jesus. So, although Stephen and Shane are getting baptised in a little while, as we said at the beginning, it's not actually about them at all.

It's all about a person, the person of Jesus Christ. So, let's have a look at these two ideas of new life and new community.

First, baptism is a picture of new life, our faith in Jesus. I was talking with someone recently who told me about a man who was both deaf and blind.

So, the way to communicate to this person was through hand signs. Literally, the hand would go in one hand, and through the shape he would be able to communicate and understand the other person.

[13:57] And this blind and deaf man was told the good news about Jesus, and in response, he too wanted to get baptised. But somewhere along the line, the communication had broken down.

This poor man thought he had to jump into a pool. Now, if you're blind, that would be a huge step of faith, wouldn't it? Being told to jump and not being able to see what you are jumping into requires faith.

Well, as you can see, we thankfully don't have any diving boards rigged up here, and Shane and Stephen aren't going to have to jump from a height. But, what is required is a step of faith.

Faith not in a church, but faith in a person, Jesus Christ. Look at chapter 2, verse 37. It starts like this.

Chapter 2, verse 37. When the people heard this, well, what had they heard? Well, Peter had been telling them the good news about Jesus.

[15:11] In fact, we can see what he actually had told them. Go back to verse 22 of chapter 2. Because he says there, men of Israel, listen to this.

And then he went on to tell them the good news about Jesus. Now, there's three things we are going to learn about Jesus from what Peter told them. First, who Jesus is.

Look at verse 22. 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.

So he's talking about Jesus who lived on earth and did amazing miracles. By a simple word, and we can read this in the Gospels, the Gospel of Mark, for example.

By a simple word, he calmed the storms. By a simple word, he healed the sick. He raised the dead to life. He fed crowds of people with only a few fish and a bit of bread.

[16:17] He silenced demons. He did amazing miracles. Now, amazing as that was to the people, the primary reason of all these miracles were signposts pointing people to who Jesus is, his identity.

Because Jesus was doing what only God could do. Only God could raise the dead and heal the sick. And now this man was coming and he was doing the same things.

Jesus was God in human form. The God who created the universe and who controls the world was walking on earth as a human being.

The God-man. But look what happened to this Jesus. His death. Look at verse 23.

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

[17:21] Now, we know through reading the Gospel, through reading the Bible, that Jesus was a man who did nothing wrong. No fault could be found in him. He was perfect without sin.

He lived the perfect life that you and I could never live. But yet we're told here in verse 23 that he was put to death, he was executed by nailing him to a cross.

Now, why was Jesus executed? An innocent man. Well, Jesus' death on the cross was all part of God's plan. Look carefully at verse 23.

It tells us that this man, Jesus, was handed over to you not by chance, but by God's set purpose and foreknowledge.

This was all part of God's design and plan right from the very beginning of time. Because Jesus' death on the cross was God's means of dealing with the big problem of sin.

[18 : 23] For Jesus came into the world to take our sin, my sin and your sin on himself and suffer the punishment that you and I deserve.

That was the purpose of his death. Now, let me illustrate this for you. Some of you may have seen it before, but I want you to imagine that this DVD here is a record of your life or my life.

It's a record of our life. Right from the very beginning of your life, right up to this moment, everything that you ever thought, everything that you ever said, everything you ever did is all recorded on here. Everything. All those public occasions, all those private occasions, everything is recorded in here. What would you think? Maybe you'd be happy with some of the things you'd see, maybe there's some things you wouldn't like.

Well, if this was a record of my life, I wouldn't like it to be in the public library, that's for sure, or in extravision. Might be entertaining to you, but not to me.

[19 : 37] Because if this was a record of my life, it tells of all the things that I've ever done wrong. Now I want us to imagine that in this room. Okay, God is up there. We are here.

This record of our life is a problem because it causes a barrier between us and God. All our things that we've ever done wrong, all the things that we've ever said and thought, are a barrier between us and God.

