



## THE HOLY SPIRIT CONNECTS

BY LANCE DAVIS

### TEXT:

### Acts 2:1-47

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Hello, my name is Lance Davis, and I am the executive minister of Develop Leaders and the Ordered Ministry of the ECC. Part of my role is to make sure that we resource pastors, affirm them in their role, and help them become more resilient to serve their constituency in the churches of the ECC. It has been a tremendous blessing as I've walked into this role to be able to do what I believe I've been gifted to do. The Lord has called me specifically to look after the souls of our women and men who serve the kingdom of God. So it is such an honor to participate in this Blazing Center sermon series. Specifically, I'll be talking about how the Holy Spirit connects, and our Scripture today is going to talk a little bit about how the Holy Spirit does indeed connect us all.

We know we live in a fallen world, or a world that seems as though we're more and more disconnected, and the issues are more polarizing than ever. But we as the body of believers are called to be different from the world. We are people who are called to be connected. We are not supposed to have church in our living rooms and stay there. We've been called to be connected to one another and to our brothers and sisters, so that we might be able to reflect the mosaic and the kingdom of God in the way he has called us. We see this in the Scriptures in Acts 2:1.

We are called to be connected because the Holy Spirit does the connecting in verse 1 of chapter 2: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now, there were staying in Jerusalem God fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked, 'Aren't these all men of Galilee? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!' Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?'"

Brothers and sisters, looking at the Scriptures, we find a multiethnic phenomenon taking place. We find devout Jews from all over the known world. Or, as the Scripture says, "from all under heaven that came from everywhere," in order to engage in their Judaic tradition. While they were all together, we find that they experienced something. There was a group of Galileans, a group of probably unlearned men, who started speaking in the language of those persons who were visiting at the time.



It's interesting that these persons who were speaking in these other tongues were not just speaking gibberish or a form of glossolalia (as some might call it). They were engaged in a conversation where every person was able to hear the wondrous works of God. I'd like to pause to say that that's exactly what we've been called to do. We practice so much bad news, and all of the things that disrupt our lives, but we've been called to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. Each one of these people was coming from a context or a place where life wasn't that easy. In Palestine, life was not that easy. Traveling to Palestine wasn't that easy. And the places where they came from also had problems. That's one thing that isn't new. Problems have been around since the very beginning. But notice that what they hear about the wondrous works of the Lord.

We don't know if those were past wondrous works or if they were present wondrous works. We just know that what they heard being spoken in their own language was the wondrous works of God. And they asked themselves, "What does this mean?" In other words, all of us are hearing these unlearned men speak in our own language, the wondrous works of God. Now, I would imagine that the wondrous works of God taking place in Phrygia would be totally different than those that are experienced by the Medes. But we find that all of them concluded that no matter what they heard, they were hearing of the wondrous works of God. This excites me, fascinates me—out of all they could have heard, they heard the wondrous works of God and they asked the question, "What does this mean?" What does this miraculous episode mean? What does this phenomenon mean to us?

Well, as the Scriptures goes on, it says that some people made fun of them saying, "They've had too much wine." That's the way it goes when we hear of what great things God has done. Perhaps you're reflecting on some of the great things God has done in your life—in the past and present—and what you're looking for the Lord to do. These wondrous works could just be the fact that he gives us

magnificent and beautiful things to behold. For example, we behold the great weather—sometimes. Even snow brings a tremendous amount of beauty to it. No matter what, they heard of the wondrous works of God. And I want to proclaim to you that the beginning of our recognizing that God has called us together through his Holy Spirit allows us to see that God is calling us into a walk and a phenomenon of good news.

He's calling us to be the beloved community, and the beloved community is in community together. Verse 14 says, "Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" "

God here is speaking to our hearts and saying that, as he will then add a date at a later time, he will begin to call all of his people to himself. We find that there's going to be women and men who will prophesy. They will be proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. What they had on the day of Pentecost was really just a snippet, just a small sample of what was going to come in the future.

