

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet
23 October 22*

Welcome

Reading: Psalm 65

Praise is due to you,
O God, in Zion;
and to you shall vows be performed,
² O you who answer prayer!
To you all flesh shall come.
³ When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us,
you forgive our transgressions.
⁴ Happy are those whom you choose and
bring near
to live in your courts.
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of
your house,
your holy temple.
⁵ By awesome deeds you answer us with
deliverance,
O God of our salvation;
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
⁶ By your^[a] strength you established the
mountains;
you are girded with might.
⁷ You silence the roaring of the seas,
the roaring of their waves,
the tumult of the peoples.
⁸ Those who live at earth's farthest bounds
are awed by your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and
the evening shout for joy.

Song:

1 All who are thirsty, come to the Lord,
all who are hungry, feed on his word;
buy without paying food without price,
eat with thanksgiving God's sacrifice.

2 Why spend your money, yet have no
bread;
why work for nothing? Trust God instead!
He will provide you richest of food:
come to the waters, drink what is good.
All who are thirsty come...

3 Call on God's mercy while he is near,
turn from your evil, come without fear;
ask him for pardon, grace will abound!
This is the moment he can be found.
All who are thirsty come...

4 Where once were briars, flowers will grow,
where lives were barren, rivers will flow:
praise to our Saviour, grace and renown
ours is the blessing, his be the crown!
All who are thirsty come...

Prayer

Reading: Joel 2.23-32

Be glad, people of Zion,
rejoice in the Lord your God,
for he has given you the autumn rains
because he is faithful.
He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.
²⁴ The threshing-floors will be filled with
grain;
the vats will overflow with new wine and
oil.
²⁵ I will repay you for the years the locusts
have eaten –
the great locust and the young locust,
the other locusts and the locust swarm^[b] –
my great army that I sent among you.
²⁶ You will have plenty to eat, until you are
full,
and you will praise the name of
the Lord your God,
who has worked wonders for you;
never again will my people be shamed.
²⁷ Then you will know that I am in Israel,
that I am the Lord your God,

and that there is no other;
never again will my people be shamed.

The day of the Lord

²⁸ And afterwards,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.

²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and
women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

³⁰ I will show wonders in the heavens
and on the earth,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

³¹ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and
dreadful day of the Lord.

³² And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,
as the Lord has said,
even among the survivors
whom the Lord calls.

Kids talk

Song: I'm gonna trust in God
I'm gonna trust in Jesus
Without shame and without fear
I'm gonna fix my eyes
On the hope of glory
For His day is drawing near

*How great is the love of God
How steady is His hand
To guide me through this world
And though I am weak in Him I stand
And you will hear me say today
In faith I'm gonna trust in God*

Now when the cares of life
Seem overwhelming
And my heart is sinking down
I'm gonna lift my hands

To the One who'll help me
To the One who holds my crown
Prayer

Song: There's nothing worth more
That will ever come close
No thing can compare
You're our living hope
Your presence

I've tasted and seen
Of the sweetest of loves
Where my heart becomes free
And My shame is undone
In Your presence, Lord

*Holy Spirit, you are welcome here
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere
Your glory, God, is what our hearts long for
To be overcome by your presence, Lord
Your presence, Lord*

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Come flood this place & fill the atmosphere
Your glory, God, is what our hearts long for
To be overcome
By Your presence, Lord

Sermon: This week I went to the Sam Sharpe lecture in Oxford given by Professor Kehinde Andrews, part of what he shared was a concern that lectures only get heard in the university bubble. He thinks as a professor of black studies that intellectual thinking is happening outside the university, in the community or in the field. In the field, Kehinde says is where real power and real knowledge can be found and shared and used to make a difference. He said that he wasn't a religious man, but I heard a practical theology in what he said.

In practical theology the real-life experience of Christians is where real knowledge about God can be found. I also heard an echo of the book of Joel. For in Joel, he reminds the

people of Judah that a day would be coming when the Spirit of God would pour out on all people. In the original language of the bible, it says on all flesh. Why is what Professor Andrews said and what the bible says about the Spirit radical?

For too long in western culture we have thought that only clever old white men can say anything intellectual or godly. For too long in the story of the people of God, mainly old rabbis have been the ones to say clever things about God. And yet Joel tells us, the Spirit is for all people, all flesh. What is flesh? Flesh is the skin that enfolds our bones, flesh that is the same if you are male or female, or not sure. The same if you are black, brown or white.

Now we know from the amount of people using Botox that skin does not stay the same when we get older – does it? The skin becomes fragile, can easily get damaged. Who here has scratched their finger or bruised an elbow or knee this week? All of our flesh is fragile, some more elastic than others but all of it fragile. Have you heard the saying: The mind is willing, but the flesh is weak? Our bodies are fallible, aren't they? When our eyes see chocolate cake, they send a message to our brain saying: eat me, eat me, eat all of me! And yet also our bodies are creative, we use our bodies to run, walk, move, give life. We use our hands to create art, to nurture and to care. We use our minds which are part of our bodies to think, change, and plan.

On all of this flesh, flesh that is fragile, fallible and creative – on this flesh, this is where God chooses to pour out his Spirit. God's Spirit which used to be just for God's perfect and powerful presence, with just a few chosen people anointed by the Spirit to be prophets. Now there is a change. Now God is to pour his Spirit on all flesh, on all people.