And God says the punishment for that is judgment, is separation from God. God is hell itself. To be separated from all that is good and all that is beautiful.

That's the problem. Christ, on the other hand, has come, we are told, the God-man who entered into the world. And he has come and through his death he takes the record of all the things that we've ever done on himself.

He takes the blame. He takes the punishment. He suffers hell for you and I so that we don't have to so that what was in the way, the barrier, is now gone and we can have that relationship with God.

[20 : 48] We can know God and enjoy him and love him and have all his wonderful promises because Jesus took the record for us. But not only that, let's just change that this is no longer a record of us, but this is a record of the life of Jesus.

A perfect life, a good life, a pure life, a life that never did anything wrong. Not only does Jesus take our record, but he gives us his record, his beauty, his perfection, his life, so that now when God looks at us, when he looks at me, he doesn't see me, he sees the record of Jesus Christ, which is now applied to my life through faith.

And now I'm treated and loved and treasured like Jesus, like God does his own son. That's what his death is all about. That's why he died, to take our record and to give us his record.

So we learn about his life, we learn about his death, but look at verse 24. We also learn about his resurrection. We're told that God raised Jesus from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Jesus did die, but God also raised Jesus from the dead. Now death isn't something we like to talk about, is it? Not a very popular subject, because when people die, it means the end of relationships.

[22 : 31] It means separation. We don't get to see those people again, not on this earth or in this life. There's sadness, a loss of friends. It hurts, it's painful.

And amazingly, we found lots of cures for all kinds of diseases and all kinds of health problems. We can go to the chemist, we can go to the doctor, we can get all kinds of treatments.

But we can't find a cure for death. Nobody has. Except for Jesus' resurrection. Because when Jesus rose from the grave, he defeated death, he destroyed death.

Or look what it says in verse 24. Jesus was freed from the agony of death. And the good news is, as Jesus says, I can free you from the agony of death.

It doesn't mean to say that we won't face death, we all will die, but the Bible says death for the believer, for the person who trusts in Christ, is just like waking up from your sleep in the morning.

[23 : 40] Just a simple waking up to eternal life. That's what it's like. And Jesus is the one who can free us. He has the cure, the antidote, his resurrection from the dead.

So we have here a story, an account of Jesus, the God-man who came to live in this world, who deals with sin through his own death.

He defeats death through his resurrection. Now the question is, what are we to do with this good news about Jesus?

What are you going to do? What am I going to do? Well, it requires a response. Look at verse 37.

So when the people heard this, this was the good news about Jesus' life, his death and resurrection, when they heard all of this explained to them, they were cut to the heart and they said to Peter and the other apostles, what shall we do?

What are we to do in response to what we've heard? Well, Peter replied, repent and be baptized every one of you.

[25 : 00] He was talking to crowds of people, far more than there is in this room. Repent every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now repentance is a double action. It means simply turning away from going your way and living your own life and turning around not just 90 degrees but 180 and going Jesus' way.

A complete turnaround. Repentance. Turning away from self and turning to Jesus. So no longer are we putting our faith in our own ability to deal with sin and death but now our faith is in Jesus who deals with the punishment that we deserve and he destroys death that we can never defeat.

So we've got to do something about this good news of Jesus. Am I going to trust in myself to deal with sin and with death? Am I going to face the grave and say well I'm going to count on myself and I'm going to figure out a way.

Am I going to trust myself to do that? Or am I actually going to turn to Jesus and say no he actually died for me. He took the blame that I deserve.

[26 : 21] He is raised from the grave. He defeated death. I can never do that. I'm going to trust him. Shane puts it like this in his story.

You can read it in the little sheet later. He puts it like this. He said I had come to realise that Jesus is our substitute on the cross.

He takes the pain and experiences death and hell for us so that we never have to. Not only that but because of Jesus we have an amazing promise eternal life.

Stephen says it simply like this. I believed in God and asked him to forgive me for my sins.

