

# The Call Of God In Our Lives

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[ 0 : 0 0 ] heads. May the words of my mouth, may the meditations of each and every one of our hearts be acceptable always in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Amen. Since a couple of my friends in the congregation looked at me when I started that prayer as if I were just slightly insane, it wasn't a mistake that there was no creed right after the gospel this morning. The creed comes later as part of the baptism. So I can reassure you that you will have an opportunity to together affirm your faith using the words of this morning.

It will be the Apostles' Creed. Now, today, as Harry has already brought to our attention, today is, if you like, the birthday of the church. Today marks the time when almost 2,000 years ago now, a group of the disciples and their friends were gathered in a second story of a house in Old Jerusalem, and together they received the Holy Spirit. So today is the birthday of the church. Today is the day when we remember a tremendous new beginning.

Pentecost is the day when a group of 120 men and women, and that doesn't sound like very many people, but when a group of 120 men and women who were gathered together to meet with each other to remember the Jesus they loved and who was now gone from their midst. When they became, rather than a memorial society, they became an outgoing, evangelizing, vital church. The story of that you've already heard in the Acts of the Apostles beginning on page 112. You've heard that story. So what I'd like you to do is just to consider it, and specifically to consider three things within that story as a way of helping ourselves think about

God's Spirit and God's Spirit within us, God's Spirit within His church. The first thing that I'm hoping that you will see in that reading, the first reading from this morning, is the inclusiveness of what happened on that first Pentecost.

[ 2 : 5 5 ] It says in verse 1, they were all together in one place. It says in verse 4, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

All were filled. All were gathered. Now just the fact that those 120 people were there that morning borders on the miraculous because they were not a homogeneous group of people.

They were quite diverse. There were the disciples, ranging from blustering and impetuous Peter to the quiet and reflective John.

There were disciples and other followers who had been working for the occupational forces of Rome. They were, if you like, the quizlings of their day.

At the same time, there were people who were part of the zealots, a group who were advocating armed rebellion against the might of Rome, to overthrow the rule of Rome in their homeland.

[ 4 : 1 4 ] There were people there who were poor, skilled craftsmen, unskilled workers. At the same time, it's probably safe to assume that there were rich and important people there.

Probably Joseph of Arimathea, who had loaned his tomb to Jesus, was there. Perhaps Nicodemus, the same Nicodemus that we've heard of in the gospel reading for this morning, was there.

So they were a diverse group. It didn't seem to have anything in common, and they were gathered together. But they were gathered together not because of their diversity, but rather because there was one thing they had in common.

That one thing was the fact that each and every one of them loved Jesus. And it was that love of Jesus that helped them overcome their otherwise irreconcilable differences, helped them come together, be there for that momentous occasion.

As they were together, as they were met as one body, the Holy Spirit of God entered their lives. Entered their lives in a miraculous way, in a dramatic way, in a way that's never quite been repeated again.

[ 5 : 49 ] When that happened, not one of those 120 people was excluded. Not one of them was discriminated against.

They all were filled with the Spirit. Inclusiveness seems to be something that we're losing if we haven't already lost in the contemporary church.

We're so busy, so many parts of the church squabbling over all sorts of things all the time that we are hardly one body in Christ.

We are hardly the body of Christ. We squabble about all sorts of things. It's, you know, men against women and young against old.

One power group or clique within the church against another. And, when we're in better form, perish against diocese and diocese against parish.

[ 7 : 09 ] There's little sign of wonder. Little sign of inclusiveness. But that's what we're called by the Spirit to be.

We're called to be not a gathering of individuals and small cliques and small interest groups. But we're called to be an effective Christian community.

We're called to be the real family of God. That calling is a calling to forget our differences, to concentrate on the one thing that I would hope we all have in common this morning, our deep, deep love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

So there was inclusiveness. There was also something else. And it takes but five words in verse 4 to say.

Those words are filled with the Holy Spirit. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. To those 120 men and women, of what age, we don't know.

[ 8 : 35 ] Obviously, most were adults. Perhaps some weren't. Those 120 people became channels for the Holy Spirit.

In their unified love for Jesus Christ, they became channels for the Spirit. The Spirit of God which gave them a new sense, a new and wonderful sense of their personal relationship with Jesus.

That in addition to the relationship that they all already had and felt and had enjoyed for varying lengths of time, that one-on-one relationship with Christ, they also now had a new dimension to that relationship.

Because through the gift of the Spirit, they sensed themselves to be, they saw themselves to be related, personally related, to the head of God's own people.

Jesus was still their friend. Now, in the events of Pentecost and the days afterwards, they came to see him as their friend and as their friend who was the head of all God's people.