And as this prophecy of Joel is unfolding, it says that "even on my servants, in both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days." The pouring out happens liberally. The pouring out is not sparing. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit obviously is something God wants to be in full



supply, so that no one walks around short on the presence of the Holy Spirit. They are in full supply of what God will supply. This, I believe, will be the mechanism that draws us all together. I believe the Holy Spirit is the one indeed who brings us together, who merges us, who congeals us, who allows us to experience a life in community together.

I would like to pause and say that I think it's impossible to live in community together without the Holy Spirit for all these people that we see in this particular chapter. They are from every walk of life. Later, we'll see that they were engaged in fellowship. Later on we'll see that they gave themselves to not only the apostles' doctrine, but also engaged in going from house to house, ingratiating one another, and embracing each other.

I want to conclude this particular portion by saying that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." It is this proclamation that is the prophecy of the sons and daughters who are preaching the word of God. And whatever it is that they say, whatever it is that they're proclaiming is going to cause a reaction of those who hear in faith and they will "call on the name of the Lord."

Hebrews 11:6 reminds us that "without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." I believe that this is indeed one of those opportunities where people hear the word and they've already wondered about God. They've already asked themselves, who is he? Who is it? Who is doing this work? Who has created all things that we know? And the answer comes when someone preaches the gospel.

When someone preaches the good news, then someone is suddenly moved by the Holy Spirit to state his faith in Jesus. He came, died, was resurrected on the third day, and now, through the power of the Holy Spirit, wants to dwell in each one of us. "Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." That word "saved" in Greek is "sothesethai." The base of the word "sothesethai" is "sozo."

I find it quite interesting that the "sozo" used in Greek is similar to the letters S.O.S., which describes another way to be saved, to be rescued, to be delivered, to be healed, to be made whole.

Now, I don't believe Samuel Morris, who created the Morse code, had this Greek word on his mind. As a matter of fact, from what I understand, S.O.S. is not even an acronym. It was actually just a word that was spoken in urgency or a mayday. It was an expression to be able to communicate to the folks on the receiving end that we are in distress.

Beloved, we are in distress. We live in distress. We're going through the challenges of life, but our S.O.S. is calling on the name of the Lord. It's a part of what connects us. We're all different in our challenges, different in our complicated lives, and the things that stress us out, but what is common to us is that we've all called on the name of the Lord and we are indeed saved.

The Scriptures go on to say, "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

Those who call on the name of the Lord, death will not be able to keep a hold of you. We escape death, as we know it, when we call upon the name of the Lord. But as we hurry through this particular passage of Scripture, I'm always celebrating what I find in these words. When Peter finishes his sermon, he ends up with these statements:

"Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. [That's Jesus Christ.] Seeing



what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”

Yes, that Holy Spirit was poured out on that day of Pentecost that made people proclaim the good works of God in the language of other people, in languages they were not even familiar with. They were able to speak, under the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit, the glorious works of God. And when they did so, the people asked the question, “What does this mean?” But after Peter spoke and preached, they proclaimed and asked the question, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Because Peter had just said, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah....When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”

This is also the question for us today. We are in a fragmented society. There is a calamity on every end. Our answer is the same as Peter’s. We ask, “What shall we do?” knowing that this Christ died on our behalf and was raised from the dead, in order that we might never see and taste death.

Knowing this, what shall we do? “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” The Holy Spirit is a gift and the Spirit of God is present with us when we receive this gift. This gift that you and I receive is really the connecting power. It is the thing, the presence of God, that brings us together and makes us one. We’re not brought together by the things that societally puts us together. We’re not even brought together by culture, for there were various cultures present here. We’re brought together only, and specifically, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures go on to say, “And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is

for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

I believe that in his calling he has made it possible so that you and I might be able to call on him. And in our calling on him, we are drawn together as we are drawn to him. It is not just the vertical beam of the cross that connects us with God, but it’s also the horizontal beam that connects us with each other. This calling is the call that called all of these folks to come and listen to the message of our beloved brother Peter. And with many other words, he warned them and he pleaded with them, “‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” That day, 3,000 souls responded to the gospel as Peter preached it!

