

To Call on the Name of the Lord

THE DAY OF PENTECOST [a]

June 4, 2017

ACTS 2:1-21

¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; ²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹ **And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'**

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

It shall come to pass, says Peter, that everyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.

There is salvation. Salvation from our sin, from the guilt in our conscience; salvation from the shame we feel so deeply; salvation from our fear of death, our fear of being rejected by God, our fear of not measuring up; salvation from our fear of trying everything the world offers us to finally make ourselves feel worthy, from all the schemes of self-realization, self-worth, self-esteem, or whatever else might be the current fad to glorify ourselves and act like we're spiritual, even though we wake up each morning

to eat breakfast, we drink our coffee, we laugh and play with our family, and these are things that no spirit would ever do; salvation from all the false self-worth, self-spirituality, salvation from everything of this sinful world—there is salvation.

It shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.

And calling upon the Name of the Lord is not some formulaic speaking of a mantra or incantation. The Name of the Lord is the person of the Lord, it is he, himself, coming to us in his Name for salvation. Mantras and incantations, they belong to the idols and demons. The Name of the Lord, it belongs to the One who saves you and who makes you his own.

In the Old Testament, *to call upon the Name of the Lord* is not a ritualistic speaking of the Name, but it is going to the Lord's gift of sacrifice to be cleansed of your sins.

To call on the Name of the Lord is to bring your children to the Holy Name in Baptism and to bring them up in the Lord's doctrine of grace and salvation.

To call upon the Name of the Lord is the Israelite at the Temple to hear the Lord's priest pronounce him and his family clean; it is the woman at the well speaking with Jesus, asking him for the water of eternal life; it is Stephen looking into Heaven and praying for forgiveness for those who are stoning him; it is you and me going to the Lord's table to hear his Name and to receive his Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sin.

To call upon the Name of the Lord is to be gathered to the Lord's Service to hear his Word and receive the abundant gift of mercy and salvation from his hand.

To call upon the Name of the Lord is the voice of the life of faith, the faith bestowed by the Holy Spirit whereby the sinner calls upon God's Name expecting to be heard not by a God seeking retribution, but by the Living God who cares for those who bear his Name, and who says to the sinner, *Fear not, do you not know that you are of more value to me than many sparrows?*

And Kate, that is your confirmation verse, from Matthew 10:

[Jesus said,] “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

To call upon the Name of the Lord is to call upon him who speaks to you his Word of Gospel, and who promises to steadfastly bring to you his Word which is not empty, is not some void ritual or mantra, but which is filled with life, daily bestowing comfort and grace and salvation. And that, Sydney, is your confirmation verse, from Isaiah 55:

¹⁰ “For as the rain and the snow come down from Heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

To call upon the Name of the Lord is to give prayer and supplication to your Lord in the confidence that peace in your conscience will never be something you can bring upon yourself or can find within yourself or within your own potential, but this peace is from God, which he speaks to you in his Gospel, so that with that Gospel he cleanses your conscience and guards your heart, and all this through the redemption he bestows upon you in the blood of his Son, Christ Jesus. And that, Jacob, is your confirmation verse, from Philippians 4:

⁶ Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

To call upon the Name of the Lord is to be gathered to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be called into his Church, where, according to his abundant mercy, he is sending forth the Holy Spirit to bring the preaching of the Gospel and the distribution of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, so that by this working of the Holy Spirit, by this abundant mercy of God the Father, you are given to live in the true hope of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, which resurrection is your resurrection, according to the promise of your Baptism. And that, Teagan, is your confirmation verse, from 1 Peter 1:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you.

Catechumens, you bear the Name of the Lord in Baptism. You have learned your Lord’s doctrine. You have heard his Word of Law and Gospel. He invites you to the table of his Body and Blood for the forgiveness of your sins.

In what do you find your worthiness to come to the Lord's holy Table? If you find your worthiness in your own self-worth, in your own potential, in any feeling or emotion you work up in yourself, then don't come. You would be receiving the holy Body and Blood not to your salvation but to your judgment.

Then in what do you find your worthiness to come to the Lord's Table? As you learned it from the Catechism, *That person is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."*

That's how we come to the Lord's table: as those with no worthiness of our own, with only sin and shame to bring; with no potential or self-worth, but with only the faith and desire to receive the pure grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the hunger to eat his Body and drink his Blood as he bids the sinner to do for the forgiveness of sins—we come as those who rejoice in repenting of our sin and who delight in being cleansed by the Lord who loves the sinner, as those who desire above all else to be justified by the voice of Jesus.

We come as those who have faith that at this Table is not some mere symbol or representation, but is just what the words of Jesus declare and bestow: His actual, true Body and Blood, for the forgiveness of your sin.

We come as those confessing that we are in full communion with Christ, and we are in full fellowship with each other in the doctrine his true Body and Blood, of his justification of the sinner, of his pure grace.

We come as those who call upon the Name of the Lord who saves.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.