

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-20-2014 @ 0900

"It's Even More Amazing When You Understand it!"

Acts 2:5-12

HOLY SPIRIT, THOU ART WELCOME

Holy Spirit, Thou art welcome in this place! Holy Spirit, Thou art welcome in this place!
Omnipotent Father of Mercy and Grace, Thou art welcome in this place!

Acts 2:5-12

There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious people who had come from every country in the world. When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because all of them heard the believers talking in their own languages. In amazement and wonder they exclaimed, "These people who are talking like this are Galileans! How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? ...- yet all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!" Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other, "What does this mean?"

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever been completely confused as some mysterious event unfolded around you, until someone who spoke your language finally "explained things" to you, and you "got it"?
- Can you remember being totally shocked when someone you considered "clueless" stepped forward boldly to share, not just "a clue", but the unexpected and astounding "answer"?
- Did you ever experience the joy of "bringing on board" people who needed a "helping hand" to understand a puzzling challenge or a mystifying game? How did you feel when *they* "got it"?

In the GI Joe programs for children, (or those like me who felt like children,) they had little teaching clips where they used the slogan: "*Knowing* is half the battle!" The Word of God also asks, "Unless someone tells them, how will they know?" Most of us, however, seem to "freeze up" about telling people the "Good News" of Jesus Christ. It's easy to feel intimidated, unprepared, or "not good enough" when it comes to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ if we've never "caught the fire" of His Holy Spirit. It's this Holy Spirit who enables us to speak to those we would never have approached before, and in a way they will understand. "How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages?" None of them had access to "Rosetta Stone", or any other teaching tool for foreign languages at the time, and even they had, they could not have learned it all that quickly. God was trying to teach them (and us) that no one need worry about how to speak for God. God Himself, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will always cover that. God will provide us with all we need to bring forth the Message of Divine Grace, Mercy, and Love if we are willing to wait for the infilling of the Holy Spirit, as Christ told us. Our problems arise when we try to do these things in our own wisdom, intellect, and power. We try to explain the inexplicable; we try to prove the rightness of God's Love in a fallen world with our own wisdom, or we try to convince sinners of their "lost-ness" and need for "the Finder". For none of this do we possess sufficient intellect or power on our own. God, grant us Your Holy Spirit in a modern "infilling"! As the first disciples waited for their "infilling", may we learn to wait prayerfully. Then, when anointed with "the Power" as they were, help us proclaim boldly the Message of Mercy and Gospel of Grace Your Son revealed. You know our need better than we do. Let Your Word blaze anew in our hearts. Raise us up as a "Tower of Testimony" to the Glory of Your Name, so many more "lost children" will find "home" in the "Consecrated People" You are gathering!

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-21-2014 @ 0900

“God’s People Make It – No Matter What!”

Acts 2:16-21

HOLY SPIRIT, THOU ART WELCOME

Holy Spirit, Thou art welcome in this place! Holy Spirit, Thou art welcome in this place!
Omnipotent Father of Mercy and Grace, Thou art welcome in this place!

Acts 2:16-21

This is what the prophet Joel spoke about: “This is what I will do in the Last Days, God says: ‘I will pour out My Spirit on everyone. Your sons and daughters will proclaim My Message; your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams. Yes, even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim My Message. I will perform miracles in the sky above and wonders on the earth below. There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke; the sun will be darkened, and the moon will turn red as blood, before the great and glorious Day of the Lord comes! And then, whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.’”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Can you remember a day, a game, an event when suddenly everything around you turned upside down and sideways, yet “when the dust cleared”, you had made it?
- Have you ever “been captivated by the vision” of a brand-new possibility, one that could go disastrously wrong, but held such exciting possibilities, you couldn’t pass it up?
- When was the last time you faced a situation in which you “called out to the Lord” for “help”? What was your “experience of salvation” that made it a “Day of the Lord”?

