

The Church of Salvation. Acts 2:14-47.

Demi-Lee Brennan contracted a virus that destroyed her liver, and so she had a liver transplant. That's painful and frightening, but it does happen.

Her body tried to reject the liver because the liver was O positive and Demi-Lee's blood was O negative. That is what normally happens.

Here doctors gave her drugs to try to stop the body rejecting the liver, but the drugs seemed to make things worse. Sometimes that happens.

The doctors sent Demi-Lee's blood for tests to see why the drugs weren't working. Nothing unusual there! BUT here is the thing that happened that is impossible.

When the blood test results came back, Demi-Lee's blood type had changed from O negative to O positive, the same type as the liver. Demi-Lee has been off anti-rejection drugs for three and a half years! That has never happened before!

The liver had totally overwhelmed the body that it was in. The illness that had overtaken the body and threatened it with death was defeated. Impossible yet true.

Now, I can't think of a better analogy for what is happening here in this passage, in Acts Chapter 2.

You see, in the same way that the liver overcame the body, Jesus came into the world and overcame it. And he has poured out His Spirit on us, The Church of Salvation, so that we might complete the work that God began in Christ.

I want us to observe three things from this passage – First of all that the Church of Salvation is Declaratory and Effective. It speaks and we listen. Secondly, that it Calls men and Women to Repentance. Thirdly, that the Church of Salvation Looks after its Own.

### Firstly, The Church of Salvation is Declaratory and Effective.

It speaks! I think that Luke wants us to grasp how big this idea really is. There are three grounding chapters. No. 1. Genesis 1 tells us that the earth was without form and void – that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters and then God speaks: “let there be light” – and the universe sprang into existence. The Spirit of God moves and then God speaks. Then we move to Luke’s gospel Chapter 3, the spirit of God descends on Jesus at his baptism and then God speaks. “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased”. Jesus begins his public ministry declaring the good news of salvation. The Spirit of God moves and then God speaks. Then we go to Acts Chapter 2 – the Holy Spirit moves, he descends on the believers and once again, God speaks – through the believers and then through Peter, both inspired by the Holy Spirit. Just as creation was effective under God and nothing got in its way, just as Christ was effective under God and nothing got in His way, so it is that the Church of Salvation will be effective under God and nothing will get in her way.

We see this illustrated as Peter powerfully sets before the Jews assembled from many nations the facts: We see in verse 23.

23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Peter continues on in v29-32.

29 "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 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. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 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.

Peter finishes his address in this way:-

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

By the power of the Holy Spirit he had declared the gospel. That is all.

BUT Look at the effect it has on its hearers:-

37When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

AND this brings us to the Second point.

The Church of Salvation calls men and women to repentance.

Let's look at v38 together

38Peter 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. 39The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

God's promise in Christ is based on a calling to repentance, to turning to Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. You can try other ways, try to live a good life, try to go to church every Sunday, do lots of charity work, but these things, so good in themselves, cannot save us. Only Jesus can do that. Only Jesus can send us the Holy Spirit. There is no other way.

Remember Demi- Lee? How the donated liver did its work in her body completely? In the same way, God will complete the work began in Christ and continues in the Church of Salvation. You will see from Verse 39 that the promise of forgiveness of sins is for all generations and for those who are far off – *for those that the Lord will call*. And that message will be effective; it will reach all those who God is calling. This should give us great confidence as we do declare the gospel – it may not seem like it at times – but God's work is effective. It will reach those whom he called.

## The Church of Salvation Looks After its Own.

We turn to verses 42-47. The great model for the church, the way in which we are to care for each other. How they actually did this, I have no idea. We read in verse 41 that about 3000 were added to that number that day. To begin with, there were about 120 (see verse 15 of Chapter 1). We average about 135, so that's 15 less people than we have!! Imaging someone here preaching up a storm and 3000 new Christians coming to church next Sunday!! This context gives the passage fresh relevance, I think. What would we do? We might find it necessary to sell up what we had and hold all things in common. The hypothetical question is, "would we do it?" But the real question is how are we holding all things in common and what can we do to better hold all things in common?

I believe that God is doing a work here. In fact, I think he began 50 years ago and that he has been preparing us for this time. Here today we have a church of many nations, so we are not drawn here because church is an expression of our culture. I praise God for that. Here the Word of God is preached and respected. Here, there is fellowship in homes, let there be more of it! I thank God for that. And I think that the attraction is Christ. To me, that is thrilling. BUT, how can we better hold all things in common?

To illustrate, I want to tell a story. Some of you have heard parts of it. When my sister was about 5 or 6 and I was about 9 or ten, we were playing a game downstairs in our house at Turramurra. She would swing off the central beam and jump onto the billiard table. With each successful jump, I would push the table out a bit further. Finally the jump came that broke the table. Cathie likewise fell in a heap and actually broke her right arm. I got into big trouble, but my sister ran upstairs and got into bed and lay with her broken arm tucked underneath her stomach. It seemed to take an age for mum to coax Cathie out of bed so we could take her to hospital.

Let me ask you, *When you come to church or meet with your brothers and sisters in Christ, are you lying on your broken arm?* Are you hiding your needs from us?

Some of you might be thinking, you guys keep banging on about the Word of God, but I just don't get it. I know I'm supposed to, but that's exactly why I can't tell anyone about it. BUT what ends up happening is you come to church hungry for God's word and go home the same way.

You might feel that your prayers never get past the ceiling, but this same feeling isolates you from fellowship, because you just can't tell anyone about it. You come to church thirsting for fellowship and go home the same way.

Or, you might have been ripped off in church when you've spoken to others before. Regrettably, you might have been taught not to speak out your needs by the crass judgements of other Christians.

If in some way, you are lying on your broken arm, if in some way, you are hiding your needs, I have just one thought for you to take home. *When you come to church, make sure you get what you need.* Come here hungry to hear God's Word. Go home satisfied. Come thirsting for fellowship. Go home refreshed.

We need to get beyond the polite stuff, down to what is going on in our lives. That means taking risks. It saddens me to think that Church might be or become a place where we feel we have to live up to an image – playing happy and well adjusted Christians with not a care in the world and everything sorted out. For the church to be a place of authenticity we need to give God thanks for all the good in our lives, we also need to share one another's burdens. So please, speak to others out of need, and please, if someone speaks to you in this way, listen and love. And so that we do not fall into the error of judgement, make sure you also speak to someone out of need. Do that for each other and this community of Waitara will have at its heart a place for healing and rejoicing – a place where all things are held in common and where we can give to anyone who has need.

AMEN