Yes, there is a call from God, and that call is a call to repentance. That call is a call to baptism. But first, it’s a call to trust in him as Lord and Savior. Second, he cares for us. God knows exactly where we are. He knows what we’re going through. He cares for us. We live in a world where people say they care about us, but do they really care about us the way the Lord cares about us? He cares about us when we’re good and when we’re not so good. He cares about us and loves us unconditionally. And not only does he call us and care for us, but he also cautions us. Remember the Scripture says that. And Peter cautioned them and warned them with many other words, saying, “Save yourself from this perverse generation.” In other words, there were a lot of things that were going on, probably culturally in society, but he was saying, “This is not your focus.”

Our focus is on him who is able to keep us from falling. Our focus is on him, who has called us out of darkness into a marvelous light. And then finally he connects us. These 3,000 people, who didn’t come from the same background, who didn’t have the same upbringing, who didn’t even live in the same region, all responded to the same message. And as they responded, they opened their hearts up to Christ.



I just look at this passage that says in light of their coming together to call on the name of the Lord, coming together, being baptized and repenting, that they devoted themselves to each other and to the fellowship and to the doctrine of the apostles. They devoted themselves to prayer. They devoted themselves to staying in the word and staying with each other.

I always look at this, a possibility where we, as the beloved of Jesus Christ, are like a garment. As a matter of fact, I took this from my wife (and I hope no one tells her). She knits and this is what she was knitting. I looked at a ball of yarn. And I also looked at the garment she was knitting. And I realized that without Christ, this is what we are. We're yarn. We're individuals. We're known for whatever color, or what kind of texture, we have as yarn. But then God through the Holy Spirit actually begins to weave us and mold us into something the Scripture would refer to in Hebrews as having faith in him. As we grow in him, as we love him and honor him, he is fitly joining us together as the Scripture would say. And as he is joining us together, we make a garment of Christ. Without the Holy Spirit, well, we are only becoming unraveled. We're only becoming individuals. Again, he's the one through the Holy Spirit who knits us together, who fits us together, who joins us together.

I would like to close with another analogy. Imagine yourself to be a conservationist and you're avid. You're dogmatic about it. You just take every single bottle in and you make sure it's recycled. You find the container to recycle. Then you go to the community, you start recycling from there, and people begin to know you as a recycler. They know you as a staunch conservationist and, only to find out after throwing away thousands, hundreds of thousands of bottles for years, that every bottle that you throw away couldn't be used. As we shipped it away to be recycled, it was shipped back to our nation because it was contaminated.

Anyone who throws away a bottle for the sake of recycling has to realize that you can't keep the top on it. And not only that, you have to make sure that this little tab that comes

on the bottle is also removed. If you're going to be a true conservationist, then this packaging needs to come off, then you can recycle it. Outside of that, it's no good. We talk about wanting to live together. We talk about wanting to worship and serve together, but I want you to know just like a contaminated bottle, it won't work without the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit connects us. The Holy Spirit connects human beings, connects the churches. The Spirit connects us collectively as believers. God has been so faithful in his word and he's been so faithful to us.

We don't want to become an unraveling garment. Thinking we can handle challenges and tribulations and trials without the Holy Spirit we will just become unraveled and will become individualistic again. God has called us to become the collective God, the gathering of God. He's called us to be his children and he connects us. He joins us together. He fits us together neatly, strategically, just as a knitted garment. We are knitted together by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit connects.

I thank God for each and every one of you. As I close, let us pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for the opportunity to share about your word that brings us together as brothers and sisters. Father, I pray that you connect us even more. Help us to know that the connecting power is only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Lead us and guide us in the days to come. Help us to focus on your Son, Jesus, so that as we have received him, we allow his powerful Spirit to work in us, to join us closer together as brothers and sisters. In Jesus's name I pray. Amen.

**God bless you.**