

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Third Sunday After Trinity, June 16, 2024**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 3, 5, 534, 19:1-3, 47.

Lessons: Joel 2: 25-32, Acts 2: 14-47, John 3: 16-21.

Sermon Text: Acts 2: 21-24.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“God help me!” “Lord help me!” Those are words which almost everyone except the most dedicated atheist may utter at times in life.

Humans are accustomed to being rescued from almost anything. We humans live anywhere without fear of much of anything. We build homes in flood plains and then buy flood insurance. We live near volcanoes and in places where tidal waves and hurricanes can destroy our possessions and kill us. But we make sure we have insurance to replace our homes. Humans do the most outrageous things: climb mountains, jump out of airplanes and many other things and often don’t worry much about what will happen to them.

But there are times when everyone asks for help. There are times when everyone is afraid of something. That is when people look for help outside of themselves. That is when people may call upon some being greater than themselves.

Today I want to remind you of where our help comes from. The child of God, the believer in Jesus Christ asks: ***“Where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*** (Psalms 121:1-2 NIV) I want to remind you that He is your help! He, the triune God: the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, and his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, Redeemer for all mankind, and the Holy Spirit who was sent to bring that message to sinful men. I want to you to remember:

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD”?**

- 1. We don’t rely on ourselves.**
- 2. We don’t turn to men or anything that men have done or made.**
- 3. We rely upon, trust in, and put all our confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Our epistle lesson today is Peter’s response to the accusation of drunkenness by those who observed what was happening on that first Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit appeared with his special gifts to believers in Christ. The sound of a mighty wind drew people to the place believers were gathered. Then hearing many people speak in many different languages, languages which were not their native languages, led to the accusation that those with such gifts from the Holy Ghost were drunk. But Peter preaches a powerful sermon, which by the inspiration of God is recorded for us.

Peter says: No, these men are not drunk. He tells us that this is the fulfillment of the words of Joel, the prophet. Then he quotes Joel with some important explanations. Peter makes it plain that not everything else which Joel prophesied was going to happen on that day; but the gift of speaking in other languages was a sign that the entire prophecy of Joel would be fulfilled in God’s good time and in his way. Joel, as you heard in our Old Testament lesson, says “afterwards.” Peter explains and interprets these words as “in the last days”. The “last days” refers to the time after God sent his Son and his Son completed his redeeming work. The sending of the Holy Spirit was the evidence that the work of redemption is complete and that when Christ comes again he will come as judge of all. We live in “the last days.”

God promised through Joel that all people, male and female, old and young would receive the Holy Spirit. All would proclaim God's message to others after receiving his revelation. "All people" includes Jews and Gentiles, "all whom the Lord our God will call", all those who repent and are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. This outpouring, which began on Pentecost, continues today wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached.

And the preaching of the Gospel is essential for calling on the Lord. St. Paul in writing to the Romans makes it very clear what is necessary to call on the Lord: "***But what does [the scripture] say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.***" (Romans 10:8-17 NIV)

Every human being knows that his or her life on earth is going to end. Death is inevitable. Because of that knowledge some people try to get everything they can in this life. When things go well, they don't worry about things. But when things don't go well, that is when people start looking outside themselves. Even the slightest knowledge of pagan religions or idolatry will show you that men will call upon anything and everything for help. But there is no true help except from the true God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Before Jesus left this earth "***He said to [his followers, to those who believed in him:] 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.'***" (Mark 16:15-16 NIV) Believing in Jesus Christ as Savior is what saves us. It is the only thing that can save men eternally. Believing and being baptized save. Not believing damns eternally. Unbelief condemns.

One text which unmistakably speaks of the triune God is "***And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.***" Matthew 28:18-20 KJV. That plainly teaches of the triune God. That plainly teaches how men are saved. That plainly teaches that all of us, God's servants, are to teach men to observe all things that Christ has commanded us. Men do not have the right to pick and choose what they want to believe.

The more we read about what so-called Christian churches, and even those churches that call themselves Lutheran are teaching and practicing, the more we realize how far mankind has strayed from real "theology". Theology is a study of God. Theology is a study of God's Word, the Bible. How much of what churches teach and preach today isn't really "anthropology"! Anthropology is a study of man, of what men do and teach and believe. And how much of what churches teach today is really based on man's ideas, and not God's ideas!

We must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what he did to be saved eternally! We can't rely upon ourselves. Every human dies. Every human at his best is only vanity. Jeremiah writes: "***This is what the LORD says: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the LORD.***" (9:23-26 NIV)

It should be clear to us that wisdom, or strength, or wealth won't let us live forever. No matter how much man boasts, he will die. No matter how powerful men are, they will die. No matter how wealthy men are, they will die and they can't take the wealth with them into the grave. Many, many years ago when people were buried in "shrouds", which I understand were kind of like this robe I am wearing, a common saying was "there are no pockets in the shroud" meaning that when you go to the grave you can't take any of your possessions with you.

But men have yet to really learn this lesson. Mankind, because of its sinfulness, thinks it can solve anything. Men are hoping and searching for some kind of magic or drug or potion or life-extending device that will let them live forever. Especially disheartening is man's belief that he can conquer any disease if he throws enough money and time at it. Just about the time man thinks that he has eradicated some such disease as smallpox, it turns up where he least expects it. Smallpox, for example was declared officially eradicated in 1979 but limited supplies of smallpox vaccine in laboratories have led some to fear smallpox as a terrorist weapon! Ah, the perversity of mankind! Sin is always with us! And even more disheartening is man's belief that he can continue to live his life wallowing in sin and live it nearly forever. Man just won't be told what to do and what not to do! The world ignores God's commandments and thinks that they won't have to pay the price.

The horrible disease of AIDS has been around for more than 40 years. News stories point out that this disease has killed 40 million people in the world in 40 years. Man thinks that the real solution is to find a vaccine, something that will prevent one from getting the disease when exposed to it. Will a vaccine be found? One doctor researching it said "Definitely! The question is with how much effort and how much time." That is probably as true as the so-called fact that man has totally gotten rid of smallpox. God has a solution to the spread of AIDS. But men have no use for God's solution. His solution is one man and one woman in the life-long union he calls marriage. God's solution is the sixth commandment – Thou shalt not commit adultery! No sex outside of marriage! But men want to do what they feel like doing, what feels best to them.

We know the world won't last forever. We know that God will bring an end to the world and all he has created in the blink of an eye, and that Jesus Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead. Isn't it almost amusing when someone talks of dangers facing the earth some ten thousand years or some billion and a half years in the future? Peter speaks of the "great and glorious day of the Lord" when Joel uses the word "terrible." Judgment day will be a terrible day to everyone who does not believe in Jesus Christ, but it will be a truly glorious, beautiful, grand, joyful day to everyone who does believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior from sin!

Men today really don't call on the name of an earthly king to save them. We dare not call upon the name of anyone or anything to save us except the name of the Lord. We rely on the life of Jesus Christ, the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, his paying the price for all our sins, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his bodily ascending into heaven to await the glorious day of judgment.

Peter said "*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*" *"Men of Israel, 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 set purpose 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."*

That's your Savior! Because you believe in him, it is impossible for death to keep its hold on you, too! God help me? Lord help me? Your God does help you and will help you! Amen.