

## Acts 2

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.<sup>2</sup> And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.<sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.<sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.<sup>7</sup> Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?'<sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?<sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,<sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,<sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.'<sup>12</sup> All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'<sup>13</sup> But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

<sup>14</sup> But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.<sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

<sup>17</sup> "In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.

<sup>18</sup> Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.

<sup>19</sup> And I will show portents in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

<sup>20</sup> The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,

before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

<sup>21</sup> Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

## John 14

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'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.<sup>2</sup> In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?'<sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.<sup>4</sup> And you know the way to the place where I am going.'<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?'<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.<sup>7</sup> If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.'

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.'<sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen

me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup> Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup> I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

<sup>15</sup> 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. <sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

<sup>18</sup> 'I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup> In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.' <sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?' <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. <sup>24</sup> Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

<sup>25</sup> 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

I was in two minds as to what to call today's sermon  
It was a toss up between  
"What's in a name?" and "Now you see me now you don't"

I was in the chemist's the other day  
When the man in front turned around and said  
"Hello Geoff" – then looking down at my prescription added, "I hope that's not for anything serious"

there followed one of those banal conversations  
throughout which I was desperately fishing for clues  
as to who the heck I was talking to!

After he left the shop, I said to the assistant,  
"I'm sure I should know that gentleman's name"  
hoping she might help me

but she was very professional,  
and pointing to the dog-collar she smiled and said  
"I should think that's a regular problem for you"  
it certainly is!

we sometimes associate names with places or occasions  
But that can be misleading

For example – we tend to think that the name "Pentecost" must have something to do with the Holy Spirit  
Whereas in fact Pentecost was a Jewish festival  
long before the Holy Spirit came along

Pentecost is a feast  
that takes place 50 days after The Passover  
you could call it the equivalent to our Harvest festival  
A thanksgiving for God's creation and abundant provision  
which is why there were so many people  
staying in Jerusalem at that time  
people from all around the world  
and of course, as usual, the meticulous Dr Luke  
typically lists all of their countries of origin

names of countries – places from whence people come  
and with whom they will always be associated

and of course – names and associations stick

many people associate me with Sunderland  
and when I see them coming I can usually expect  
the conversation to turn to football!

others recognise me from the woods or the beach  
And the conversation revolves around dogs

Or they associate me with the school  
or the Sea Cadets  
Which is all rather disappointing

Even when they see the dog-collar  
The conversation may be about the new Archbishop  
Or who I think the next Bishop of Bath & Wells will be

rarely – on the tiniest smidgen of occasions  
does someone mention the name of Jesus  
what's in a name?

which brings me to my one question this morning  
who or what do people associate you with?  
What's in YOUR name?

Does your presence –  
or more importantly your *behaviour*  
remind people of Jesus?

As the song goes  
Do they “know you are Christians by your love”?

Now – please - I'm not suggesting  
you should begin every conversation with His name

that would almost certainly strip you  
of all friends and associates within a matter of weeks!

But I would go so far as to ask,  
if you are one of those fortunate enough  
to be considered as “popular”  
could it just be because of your association with Jesus?

And as such your life follows a pattern of behaviour,  
which people like the look of?

I don't know about you, but I get quite depressed  
by the ways of the world these days

Chemical weapons deployed in Syria  
Sex traders preying on children as young as 11  
More and more *famous* names  
once thought trustworthy role-models  
ending up in the dock, accused of all kinds of atrocities

it's becoming increasingly difficult  
to know who we can trust any more

which is why - when someone comes along  
glowing with the love of Jesus  
it's like a light in an otherwise very dark place

I suppose the one positive thing we should take  
from the dark and dangerous times in which we live  
is that if we live as true disciples  
the contrast will be - *dramatic*

and people should flock to us  
to this place  
and embrace this faith of ours  
like a life jacket in a cold stormy sea

Last Saturday  
Some of us gathered for an away day in Locking

And many came away from that day  
Feeling really excited by the opportunities  
which lie ahead of us

We can make a difference to our communities  
We can begin to change the world  
And it all begins with the name of Jesus

In the afternoon session  
The two churches divided into separate groups  
To share thoughts and ideas we'd had in the morning

The St Paul's group talked about reaching out (quote)  
"to an abandoned, fractured society  
to make church a place where they feel safe"

and the folks of St Peter's expressed a longing  
to get back to basics  
And it all begins with the name of Jesus

Whilst preparing for last Saturday  
I came across this logo

St Peter's already have it  
on their power-point slides this very weekend!