Now baptism as we'll see in a minute is just a picture of that. It's a picture of our faith. A visible demonstration of our faith in Jesus Christ.

[27 : 25] In his death and in his resurrection. So when we climb into this pool here when we go down into the water it's a picture of Jesus' death.

And when Stephen and Shane go down under the water they are saying that when Jesus died he was dying for me. Jesus' death was my death.

He was taking the blame. He was experiencing hell for me so that I don't have to. So when they go down under the water they are putting their faith in Jesus and saying he died for me.

He did it all for me. I'm not trusting in myself but in Jesus. And then when they come up out of the water we promise we'll do that. We'll not leave you down there.

We're going to bring you up. It's a picture of Jesus' resurrection. That Jesus was raised for me. That his resurrection was my resurrection.

[28 : 22] That his life, his ability to defeat death is in Jesus. They're not trusting on their own. They're not trusting in their own self or anyone else or anything else.

Only in the death and the resurrection of Jesus. And this is a wonderful picture of new life. Their death and their rising again to new life. And that's what baptism is all about.

It's new life. A transformed life. The hope of eternal life. A new life today. Sins forgiven and the future secured.

So that's the first. It's new life. Second, baptism is also a picture of the new community or if you like the family of Jesus.

Community is vital to all of our lives, isn't it? In fact, most of us I say long for real community.

Friendships, relationships, people that are going to support us and encourage us and never let us down.

[29 : 31] A place where we can feel safe, a place where we feel we belong, a place where we're not going to be left out and even if we mess up we're still going to be welcomed. That's the kind of community we want.

Now most of us belong to communities. You live in a neighbourhood don't you? Or on a street somewhere? That's a little community. We all live within the bigger community of Carragaline. Maybe some of you belong to a sports community or a social club. We all belong to little communities. Now it tells us here that when our faith is in Jesus Christ you know what? We become part of a new community, a new family. family. Look at verse 40. It says with many other words Peter warned them and he pleaded with them save yourselves from this corrupt generation.

He's telling the people look you're to leave this old community. Leave the community of people who do not put their faith in Jesus.

[30 : 43] Who do not have Jesus at the centre of their lives. And devote yourself or join this new community who do have Jesus at the centre. Now of course that doesn't mean we all have to leave our neighbourhoods and go and live in some little commune somewhere or stop going to our sports club or anything else like that.

Don't do that. Stay where you are and live where you are and keep being involved where you are. Both of you. Keep involved where you are with your friends. Don't ever leave them.

Alright? But what does it mean this leaving to another community? Well it simply means that we have this awesome privilege and responsibility of belonging to those who also love Jesus.

Look what it looks like. Verse 42 it says they now devoted themselves so they leave one community and connect themselves to another community. They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching that's devoting themselves to the good news about Jesus and learning from God's word to the fellowship that's to the rest of the people to the breaking of bread remembering everything that Jesus had done for them his death and to prayer.

And verse 44 all of the believers were together and they had everything in common. They were even selling their possessions and goods and they gave to anyone as he had need.

[32 : 14] Now this isn't a community of rules and regulations where everything is decided for you or we're suddenly going to ask Stephen and Shane to hand over their bank account details or no it's not like that at all.

It's like a family. It's a place of support and care, a place where people grow and learn. It's a community of continual forgiveness and unconditional love.

And of course it's not perfect because this community is made up of people. I'm involved in that community. That's one good reason why it's not perfect. And Stephen and Shane are joining.

That's another reason why it's not perfect. He was already blaming his brother earlier on for being late. That's how imperfect it is. But this is a community that depends on the daily grace and mercy of God.

We're messed up people who get it wrong all the time but we're simply depending on his grace each and every day and seeking to live that grace out with each other. Stephen puts it like this in his story.

[33 : 25] This is after his faith. He says I then knew in my heart that God really had forgiven me and that I was saved. I knew I was part of God's family and that I was a citizen of heaven.

