

Acts 2:14-41

The simple gospel changes hearts and the world.

This week as I was thinking about the events of Pentecost, the miraculous move of the Holy Spirit coming upon the church, the mighty rushing wind it was and the vast languages declaring the mighty works of God... I randomly thought of a scene from Return of the Jedi in the Star Wars franchise. Maybe you know it. The Ewoks have discovered the band of rebel on Endor and take them captive... But when they see C3po they blindly worship - before he has even said a word. They saw something shiny and were stunned into worship...

But in the church it happens differently... from the miraculous the question of what it means is asked and it is what is given as an answer that creates worshipers. Followers of Jesus. It is not only the miracle that draws attention but the message that shapes the church, that radicalizes normal people to follow a new king - to give up everything that gets in the way of his fame.

Here we have Peter's answer and sermon given to the assembled crowd. While some mockers suggest the 'people of the way' are simply drunk, Peter says 'don't be absurd, it is only nine am, there has been no feasting, no celebrating yet... but something else, promise long ago has happened.

God's promise to pour out his Spirit in the last days has come, visions, dreams, prophecy, signs... this is what has taken place. Then he goes on to preach about what is all the more significant, the promised Messiah that has come offering forgiveness of sins.

Our approach this morning could be to analyze the structure of the sermon, the elements of Peter's preaching in style and form (which isn't a bad idea if you ever want to preach!) But it is the content of this sermon that changes everything.

I love making Revel Bars... some of you have been blessed with the opportunity to eat them! Fudge and Oatmeal... practically health food. But you don't care one lick how I make them... you want what is in them, the flavor of the ingredients. So like we would approach a Revel Bar, we are going to approach this sermon with the purpose of savoring every bite - with the hope it makes us fat with the good news of Jesus!

The gospel found in Acts 2 is bookended by two wonderful, hopeful truths. **Acts 2:21** "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (ESV) **Acts 2:39** "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (ESV)

As long as you have breath you can get in on this! And if you come it is Jesus that has called you to himself! These two statements of profound mystery hold within them the gospel as the delicious center.

What is that content? It is Jesus... who he is, what he has done, and how to relate to him. This is the good news, the simple gospel that we claim as the most important thing. This morning we want to listen in to hear four things that the gospel is - Foreknown, Foretold, For Everyone, and Forgiveness in Christ. From these truths we will see if the Spirit will stoke our affections all the more for Christ.

1) Foreknown

Peter shuts down the question of drunkenness tying the activity of this fateful morning to a prophetic voice, a promise many of them would have memorized and been familiar with... the promise-keeping God has come through once again, doing exactly what he said he would. And it is all meant to point to Jesus.

We are now in the chronology of the church's existence, some fifty days after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, ten days from his ascension into Heaven... so the news of it all would still be on the minds of the people, and even those freshly arriving in Jerusalem for the festival would have heard of it as the breaking news of the day. Some would have been witness to his miracles, to his trial and execution.

And the Holy Spirit being poured out was to highlight this Jesus. Not a mere zealot or charismatic leader. No mere moral teacher and example of a better life. He was not just a prophet who got on the wrong side of religion.

He is the Savior, promised and purposed by God. **Acts 2:23** "Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. (ESV)

The consistent theme of the Book of Acts is the sovereignty of God. His control, his plan... What has gone down was on purpose. Just like the work of the Spirit planned by God, spoken of through the prophet, and accomplished, Jesus was teaching what he did and faced the torture he did, according to plan.

Peter does not say that God has done his best with the mess that humanity made. God was not taking lemons and making lemonade. He was working his will.

So the gospel is foreknown, deeper still, fore-planned from eternity for Jesus to be crucified. But even in his foreordaining there is still the sting of responsibility...

"You crucified and killed..." The hearers, and all of humanity, bear responsibility for what Jesus experienced. Because of our rebellion against God. The weight of our sin (missing the mark of what God desired for us).

God didn't leave us to ourselves... he planned to provide salvation just this way. And he left a trail of crumbs to tie the people over before the main course...

2) Foretold

In this sermon Peter uses two Psalms written by David that are actually about Jesus - and by doing so he gives us a hermeneutic (a way to study Scripture), looking for Jesus in all of it.

Death could not hold Jesus and this is exactly what David foreshadowed when he wrote that God would not let his holy one see corruption - decay. You see, David sang these words but David, his body, is in the ground. If Peter is confident of one thing, it is that David died, was buried and that his tomb was still in Jerusalem.

By the Spirit, David foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of Christ. The events of Jerusalem in the last weeks had been part of the hymnal of Israel for hundreds of years. If only they had the same eyes as David, to see it and savor it with hope.

Scripture pointing to this work of redemption.

Not only did he rise from the grave, but Jesus is seated on the throne of Heaven and he has poured out the Spirit that the crowd has witnessed. Made not only Savior (as the Christ) but Lord. King, as promised to David, to have a descendant on the throne... "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."

Christ's ministry, work and seat in Heaven, was the plan (foreknown) and it was foretold that all of Israel would know for certain who Jesus was. Even under wrath for sin, for generations, there is hope of redemption as it is promised. Hope for the forever King who would come and reign, restoring all things.

The good news of this sermon doesn't end there... because this Jesus is not just for Israel...

3) For Everyone

Acts 2:39 "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (ESV)

Here we are back to the bookends; all who call on his name... those he calls to himself. This promise of salvation, of new life under the reign of Christ, it is not only for the generation of Israel... but even for "all who are far off."

While this might seem innocuous enough to us - maybe it is just a distance thing - this is Peter blowing up the categories of who could be saved. Those far off would be those not geographically away, but ethnically, ceremonially, Gentiles, the promise is for them too.

