

January 28, 2024
As You Are Going: The First Message of the Mission
Acts 2:14-36
Vernon Advent Christian Church

[Intro] Theme...

We're going to pick up today right where we left off last week. The disciples had obeyed the command of Jesus not to leave Jerusalem and had even replaced Judas' spot among them with Matthias. And just as Jesus had promised, 10 days later the Holy Spirit came upon them as they were praying in the upper room. As we learned last week, there was loud sound of a rushing wind, so loud that it drew the attention of those nearby and a large crowd gathered. And these same disciples who had been in hiding for the past 50 days, since the death of Christ, now filled with the power of the Holy Spirit spilled out into the streets telling everyone, in their own language, about what had happened. Remember, there were Jews from all over the Roman Empire gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of weeks and to celebrate the Day of Pentecost. And in a great reversal of the Tower of Babel in Gen. 11, in which God judged the people for their disobedience to his command by giving them different languages and dispersing them out into the new world after the flood of Noah, here in Acts 2, just as God promised, he begins his mission of gathering all nations to himself through the good news of the Gospel in their own language.

We're told that the crowd that gathered could be broken down into two groups of people: we left off last week with those who were filled with awe and wonder at what they were witnessing and those who couldn't believe what they were seeing and hearing and could only surmise that the disciples were drunk (because how else would you describe a bunch of men running out into the streets speaking in all kinds of languages!)

So, what happened next? Our passage this morning, is in fact, the first sermon ever preached in the early church. For our purposes, we could say it's the first message of the mission. Let's look at it more closely shall we? If you are able, please stand with me as I read the Word of God this morning.

[Read Passage]

There's lots to unpack here, so let's jump right in to this message delivered through Peter by the Holy Spirit. Peter's message demonstrated the bold power that the Holy Spirit had worked in his life. Unlike the man that denied that he even knew Jesus three times on the night of his crucifixion. Here, Peter is the first to deliver the gospel message to the crowds in Jerusalem. His message is easy to understand, to the point, and uses a strong scriptural foundation. Everything that a message needs to be.

Many times, today especially, we see the gospel message watered down in the name of being "seeker friendly" or to make the message "less offensive." The idea behind this way of thinking, to present the gospel to unchurched people in a way that they can identify with, is good and not without merit. But what happens too often is that people often get a feel-good gospel that only presents one side of the gospel, the "God so loves the world" part and not so much the "whosoever believes" part which indicates that there is a hard truth of the Gospel that whoever does not believe will not inherit eternal life. As we will see today though, Peter's message pulled no punches. He presented the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), as he not only made clear their need for a savior and then presented the savior to them.

We're going to look at several points today as we go through Peter's sermon. And right off the bat I want us to look at the unity that was shared among these believers. We see in verse 14 that Peter stands up with the other eleven apostles to address the crowd. This group included Matthias, the replacement apostle that we looked at a few weeks ago. They stood as one. That took some guts considering how hostile the crowd could be. Again, these were the same disciples that been hiding out for the last couple of months and this was the same crowd of people that they would have been afraid of. But now, under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, they stood and proclaimed the Lord boldly, and with power.

Next Peter addresses everybody gathered there, both those from Judea, referring to the locals, and those dwelling in Jerusalem, which refers to other Jews that had traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. He raises his voice above the noise of the crowd and addresses them he says, "Let this be known to you, and give ear to my words." In other words, "Hey! Listen up! Pay attention! I've got something to say to you."

And notice, and this should give us comfort, he doesn't go back into his study and prepare a three point sermon. He doesn't pull out his Greek lexicon and do a bunch of word studies. He just stepped up and stepped out and in full obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit, he simply opened his mouth and the Lord spoke through him. And what did Jesus promise would happen when the Holy Spirit came upon them? In John 14:26, Jesus says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." Peter and the other disciples had been with Jesus for 3 years and had sat under his teaching and heard everything he said. Now, it was time to put it into practice. Peter was simply, under the power of the Holy Spirit, teaching this crowd what Jesus had taught him. You might say, "Well, that easy for Peter. He was with Jesus! How is it that we know what to say when we are giving the opportunity to share the Gospel?" Simply knowing God through his Word. And the same Holy Spirit will bring to mind the things that we have learned and been taught in order to share it with others. But we cannot share what we do not know. That is why we must make it our intention read and study the Word of God and commit ourselves to it.