- [ 10 : 00 ] See, it was because of their love for Jesus that they were willing to open their lives. It was because of their love for Jesus Christ that they were able to become receptacles for the power of the Spirit and to receive the gift of a new vitality in their lives and in their faith.
- Those people who were filled with the Spirit were people who had gathered there because of a double commitment. First of all, they were committed to Jesus emotionally.
- emotionally. They loved him. They loved him dearly. As a friend, as a teacher, as someone who had done amazing things in front of them and perhaps for them.
- They loved him. But hand in hand with that emotional commitment went an intellectual commitment.
- Oh, it wasn't the intellectual commitment we might think of today in terms of highly philosophical theology and theological concepts.
- [ 11 : 16 ] Nevertheless, it was an intellectual commitment. They put their minds to what they knew about Jesus.
- They remembered that he had told them to stay together and that he would bring to them the gift of God's Spirit.
- So their minds remembered that. And because of what they knew and remembered, they obeyed. In obedience, they became the recipients of the Spirit.
- If you like, what we see in those people between the Ascension and Pentecost is almost a model of what the Christian life is all about.
- What it consists of. See, the Christian life, for most of us, but not all of us, begins with an emotional commitment.
- [ 12 : 27 ] It begins with discovering Jesus and responding in that discovery with love for Jesus. begins, in other words, with a love that leads to trust.
- Trusting the relationship we have with Christ. Trusting the person we know through that relationship. But another part of the Christian life, and for some people, this is the way they come to the Christian life in the first place.
- There's intellectual commitment. Knowing about Jesus. Knowing the facts of his life, of his death, of his resurrection.
- Knowing the gospel story. Coming to understand what that gospel story means for me, each of us, what it means for each of us.
- For some of us, that's the way we come to Christ. But whichever way we come, commitment to Christ, the Christian life, consists of emotion and intellect together.
- [ 13 : 50 ] Responding to God, obeying God, serving God, loving God. the church, the church, the church, the church, that fails to have that double commitment amongst its members as individuals as well as amongst itself as a corporate entity.
- The church that no longer is a church and it's nothing more than one big social club. A social club for which I suspect there's not much attraction in the long run.
- So we're called to that life of commitment. And when we make that commitment, God in turn fills us with his spirit.
- And his spirit gives us a new life, a new vitality. One last thing I want you to note and remember from this passage this morning.
- And that's the fact that once those people had received the power, the gift of God's spirit, they didn't sit back and sort of savor the experience.
- [ 15 : 11 ] They didn't sit back and try to make it last as long as possible. Rather, they immediately rushed out to get the message of Jesus out to the world around them.

The power of the spirit was not a power that led them to grasp and become selfish about the experience.

Rather, a power that led them to want to give away that experience. To give away the knowledge of Christ which had brought them to that experience. And the sermon of Peter which consists not just of the last part of this morning's reading but goes on to really the bottom of page 113 to verse 36.

That was just the first instance of the effects of the power of the spirit causing them to burst out so that they shared that message first of all with their city Jerusalem, secondly with the land around and then in widening and widening circles until if statistics are to be believed approximately a billion people share that message that commitment in today's world.

They wanted to share that message not just because they had a really neat experience. They wanted to share that message because they recognized its importance to all people.

[ 16 : 58 ] They recognized that in the gospel, in the good news of Jesus Christ, there's a message that everyone needs to hear, a message of need, failure, my need, our need, my failure, our failure.

There's a reminder, in other words, a message of reality. There's also a message of sin and salvation.

my sin, my wrong, wrongdoing, wrong thinking, and the salvation that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ offers to forgive that wrong and, as far as God's concerned, not just forgive it, but to forget it.

It's a message of hope. It's a message of freedom. the hope we find for the new life in Christ.

The freedom we have from the things that would lead us to go against God. The freedom, the gift of freedom we're given to obey God when our impulses are to go in the opposite direction.

[ 18 : 19 ] God is to go against God and to go against God. It's a message given by Christ to his followers and by his followers down through the ages to us.

But often, it's a message that gets hidden behind a sort of haze. Sometimes, that haze is just plain human inertia. Sometimes, that haze is a whole lot of less important things.

In the early church, that haze of less important things was basically surrounding a debate about whether or not a Christian had to also be a Jew. And so, we get those passages and other instances that point to a debate about circumcision and about what food you could or couldn't eat, et cetera.

In today's church, takes the form of too much talking about other things. When I was an industrial chaplain in Hamilton for four years, one of the things I heard again and again and again and again from people in management and people in unions and people who ran their own businesses, regardless of what their denomination or church background was, the message I got from them was that they hardly ever heard the good news about Jesus in church.

What they basically heard was a lot of talk about money. There's some truth in that, I'm afraid. Some of it was rationalization, obviously, but obviously, very obviously, there was a lot of truth there too.

[ 20 : 04 ] So, one of the things we have to worry about if we're really intent on getting the message of Jesus Christ out is that we don't hide it behind other things, things that may seem to us to be very important to keep the structure going or to keep our prejudices going or whatever.

We need to see what those little things that hide the gospel are so that the gospel can make a deep and lasting and life-changing impression upon upon our society and each member of our society.

So, if you like, we're called by God. That's what a Christian is. A person who has heard the call of God and has responded to us.

We're called by God to begin with. We're called to make certain of our relationship with Christ. To never take it for granted the way we often take our spouses or our kids or our parents for granted.

To never take it for granted but always to keep it under the microscope of prayer. To keep it under the microscope of the working of God's spirit within us.

[ 21 : 25 ] To keep it fresh and vital and to the point. we're also called to continually increase our knowledge. Now, Bible study isn't just a nice social event.

Bible study is the life blood of the church. It's through Bible study that God's spirit speaks to us through the scriptures. Speaks to us through the thoughts he puts in our minds that apply to the scriptures.

Speaks to us through other people in our Bible study who bring a word of God to us. It's also a call from God above all to come together.

To come together as the people of God. To come together with a common devotion. With common sacrifice.

common work and with a common witness. Come together to be the body of Christ in our world.

[ 22 : 40 ] The Holy Spirit did that to those people in Jerusalem. Gave them in a way they clearly understood the call of God in their lives.

I pray that that call of God will be seen will be heard will be obeyed by all of us in our world today.

Amen. 10 seconds lower tocar and heat up and go to the water to gain■ and ■■ as to die Electric f Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 25 : 26 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 29 : 58 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Oswald, Jehovah, Goj, Goj, Goj, Goj, Goj, Goj, Goj. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 32 : 16 ] Thank you.