Jesus is not for the exclusive class but for all that he calls to himself. Red and yellow, black and white... and everything in-between... the promise of Christ is for them.

This is where you come into the story! Yes it was the plan, yes it was promised and hinted at for generations... but it is also for us! This makes the good news of Jesus personal because it is for you.

It is the promise of...

4) Forgiveness in Christ

Humanity under the curse of the fall, disobedient to God by inheritance, built into our DNA. Redemption, a correction - a fix for eternity, promised and now delivered in Jesus.

The God-man, who lived perfectly obedient to the father - he was the One who could ascend the Holy Hill. Delivered over for crucifixion, sentenced to death for claiming his identity as the I AM. The One who death could not hold... the One who opened all of Scripture to his followers, showing how it all was about him. The One who ascended to heaven as he promised the arrival of the Spirit.

Jesus, Messiah and Lord. Savior and King. Inviting us to submit to his authority for the greatest of benefits, the forgiveness of sin.

The brokenness we could never rid ourselves of. When we could never reach the pinnacle ourselves. With nothing to offer but our need. And Jesus says come. I give you myself, saved by my blood, made new. And as Lord I will put to death everything in you that ruins, that gets in the way of my love for you and of my renown.

This is the real Jesus. I wonder... Have we denied or accepted the wrong Jesus - an imaginary Jesus. Ghandi "I like your Christ but I don't like your Christians..." You don't know Jesus, and you don't know your own sickness - it's not about other people it is about my sin, and his greatness. Jesus is not a better performing hedge fund. Jesus is not the better method of education. Jesus is not a political banner. Jesus is not a pill to take the edge off the day. JESUS IS LORD AND SAVIOR.

Under his rule there is new purpose, new hope, new power. **Acts 2:38** "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. (ESV)

This simple gospel. Foreknown, Foretold, For Everyone, Forgiveness in Christ, is used by the Spirit to wreck the crowd when Peter is preaching. Notice, the miracle didn't make converts and followers of Jesus, this message of his grace does.

At the preaching of the gospel, they were cut to the heart... they owned their need, their sinfulness and in repentance - giving up on all the others little lords they followed and turning to the Lord... the create a rush at the pools of Jerusalem to be baptized, identified in Christ. And received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This is how the church grows, the preaching of the gospel. With many other words Peter exhorted the crowd to be saved.

Change hearts, you change the world. Working for restoration, for freedom, for justice as owners and exposers of the peace of Christ found in the gospel, by the Spirit.

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The message, the sweetness of the gospel, the thing to be savored and consumed constantly, meets the need. Our need for purpose, for our deepest of identifies. Our need for salvation. This is the message we still need today. We need this Jesus, Master and Messiah.

And at the preaching of this goodest of news, we too are to repent and be "colored" by Christ.

"There are professing Christians who need Christ. They've heard, but they haven't heard. It is possible to be a respectable, well-taught, moral sinner..."

"It is possible to have everyone fooled and yet to know nothing of what the 3,000 heard. If you know no emptiness, you will not know fullness of Christ in your life. If you have never come to the end of yourself and become "poor in the spirit," you have never been truly open to the fullness of Christ and the true knowledge of him. Do we hear Peter's sermon? If not, the God of grace invites us to come honestly before him who sees all and to allow him to speak to us." Hughes

May the Spirit use this simple gospel to rend our hearts... may he use it to keep changing the world.

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Acts 2:39 "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (ESV)

Call on him today - call on Jesus. This promise is for you, and everyone that Jesus calls to himself.

This first sermon in the age of grace, is the same sermon through the history of the church and meant to be in our pulpits today. The forgiveness of sin in Jesus. The help of the Spirit to live for this King from his grace to us. This sermon is a great reminder, a great gospel primer for us.

But this gospel also primes us for life. Generator on the RV... has to be primed to work, to ignite and generate power. This good news demands *response* from us.

If you have heard as the 3000 did, **let the gospel**, by the Spirit, cut to the heart. Own you need, run to Jesus over and over again.

Live in repentance. Not as a one time experience but a posture for life. "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance." - Luther, Thesis 1

"Genuine repentance is provoked when the excuses and rationalizations go and the self-applause is silenced and we say "oh God my God what have I done?" Sproul

As you live hear his claim over you, know you are forgiven, saved and given the Spirit to live.

Let someone know about it. Share this news. Live for others and the spread of the Jesus' fame.

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Jared C. Wilson's friend Richard... Brain cancer, drove an hour for church... faced even his sickness as opportunity to make much of Jesus, the gospel had changed his heart.

"Richard was not interested in shallow spirituality, trite inspirational platitudes, a vague and sappy Christianity. He did not care for the kind of faith you'd see by breaking open a fortune cookie. He had the kind of faith you'd see by breaking open a person.

"I really feel so blessed that God would actually use me at all to attempt to bring Him the Glory He so deserves. Why me, brother?"

Did you catch that? Do you see what he was saying? "Why me?"

Most people in his position would say "Why me?" in the sense of "Why should I get cancer? Why is God picking on me?" For most people "Why me?" is an expression of self-pity.

Not for Richard. "Why me?" for Richard meant "Why would God choose me for this privilege? Why would God honor me with this opportunity to share the love of Jesus through my suffering?"

Richard had so abandoned himself to Jesus, he ceded sovereignty over his body to Jesus. He found in Jesus the only satisfaction that satisfies, the only savior that truly saves."

The gospel works this way. May the Spirit use it to change our hearts and change the world.