Why? God has met the needs of the people of Judah whose crops have been ravaged by locusts. He has met their physical needs, now there is a broader and wider promise that speaks into a deeper need for the people. God recognises the spiritual needs of his people as well as their physical needs. For this he offers us all the Holy Spirit. This spirit is poured on all people, all flesh. All people – men and women, old and young, slave and free.

Earlier we looked at the short film on Nannie Helen Burroughs. Her voice comes to the world at a special time. She was born in 1879 but slavery had only been abolished in 1865 in Virginia. Nannie was born into a Baptist family who had grown up in slavery and had been enslaved as children and young adults. 1865 is also the date the American Civil War ended. Her family had seen the violence and chaos of war and shared its pain. And yet into this young black woman, we see the pouring of the Spirit.

She was woman who dreamed dreams and had bold visions. She had a particular economic vision. No longer should black women only be employed in low paid domestic work, she wanted to offer training so that lots of women could work in higher paid jobs like in shoe repairs, gardening and hairdressing. She established a National Training School in 1908 to offer education in the evenings for women. She wanted to offer learning opportunities in African history; a foreshadow of Saturday schools here in the UK and to instil pride among the Black women. Wherever we see moves for justice like this, we hear the Spirit speaking.

Nannie saw the crisis that she had been born into with the great struggles with racism, the ragged end of slavery and economic crisis after the war and after the great depression. Into this era of crisis, she chose to speak of the faith that burned deep within her and give space for the Spirit to speak. She called whole

conferences to account, to recognise the women among the congregations and to grant them leadership opportunities.

Burroughs speech to the Nation Baptist Convention:

‘We come not to usurp thrones nor to sow discord, but to so organize and systematize the work that each church may help through a Woman’s Missionary Society and not be made poorer thereby....We realize that to allow these gems to lie unpolished longer means a loss to the denomination. For a number of years there has been a righteous discontent, a burning zeal to go forward in his name among the Baptist women of our churches and it will be the dynamic force in the religious campaign at the opening of the 20th century. It will be the spark that shall light the altar fire in the heathen lands.... We unfurl our banner upon which is inscribed this motto, “The World for Christ. Woman, Arise, He calleth for Thee.” Will you as a pastor and friend of missions help by not hindering these women when they come among you to speak and to enlist the women of your church?’

Burroughs, 1900, *How the Sisters Are Hindered from Helping*

Wherever we see moves for justice like this, we hear the Spirit speaking.

The people of God in Joel’s day knew about the spirit, but they knew a spirit that called leaders, anointed kings, that was part of creation. That spirit was for special times and special people for special tasks.

This prophecy from Joel was altogether different, this was about the spirit’s role in the future. This spirit pours from heaven, this spirit pours onto everyone, this spirit drenches the people in power, in dreams, in visions, in proclamation. This pouring spirit

is for everyone – young old, male female even servants.

Nannie Burroughs calls for the unpolished gems to be released into service at the 1900 convention. She calls in a prophetic sense for all flesh to be able to lead in the Spirit, for all female flesh, to be able to dream dreams and have visions of transformation. Her vision was of economic transformation. A Baptist church member, not a minister – even though her daddy was a preacher. Nannie a member of church with a prophetic concern for all people spoke out and the people listened.

Be encouraged by her story, know that God equipped her with the Spirit, and will give each of us the same outpouring of his power as we follow him. For what we hear of from Joel is just a trickle of the Spirit in comparison to what is coming at Pentecost. From the day of Pentecost until this very moment, every person who calls on the lord will be saved. Every person who calls on him, is given the holy spirit to be present in our very bodies, in our very flesh. To which Paul writes therefore there is neither jew nor gentile, male or female slave or free for all are free in Christ.

There is a wideness in God’s mercy that recognises every person for their strengths and welcomes every single person into his presence.

Therefore, we ought never to despise our bodies, because God does not. We ought never to despise our skin or another’s, because God does not. And we ought never believe that God speaks to other people and not me, because God does. God does pour out his spirit on all flesh, all people to proclaim justice and his glory for the world. God poured his spirit out on nannie. And God pours his spirit out on you and me. Right here in our community there is knowledge of God and his Spirit that has transformed us and can transform others and the world.

Spirit flow through us, pour out on our lives
and the life of our community. Show us how
to change and lead us into renewal and hope
which is your vision for this world. Amen.

Song: Build my life
Worthy of every song we could ever sing
Worthy of all the praise we could ever bring
Worthy of every breath we could ever
breathe
We live for You, oh, we live for You

Jesus, the Name above every other name
Jesus, the only One who could ever save
Worthy of every breath we could ever
breathe
We live for You, we live for You

*Holy, there is no one like You
There is none beside You
Open up my eyes in wonder
And show me who You are
And fill me with Your heart
And lead me in Your love to those around me*

Jesus, the Name above every other name
Jesus, the only One who could ever save
Worthy of every breath we could ever
breathe
We live for You, oh, we live for You
And I will build my life upon Your love
It is a firm foundation
And I will put my trust in You alone
And I will not be shaken
And I will build my life upon Your love
It is a firm foundation
And I will put my trust in You alone
And I will not be shaken

Prayers for world

1 I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner condemned, unclean.

How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!

- 2 For me it was in the garden,
He prayed: "Not my will, but Thine."
He had no tears for His own griefs,
But sweat-drops of blood for mine.
- 3 In pity angels beheld Him,
And came from the world of light
To strengthen Him in the sorrows
He bore for my soul that night.
- 4 He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them His very own;
He bore the burden to Calv'ry,
And suffered, and died alone.
- 5 When with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see,
'Twill be my joy through the ages
To sing of His love for me.

Blessing