

# Listen and Understand

by Rev Dan Balsdon, Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020

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Many of us have been travelling through the book of Acts this May, and today we reach the final chapter Acts 28. In the last few chapters Paul has been arrested and put on trial for telling people how much he loves Jesus, and encouraging others to know him to, and now he's been put on a ship to sail to Rome. Except the ship gets caught in a storm and they go adrift, landing on an unknown island, they later learn it is called Malta.

After being on trial for some time, and travelling on the ship through dangerous storms, Paul must have been pretty glad to be safely on dry land. But he was in a new land, a land that wasn't familiar.

Today is a special day when as Christians we celebrate the festival Pentecost. This festival takes us back to the start of Acts, when Jesus disciples were experiencing their own unfamiliar time.

Jesus death, resurrection and returning to his father was definitely not what they expected. They felt alone, living in a way that was unfamiliar to them.

I think there's some similarities here to living in lockdown. The way we live, work, shop, learn, travel, interact with family, friends & neighbours has all changed. Even 10 weeks on, I still feel like I'm in a very unfamiliar land, and the uncertainty about the future doesn't help either.

For Paul, for the disciples, and for all of us, the Spirit of God comes to us. The presence and power of God that supports us, encourages us, affirms us and says no matter how you feel, I am with you.

For Paul the presence of God with him was so strong that the natives of Malta thought he was a God. For the disciples the Spirit of God enabled them to speak in every language. For Peter he stood up and delivered a stonker of a sermon and convinced about 3000 people to join the Way – which is the early name for what we now call Christians.

In Acts 28 Paul says:

*“You will indeed listen, but never understand,  
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.”*

Acts 28:26

Paul challenges the people that are listening to him. Will you seek to understand, will you seek to see, or will you just look and listen and then carry on as if what you've heard makes no difference?

I encourage you today to listen. To listen to what God's Spirit is saying to you. Yes you. Just as God's Spirit enabled the disciples to speak in every language, God's Spirit speaks the language of your heart and mind.

God understand your worries.

God knows your strains and anxieties.

God knows this unfamiliar way of life, with all its uncertainties is tough at times.

Whether you've never had a care in the world about God until today,  
or you've been a Christian all your life,  
or you used to go, but you've not been much recently,  
It really doesn't matter. What matters is if you'll seek to see and understand today.

God is waiting for you, and I believe God's Spirit is already with you, and in you, just waiting for you to see, whether for the first, 10<sup>th</sup> or 100<sup>th</sup> time.

If you want to know more about God and the difference God makes to the lives of many, including you, do get in touch with us or find a church near you can connect with.