From then on I began to grow every day as a believer. Shane says it like this. He says it's bizarre to me that you can know someone for five minutes but instantly have a strong bond thanks to a shared love of Jesus you automatically feel as if you have a bond with the other.

It's bizarre isn't it? But it's very true. Now the question is how do people know that Stephen and Shane are a part of this new community?

Well hopefully by the way they live and the way they care for others and the way they help out which is what they do but the sign well look at verse 41 was that they were baptized.

Look at verse 41 those who accepted the message the good news about Jesus were baptized and about 3,000 were added to their number that day.

[34 : 39] They just simply became part of the community. You see baptism was like an initiation. It was a sign to say that we're no longer part of this community we're part of this community the family of Jesus.

You see our faith in Jesus is not just some personal affair that we conduct out there somewhere in our house on our own and do it when we want to. No it's a public event of joining the family of Jesus.

Faith in Jesus and the family of Jesus. You can't separate them. They belong together. And that's why we have this public event inviting people to come and to share that they're saying yes I'm a follower of Jesus, yes I have faith in Jesus and yes I'm in the family of Jesus.

Jesus. Now in a moment Shane and Stephen are going to get baptised but as we said at the very beginning it's not actually about them.

If we think it's about them we've missed the point. And it's not even about this church. It's a Baptist church. So be it but it's not actually about this church either. It's all about Jesus Christ.

[35 : 59] Their baptism is a picture of their new life. Our faith in Jesus. The new community. The family of Jesus.

But is this just for Shane and Stephen? Is the good news of Jesus Christ just for these two people here? The new life, the new community is it just kind of for a few?

Well look at verse 39. I don't think it is. I think it's open to all. Look at verse 39. This promise, the new life, the new community is for you and your children and for all who are far off.

So he was talking, this is like 2,000 years ago, so we're these people who are far off at this stage, a long ways off, 2,000 years off. and for all whom the Lord our God will call.

You see, God has done a work in Stephen and Shane's life. He's helped them to see and understand. He's given them understanding and he's brought them to a place of faith.

[37 : 14] That's God's work in their life and this promise is open to everybody who will come and trust him. they've responded to the good news.

They've put their faith in Jesus. They've identified themselves with belonging to the family of Jesus. Baptism is simply a sign of those things.

What's our response? What's my response? What's your response to the good news of Jesus?

Have you got faith in Jesus?

is your faith in his death and resurrection or are you going to trust yourself or are you going to trust him? What about the family of Jesus?

Is the Christian life something you just want to live on your own or have you committed to the family? It's part of the same thing. If you have faith in Jesus, you're in the family of Jesus.

[38 : 16] You can't separate it. This is the good news that Christ has come to bring us. Stephen and Shane have responded. We all need to respond to this message.

Let's pray and then we are going to baptise Stephen and Shane, but we'll pray and then we'll just have a little minute or two and somebody can go and get the others.

But let's just pray together first. Let's just use a moment's silence for us all to respond to what we've heard. When they heard the message, they said, what shall we do?

And Peter replied, repent and be baptised, every one of you. Father, we thank you that it's not dependent on ourselves, but it's dependent on the Lord Jesus, that he died our death.

He took the blame that you and I deserve. He defeated death for us, something that we could never do, so that we might have new and eternal life.

[39 : 59] But not only that, he has given us the wonderful family of Jesus, other people to care and support and encourage, people who forgive.

People who show grace and mercy and love. We thank you for these wonderful things that we can have because of you.

We thank you for Stephen and Shane. Thank you that they have put their faith in you. Thank you that they love you. And we pray your help for them as they go into school and college at the beginning of this week.

That they would be strong for you, that they would live for you, that they would be people who tell others the good news and bring that same love wherever they go.

Encourage them in their lives. Bless them. Keep them strong. Keep them focused on you. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

[41 : 03] Amen. So I'm going to ask Stephen on you. Hold on water on e and for to to be good.