Look closely at this passage, and notice the “/s”! We can see clearly the One Who is “large and in charge”, and more than able to “make it all happen” for us. God says: “This is what **I will** do in the Last Days... **I will** pour out My Spirit on everyone...**I will** pour out My Spirit in those days... **I will** perform miracles in the sky above and wonders on the earth below.” Four times in this short passage God affirms His Purpose for us. We are not in this “Christian Struggle” alone, for God is not just “with us”; He is ready, able, and willing “to do” *for* us. Imagine that; this great, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient God is “doing wondrous things” for *us*. Ponder the miracle(s) through which the Creator of all heaven and earth is actively doing marvelous things for us! This means all of us... young or old, male or female, wise or foolish; it doesn’t matter. God is performing miracles of revelation from above and wonders of salvation here below. Remember this key point: this is not about us and our need; it’s about God, whose Love and Fidelity pours out Grace and Mercy in abundance. This is the Holy Secret we must remember: “It is not about what we may receive; it is all about *what God will do* for us to reveal Divine Graciousness and Mercy.” This passage indicates we are likely to face some truly tough times, but if we call to God with faith, we will be saved! We have God’s Word for that! Jesus paid “with dearest Blood” for us to receive our “place in the Family of His Father.” Jesus literally “laid down His life” to reconcile us with God, and “incorporate us” as “joint heirs” with Him. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for re-creating us as “children of God”. With You, we call upon our Heavenly Father, and know that like any good father, He will save us! This is why we wait willingly for the Holy Spirit You will send us before we take Your Gospel to the world. Yes, the Father who raised You from death can always save us, but Your Spirit must strengthen our faith when the tough times come. Awesome Lord, teach us to wait confidently, pray constantly, and share competently the Vision of Your Day!

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-22-2014 @ 0900

“Proof is Proof!”

Acts 2:22-24

HOLY SPIRIT, THOU ART WELCOME

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Acts 2:22-24

“Listen to these words, fellow Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose Divine Authority was clearly proven to you by all the miracles and wonders which God performed through Him. You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you!”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Can you remember ever being faced with proof that changed your world view significantly, whether you wanted it to or not? (Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, Sand Man, etc....)
- Were you ever confronted with “evidence” about a friend or family member which changed your opinion of them completely? Did their personal “stock” with you rise or fall?
- Have you recently learned any such “additional data” concerning Jesus? Did that “change” cause you unspeakable pain or indescribable delight? (Or a bit of both?)

Proofs of authenticity, additional evidence, or new facts about someone or something we thought we “knew” can have one of two effects. This “new material” may finally give us certitude we needed to rest in the assurance of belief we already treasure, or it may finally “bust our bubble” about the person or issue in question. Either way, clear proof is difficult to refute. In this passage, Luke records Peter’s appeals to proof on Pentecost, proclaiming how Jesus’ Ministry and Message were “clearly proven to you....You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you.” The Apostle appeals to what they know to be “true” because *they were there*, and witnessed His “miracles and wonders” for themselves! He asks, “How can you possibly argue with what you know to be true?” (It’s like looking at the score board at the end of a game, and refusing to believe what we see. The score is the proof of victory for the winners, and defeat for the losers. It may not say what we want it to say, but nothing we can do at that point will change the *truth* in the score.) So...while the people of Pentecost may have found Peter’s proclamation “amazing” and “perplexing”, they knew what their own eyes had seen; He didn’t just *claim* Divine Authority; Jesus backed it up with “miracles and wonders”! Even today, many who have examined the evidence surrounding Jesus’ identity and ministry still turn away, refusing to believe in Him, because they want to “do their own thing”, “be free of all that old-fashioned superstition”, or just “be reasonable and scientific”. How many are more familiar with Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny than we are with Jesus Christ? How many of us know our favorite teams’ line-ups and stars better than we know the “line-up” of God’s friends in Scripture? One “line-up” diverts our attention to the “seasons” of this world, while the other “line-up” calls us to *join them in the arena* for the “Cosmic Contest” whose victors win Eternal Life. God, grant us the Grace of True Vision! Help us examine Your “evidence” with open hearts, humble minds, and sincere spirits. You have provided us with enough “proof” to make belief reasonable, but given us enough “wobble-room” to doubt if we really want to refuse You. Make us wise, Lord! Grace us with trust in all Your Son has revealed, so we come to know Your Truth, embrace Your Way, and enter fully into Your Life! We’ll *be* Your Proof!

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-23-2014 @ 0900

“Why Are You Troubled?”

Acts 2:25-28

HOLY SPIRIT, THOU ART WELCOME

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Acts 2:25-28

“For David said about Him, ‘I saw the Lord before me at all times; He is near me, and I will not be troubled. And so I am filled with gladness, and my words are full of joy! And I, mortal though I am, will rest assured in hope, because You will not abandon me in the world of the dead; You will not allow your faithful servant to rot in the grave. You have shown me the paths that lead to life, and Your presence will fill me with joy!’”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever “been alone” in a sad situation, or “abandoned” in a crisis event, feeling very frightened and unsure, until you spotted the familiar face of a friend, and suddenly felt better?
- Have you ever worked or played with a team so united to one another through struggle endured and test embraced you were sure you could face anyone or anything...anywhere...anytime?
- Did you ever know a moment in which “God had your back”? Was there a time in which you saw “no way out”, but the “resolution” showed up “coincidentally” in a way you never imagined?

