

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

Not too many sermons are memorable but this one certainly was. It is not every day that the circumstances surrounding this sermon happen. Firstly there was the sudden sound from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind. Then there was the appearance of tongues as of fire resting on each of the apostles. Next the apostles were speaking in “other tongues” so that the hearers who had gathered from every part of the Roman Empire could hear the preachers in their own language. Now that is memorable! Surely this was something unusual and directly from God himself. What did all this mean?

Firstly it means the last days have arrived:

The lead preacher among the apostles was Peter. He raised his voice to get people’s attention. He then declared that the hearers were in special times. What they had just witnessed in the circumstances of this sermon was the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy. The Day of the Spirit had just dawned and since it was that Day it held out the promise of salvation. In this Day, this age, this time - anyone who called on the name of the Lord would be saved!

Many people heard this sermon when it was first delivered and 3,000 of those people took the message to heart. They believed the apostles and so were saved and expressed their faith by being baptised.

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The obvious next question to ask is: “Has this Day finished?” The answer is “No”. This is still the Day of salvation. It is the Day which begins with the first coming of the Christ and ends with his second. The further question, which then must be asked, is a personal one. Have I called on the name of the Lord and been baptised so I may be saved? It is imperative that we settle this question before the Christ’s second coming. The Day will pass and if we have not been saved our eternal destiny will be destruction.

Secondly it means David’s Psalm has been fulfilled:

A thousand years before this sermon was preached, the great king of Israel, David, had prophesied in song. He wrote what in our collection of the Psalms, is Psalm 16. Peter cited verses 25-28 of the Psalm and then taught from it.

‘I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will dwell in hope.
²⁷ For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades,
nor let thy Holy One see corruption.
²⁸ Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;
thou wilt make me full of gladness with thy presence.’

He began by stating the obvious. The Psalm spoke of a resurrection of a dead person in the first person singular. Although David wrote the Psalm it could not have referred to him. The Jews could still visit his tomb to the south of Jerusalem near Siloam and it was undisturbed. David had died and was buried. However, Peter noted God had promised by oath that he would give him a descendant who would reign from his throne. David was prophesying as he looked to the future of this Christ, of an anointed king.

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At this point Peter could speak personally. He was with the disciples when their master Jesus had been arrested by the soldiers and taken off for trial and on to crucifixion. He also had followed the women to Jesus' tomb and had seen the grave clothes lying in the tomb, had heard the women speak of angels saying that he had risen, had seen him alive on many occasions over the forty days following his death, had eaten breakfast with him on the beach by Lake Galilee and even had an uncomfortable private interview with him in which he had been commissioned to pastor God's flock. There was no doubt in Peter's mind that Jesus was the descendent of David and the risen King of whom the Psalm spoke.

Thirdly it means the Saviour has come:

Peter called upon his listeners to cast their mind back over the previous three years or so. He could appeal to "the mighty works and wonders and signs" that God gave Jesus of Nazareth to do. They were not just wonders but mighty works of God and they were signs that God was ruling among them. Jesus had done them in Galilee and Judea. They had all heard about him. They also knew how he had died. In fact they had been party to his death by not opposing the Chief Priest's plans. The chief priests had thought that this was the end of Jesus. That was not the case. God raised him from the dead. Peter and the other disciples had seen him alive. He was the promised Christ and the Jews had killed him.

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However despite their being responsible for such a determined rejection of God's appointed Saviour, Peter was at pains to point out that even the rejection had been in God's definite plan and foreknowledge. In a later sermon he would call the cross a tree so that could he allude to his death as being under a curse for us all so that we might be saved from God's curse.

And how should these assertions be responded to?

When Peter was concluding his sermon the crowds were "cut to the heart" and began to ask him and the other disciples, "What shall we do?"

I wonder how many of us have neglected to respond to the risen Saviour in a wholehearted way? I wonder how many have just heard how the Christ Jesus of Nazareth has died and been raised by God and then promptly forgot about him or got caught up with our many other pursuits or got choked by those worries and anxieties of life? Now is the Day of salvation, now is the day to act.

And what does Peter say to do? Repent; change our minds and our life's directions. Embrace the Saviour. Express our repentance and faith by being baptised into Christ. So we shall receive forgiveness of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.