And I think I'm going to put it on my letterheads  
And anywhere else I can think of  
to remind us of something Bishop Peter said  
in our Lent Course about being Christian

that's it's not just about what we do for an hour each Sunday  
it's not about talking the talk – but walking the walk  
it's not just saying – but doing  
being Christian – 24/7

So what about that alternative title for this sermon  
"Now you see me now you don't"?

Well – another name that's oft forgotten  
Is that of The Holy Spirit

He's generally considered to be the silent third of the Trinity  
And yet, without Him, the other two would be powerless

He's mentioned in the very beginning of Genesis  
*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, <sup>2</sup> the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.*

The HS directed Jesus (Luke 3)  
*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness*

And of course He was raised by the Spirit

And - by the way - if you ever wondered how a grave stone  
which required 6 Roman soldiers to roll into place,  
was brushed aside like a sliding patio door

where do you think that power comes from?

The Holy Spirit is the power  
Behind everything that the Father and the Son do  
Lies the power of the HS

And in our Gospel reading today  
Jesus promises that power to His men ...  
*<sup>17</sup> This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*

You know Him  
because he abides with you, and he is in you

The world – them out there – they can't receive Him  
Because they neither see Him or know Him

Why?  
Well I said it the other week didn't I?  
Because they're all looking in the wrong places

I couldn't believe some of the hype  
when Alex Ferguson announced his retirement  
"Oh no! What are we going to do?  
He's been there all my life!"

They're looking in all the wrong places!

They're putting their faith in the Alex Fergusons

The Jimmy Savilles and the Stuart Halls of this world

They're putting their faith in the lotto and the euro-draw

they can't receive Him

Because they neither see Him or know Him!

But they can

They will see Him – if we play our part in God's plan

Jesus said

"You know him, because he abides with you,  
and he will be in you"

so when them-out-there can't see the Holy Spirit  
it's because we're not displaying Him!

Now you see Him – now you don't!

*They who have my commandments and keep them  
are those who love me;  
and those who love me will be loved by my Father,  
and I will love them and reveal myself to them.*

Now you see Him – now you don't!

The Spirit – like any spirit – cannot be seen

As Jesus was the embodiment of God's Spirit

So Jesus is saying to us

that we too can be living, breathing, tangible proof  
not only of the existence of God - but of His nature

and when people see that He lives – in us and through us  
and when they see what an awesome,  
loving, caring God He is

they will want to give their *lives* to Him - just as we once did  
and He will live in them – and show His love through them  
and the world will be transformed

now I'm going to say something controversial here  
but I do believe that God's power is limited

and it's limited because of us

God loves us so much that He gives us a free will

We can allow Him in

Or we can block Him out

I've said before,

The Holy Spirit is a gentleman

He's not going to barge into our lives

Unless we invite Him to

And there's a massive difference  
Between a person who calls himself Christian  
Even one who goes to church every week  
And someone who gives His life  
Totally, exclusively and unreservedly  
To God's Holy and perfect will

don't worry – I'll still sing that song  
"My God is so Big"

but for God to transform His world  
we first have to glorify Him  
Raise Him up  
make Him seen and known in all the world

and the only way we can do that  
is to let Him have His way among us

Let me end by unwrapping verse 14  
Jesus said  
"If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it"

well – I've said this many times I know  
but this is an awesome promise!

And it's not a matter of who you know vs what you know  
It's not a massive name-dropping exercise  
"Oh well, you know, I was just saying to the Son of God the other day..."

without going into all the technical translation  
and interpretational stuff  
I'll simply say this  
for "In my name" read "in my nature"

Next year will be my 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
I became a Christian all those years ago

Because God was revealed to me  
By a nun called Sister Ann Julian

Sister Anne gave herself to the Holy Spirit  
She allowed Him to dwell in her  
And to reveal God's glory in her life

If ever you lost her,  
you just had to follow the trail of slumped chilled-out bodies lying in her wake!

And I gave my life to the Lord that weekend  
because I saw God through Sister Ann  
and I liked and *hungered* for what I saw!

Apart from her divine peace

There was one other noticeable characteristic  
Whenever she was asked something  
There'd be a brief pause before you got an answer

“that” she explained,  
“is when I'm praying and waiting for the answer myself”

whatever you do  
whatever you think write, text or say  
do it remembering that you are a disciple of Christ  
do it or say it asking His Holy Spirit to lead You  
and guide you, and strengthen you  
and *reveal Himself* through your words and actions

what's in a name?  
Well, when it's the name of Jesus Christ  
It's bound to be a lot more than you bargained for!