

“Who Ya’ Gonna Call?”
Acts 2:1-21
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This Wednesday, June 8, will be the 38th anniversary of the release date of the original Ghostbusters movie. I was 8 years old in the summer of 1984 when the movie came out, and what I remember most about the movie coming out is that everyone loved it, and everyone went to see it – except me. It was described as a supernatural fantasy/comedy/action movie, and one or more of those descriptors lead my parents to conclude that it wasn’t an appropriate movie for children- at least not their children- which seemed pretty unfair and unreasonable to me at the time. Since I didn’t get to see the movie, my only chance to participate in the Ghostbusters movie phenomenon that summer was by getting a few glimpses of the tv trailer, and by listening to the theme song on the radio. That theme song, sung by Ray Parker Jr., had one of those lines that became as iconic as the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man who attacks NYC in the movie, and even though I didn’t see the movie until I was an adult years later, I *did* know the answer to the question, “who ya gonna call?” If there’s something strange, in your neighborhood, who ya gonna call? Go ahead and try *not* to think or say “Ghostbusters” when you hear that question.

If you never saw the movie, the song pretty much summed up the gist of it. It was about three guys with ghost-capturing devices called proton-packs who started a business that involved helping people who were being harassed by supernatural bad guys. Now if you’re a character in a movie and you’re being bothered by ghosts, a scientist with a proton pack is a good person to turn to for help, but in real life, that’s pretty useless. In real life, people have real problems, and we contend with the real forces of evil- just look at the news. In real life, people feel lost, and things get broken. In real life, people search for who or what can make things right, and when we do, we’re looking for more than fiction and movie magic. We are looking for real help and real salvation.

In our Scripture reading this morning, we get to listen in on Peter as he preached his first sermon on the day of Pentecost. On that day, Jerusalem was filled with Jewish pilgrims who had come from all different places to celebrate the harvest festival (that was called Pentecost) and to commemorate God’s giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The disciples had been waiting in Jerusalem in obedience to Jesus’s instructions. In Acts 1:8 it says that Jesus had promised that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit was given to them and that they would become his witnesses taking the message out from Jerusalem, to Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. When we get to Acts 2, we hear how the Holy Spirit was poured out and how the disciples were filled with power. After being filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter, who had gotten scared and denied Jesus just a few weeks before, stood up and boldly addressed the crowd that had gathered. Only part of the sermon is included in our reading this morning. In the part we’ll hear, Peter explains that what the people were witnessing was the fulfillment of prophecy, and in verse 21, the last verse in today’s reading, Peter announces good news for every person who is looking for real help and real salvation. Let’s listen to the Scripture.

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?' ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, 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, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³ But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵ Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon 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 upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰ The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Peter was preaching that day to a crowd of people who knew that they needed a Savior and they were looking and waiting for that Savior. They were faithful Jews who believed that God was going to give them a King from the line of David, who would save them from their enemies and restore them, but they didn't know who he was. On Pentecost, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up and preached to the crowds telling them, if you are looking for your salvation (not just political but spiritual), Jesus Christ is the Savior that God has given. If you want to know who to call, it's him. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, he told them.

In our world today we can find crowds of people – in cities and in small towns; in malls and in markets; in public buildings and elsewhere- and in those crowds are people who are hurting, and searching. They are looking for help and a rescue, but if you were to ask them who are you going to call, they don't know for sure, or maybe they have an answer but they aren't confident that they are calling on the right person or leaning on the right thing. In times of darkness and desperation, in times when life doesn't seem to make sense, in times when shame is overwhelming, in times when God seems non-existent or out of reach, in times when war, and hatred, and injustice seem invincible, people want to know what or who can help. Is there any help, or relief, or hope? On this Pentecost Sunday in the year

2022, the Holy Spirit continues to testify that the answer is yes. The Holy Spirit continues to testify that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

In Romans 10:13, the Apostle Paul quotes Peter saying everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, but then he goes on and adds a challenge in verses 14-15. He asks, “**But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?**”¹⁵ **And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’** Church, today Jesus speaks to us by his Spirit to remind us that the good news and the gift that we have received is the good news and the gift that we have been sent to share with others. We have been sent to carry the good news to the people in the crowds that Jesus is the one who saves us from our sins, and saves us from ourselves, and saves us from our enemies, and even saves us from our final death. We are sent to tell everyone that whatever the threat is, whatever the failure is, whatever the challenge is, there is Someone who lived, and died, and now lives again for us and for our salvation. His name is Jesus and everyone who calls on him will be saved.

This morning Gabriel was baptized and marked as a member of God’s family. You made promises to teach him about Jesus and to help him grow in his faith. As we fulfill that promise to Gabriel and all of our children, that is one of the ways that we participate in getting the word out that Jesus is the one to call on for help, and healing, and guidance, and salvation. What a gift it is to our children to teach them early in life that they can call on Jesus so that as they grow and life becomes more complicated, and as they begin to encounter the fearful things in this world and the temptations in life, they have already been equipped with the good news that Jesus is the one who will help them when they call. The children in our care are a good place to start in pointing people to Jesus, and we can expand from there. We may have family members, and if not family members, friends, and if not friends, acquaintances and neighbors who are feeling lost, or condemned, or angry, or afraid and they don’t know who to call on for help. The name Jesus doesn’t come to mind as quickly or as naturally as “Ghostbusters” does when someone says “who ya gonna call?” We may not always feel like we know the right words to say, or we may not feel sure about if or when or how to let others know that they can call on Jesus, but the Spirit lives within us to us help us. If the Spirit could turn Peter’s fear into boldness, surely the Spirit can do the same for us.

We have the joy of celebrating both of the Sacraments in worship this morning. As we prepare to eat with Jesus at his table, know that he welcomes us and lavishes grace on us. At the table, he gives us the assurance of our salvation and nourishes and strengthens us for the work of inviting others to call on him for their salvation also. Amen.