Modern technology is amazing, isn't it? With the right “tools”, we can address situations that would have “stressed us out” not so very long ago. Most of us can remember when finding our way around a new city, or locating the site of that important interview, could be so nerve racking. And then there were times when making a wrong turn, or not being able to find a phone, could cause near panic because we felt “lost” and “out of touch”. Now we have GPS and cell phones, and by pushing a few buttons, we can “reconnect”, know where to turn, and know when we have reached our destination. What about all of the other problems and crises that arise in our lives? Where do we turn? To whom do we turn to for help at these times? Luke reminds us here of the words of King David years before, “I saw the Lord before me at all times.” Where do you “see” the Lord, your God? Do you see Him “near you”, or far, far away? Do you see God in the midst of your situation, or is He “absent”? David saw his God with him, and *involved* in everything, therefore he says he will not be troubled. In fact, he affirms that he will be filled with gladness, and his words will be full of joy! See how David states that he is only a “mere mortal”, but he rests assured in hope, because he knows that God will *not* abandon him, even in the world of the dead. David assures us we can even have a hope that sees beyond the grave, for God will not abandon us, even there! Real paths, which lead us to genuine Life, we find only through Jesus Christ...nowhere else! It is easy to lose our way in this world, and find ourselves completely lost and undone, a lost-ness that no GPS can correct. Yet David found the exact *Help* he needed. God, help us learn to “wait on You”, as David did, so our waiting is rewarded with Your very Presence, O God, so Your Presence fills us with joy! We can waste our lives seeking happiness, fulfillment, success and life in the world, and from all it has to offer, or we can wait upon You, Lord, and find in You all the Love and Truth, Life and Light, Peace and Joy for which we have searched. Dear Lord, help us see You before us at all times, and follow faithfully where You lead!

DEVOTIONAL TIME

10-24-2014 @ 0900

“The Gift Has Been Poured Out!”

Acts 2:32-36

HOLY SPIRIT, THOU ART WELCOME

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Acts 2:32-36

“God has raised this very Jesus from death, and we are all witnesses to the fact! He has been raised to the right side of God, His Father, and has received from Him the Holy Spirit, as He had promised. What you now see and hear is His Gift that He has poured out on us. For it was not David who went up into heaven; rather he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: sit here at my right side until I put your enemies as a footstool under your feet.’ All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!”

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever ignored an announcement, or passed up an invitation, because the offer sounded “too good to be true”, so you didn’t go, only to hear later about all you had missed?
- Can you remember someone so trustworthy you could count on any promise that person made, no matter what, no matter where, no matter how long, no matter how seemingly impossible?
- What do you “make” of God’s Promise to you? Does “Eternal Life” in an infinity of bliss seem “too good to be true”, or is God “big” enough, wise enough, and trustworthy enough to do it?

This group of believers has suddenly been speaking perfectly in languages they have had no opportunity to learn. Imagine that! Who wouldn’t be trying to “sort things out” at a moment like that? What sense could we make of what we’d be seeing? Would what we’d be hearing even “compute”? Imagine yourself hearing Peter explain, through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, what God has done in Jesus, and is now doing “in the Spirit”. As a testimony, he points to a prophetic psalm attributed to the great king David, in which God makes a Promise of an eternal victory over all enemies. Devout Jews, whether from Jerusalem or elsewhere in the Empire, believe in and revere King David as a trustworthy source of “knowledge of God”. Peter is using solid evidence based on what they have all seen and heard with their own eyes and ears to prove that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s Promise to David. As God, His Father, raised Jesus from the dead, and exalted Him to the “Place of Honor” at His right side, He was not only keeping His Promise to David, but to all those who would place faith in His Son as “Lord and Messiah”! God had promised that He would send a Messiah to save His People, and also promised that He would pour out His Holy Spirit on all flesh in the later days, and God is keeping both these Promises “here and now”! Well, that was great for those first believers, but what does it mean for us today? This same Jesus still sits at the Father’s “right”, sending the same Holy Spirit to all who will believe in Him as “Lord” and “Messiah”. God, grant us the Grace to hear Your eternal Promise today, with new ears and open hearts. Teach us to trust Your Son completely as One who can do all He has promised! Pour Your Holy Spirit into our souls in a new anointing, so we in our turn may testify to Your Goodness and Mercy, both by the Word we share, and the Life we live. As Jesus has gone “all out” for us, may we in our turn now go “all in” for Him, in the prayer we pray, the sacrifice we embrace, and the service to others we do in His Name!