Next, Peter addresses the error of thinking among some in the crowd when he says emphatically, "We're not drunk!" He does this by explaining that it was only the third hour of the day, or about nine o'clock in the morning. Peter is not saying that it's not possible for someone to be drunk at nine in the morning, although it's unlikely, but his explanation would have been understood by his Jewish audience because the Jews didn't usually eat a morning meal, or "break their fast," until this "third hour," but this day being a religious feast day, Pentecost, it would have been pushed back to 10 am and it would have been unlawful for them to be eating or drinking during that time of the morning. Adam Clarke, in his commentary on this passage says that, "Most Jews did not eat or drink until after the third hour of the day, because that was the time for prayer, and they would only eat and drink after their business with God was accomplished."

Having eliminated this error from their thinking, Peter then moves on to his next point, and that is to offer an explanation for what they had all experienced that day. We see this in verses 16 through 21.

Peter starts his explanation by quoting a passage of scripture found Joel 2:28-32. Joel mostly prophesied about judgment that was coming to ancient Israel. Yet in the midst of the many warnings of judgment, God also gave several words of promise, promises of future blessing, like this one that announces an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What Peter is saying to

these people is what they were seeing was a direct fulfillment of the promise in Joel 2, with the final fulfillment coming in the last days. The idea of the last days, as described in Joel, are the times of the Messiah, encompassing the times of his first advent and His glorious return. Because Jesus had already come in humility, they were aware that His return in glory could be any time. And Church, this is where we find ourselves today, in the last days, awaiting the second coming of our Lord. How much more should we be doing for his name's sake and for his mission to reach the lost who do not yet know Christ?

This leads us to vs 21, and I want us to pay special attention to this verse. The prophet Joel writes, and Peter quotes him in saying, "And it shall come to pass, that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Not "might" or "maybe" but "shall be saved." This outpouring of the Holy Spirit meant that God now offered salvation in a way previously unknown, to "everyone who calls upon the name of the LORD," whether they are Jew or Gentile. It would be many years until the gospel was offered to Gentiles, yet Peter's message announced the gospel invitation by saying, "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." Maybe you haven't made that decision in your life, if you haven't I pray that you will even today. We'll come back to this verse in just a little bit.

Now that Peter has talked about calling on the Lord for salvation, he introduces Him in vs. 22-23. Peter starts off by telling them, again, to, "Hear his words." He seems to be trying to let them know that he had something important to tell them. And the gospel is the most important thing that we can tell anyone. Romans 1:16 says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." This is the power of the gospel. It is a powerful and important message. It meant eternal life or eternal death to the listeners. And it means the same to you and me. This is what Peter was trying to get across to this crowd.

The message that Peter was proclaiming here in these verses was the life, ministry and divine nature of Jesus. Jesus told his disciples in John 14:9 that, "he who has seen Me has seen the Father." Peter declared all the miracles God did through Jesus gave proof to His divine nature. He was proving that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah that the nation of Israel had been waiting for. Nearly everyone in the crowd had seen and heard Jesus and many had even seen one of his miracles.

The prophets had described Jesus as both a coming king and a suffering servant. This was confusing to many Jews. Peter makes this connection with Jesus as the suffering servant, in verse 23, when he says, speaking of Jesus, "you crucified at the hands of lawless men." But notice this was all "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." Yes, the hands of evil men carried it out, but it was God who offered up his Son as the perfect atoning sacrifice for sin and the price for our redemption. This was foretold in scripture, and Peter knew that his hearers would know this too as he continues to build his case for Christ.

But notice that Peter doesn't let them off the hook either as he lays the death of Jesus at their feet as well, "you crucified him." It is very probable that some of the same people in this crowd were the same ones that called for Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus, and the same ones that cried for Pilate to crucify Jesus. The blood of Jesus was on their hands, along with the religious leaders and Judas. This is a very blunt statement, one that he probably wouldn't have even thought about making even the day before, but now with the boldness and power of the Holy Spirit, Peter didn't back down at all, even though some hearing him might not like it. Peter spoke the truth. We all need the boldness of Peter to speak the truth, especially when it's not the easy thing to do.

Well, after accusing them of having a hand in Jesus' death, notice he doesn't leave them there. He gives them, and us, hope. Let us not forget that we are just as guilty, for as the hymn, 'How Great the Father's Love for Us,' puts it, "it was my sin that held him there," speaking of the cross. But there's hope. There's always hope and Peter talks about that hope in vs. 24-28.

Peter says, in vs. 24, that Jesus was raised up by God and he uses an odd phrase to us to describe the resurrection. Peter says that, "God loosed the pangs of death." In the original Greek, the "pangs" describes the pain of childbirth. When the labor process starts, the birth "pangs" if you will, there is no stopping the process until the child is born. Peter's illustrating here is that death was as not able to hold back, or stop, Jesus from being raised from the dead. What had been set in motion by the "definite plan and foreknowledge of God" could not be stopped. Peter's point, Jesus was not held by death because He was the Messiah, the savior and king that they had been waiting for.

The resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of our faith. Without it, there is no hope. As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Cor. 15, "If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then we are still in our sins," and, "the most to be pitied." Peter was declaring hope to the crowd gathered there, and we have this same hope.

Peter continues with his thoughts on the resurrection by quoting more scripture, again pointing out to us the importance of knowing God's Word for ourselves. First he gives the example of David as he quotes Psalm 16:8-11. In these 4 verses, we see a man devoted to God pouring out his heart in prayer to the Lord. He is not only praising God for His hand always being upon him, but David goes on to rejoice in the hope that he has in the coming Messiah, who Peter had just declared to the crowd as being Jesus. David believed in the promises of God, that he would one day send His Son, the Messiah, and this promised One would rescue David from the eternal judgement of God even though David would be long gone before Jesus was ever born. Peter wanted these Jewish people to see that even there great King David was looking forward to the coming of Jesus.

We see more of Peter's commentary about David's Psalm, vs. 29-35. Peter starts by stating the obvious, that David was dead and buried, and his remains were in his tomb. Peter was creating a link between his Jewish audience and the gospel by using the prophetic writings of David found in the Psalms. Peter continues on to tell them that God had sworn to raise up one of David's descendants, and that this same Christ, or Messiah, would sit upon the throne of Israel. David foretold that the Christ would not have his soul left in Hades, which is not a substitute for a cuss word but the actual Greek word for "grave" or "place of the dead," and that the Holy One would not see corruption, that is that his remains would not rot away, because He would not be in there long enough, and he raised from the dead. They were following Peter here. The Jewish crowd knew the Scriptures, as they had been taught them from an early age.

Peter then confronts them with the truth in vs. 32. The promised one spoken of by David was, in fact, Jesus of Nazareth! That Jesus fulfilled not only this prophecy, but every other prophecy in the OT, and that the resurrection proves it. And He, and the other disciples, could proclaim the resurrection so boldly because they had all been eyewitnesses to it. They had all seen Jesus multiple times after his resurrection. And not only that but, as we saw in Acts 1, they were also witnesses to his ascension and to his promise of the Holy Spirit which was now on full display for all to see.

Peter concludes his argument that Jesus was the Messiah by bringing them back to scripture. He quotes, in vs. 35, another Psalm of David, this time Psalm 110:1.

Interestingly, this same verse was used by Jesus to confront the Pharisees in Matthew ch. 22. Many Jews believed that the Messiah would be a natural descendant of David who would become king and restore the Kingdom of Israel. In Matt. 22, Jesus asks the religious leaders in his audience the simple question, “How could David call him Lord, if the Messiah was David’s natural son?” The answer was that the Messiah was not only David’s son, but also the Son of God. This was a fact that Peter was going to declare to them plainly, we see this in verse 36.

Here Peter declares that Jesus, whom they had crucified, is both Lord and Christ as promised by God. That word translated as “know for certain,” means that something is true beyond a shadow of a doubt. Jesus had lived, taught, ministered, and performed miracles among them. Again, there is no doubt many of those gathered there that day had seen and even heard Jesus. God attested through Jesus’ life and ministry that He was the Christ, the Messiah. As John MacArthur puts it, “the verdict was in, and they were on the wrong side.” They had been guilty of opposing and rejecting God’s Messiah, God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

So they were left with a choice. But remember, Peter was speaking the truth in love, along with the indictment Peter handed down to them, he also gave them hope. He had given them all the information they needed to become convinced by his message. They had to believe in and trust the Lord. They had to call upon His name, and if they did so, they would be saved as we saw that in verse 21.

Maybe you’re sitting here this morning, and you haven’t made that decision and yielded your life to Christ. Maybe you’re like the one of those in the crowd Peter was preaching to. We’ll have the opportunity to look at how they responded next week, but you can make that decision right now, today. We all have to ask ourselves the same question, “Whose side am I on?” The Lord’s side, believing that his death in my place was the payment for a debt that I owed and that through trusting by faith in that free gift of salvation I now have the hope of eternal life with God? Or, on my own side, choosing to live a life of rebellion and rejection of God and his Word? The choice is literally a choice of life or death. One path, the Bible describes as “wide” and “broad.” This is the path of rejection of God and it leads only to destruction and eternal death. The other path is described as “narrow” and “only a few find it,” but it is the way of complete faith and trust in God and it leads to eternal life. What say you?

Today, we have looked at the first message of the mission that Jesus gave to his followers when he commanded them to “go and make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them all I have commanded you.” As I said earlier, we all need the boldness of Peter. And as we are going, through the power of the same Holy Spirit that empowered Peter, we need to speak the truth of the Gospel to a world that so desperately needs it. So, as we are going let us be a church on mission.