

The Sermon that Started the Church

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. Wonderful to see you all this morning. Again, it's just so refreshing to preach to real people after six months of preaching to a camera.

And I'm sure it's great for you to be here and to be together and to see each other. And again, welcome to Naomi. Great to see you. It's like we've never had the last six months.

You know, it's amazing how you forget traumatic experiences. And I think we will. I think it's like it's just passed so quickly in one way.

Anyway, we're going to come to this passage in Acts chapter 2 that Rowan read for us earlier. And this sermon that Peter preached is the sermon that started the church. It's a very important sermon.

Millions of sermons have been preached since then. But this sermon is the key foundational sermon to the whole church and the whole history of the church for the past 2,000 years. So it's very important that we spend some time digging in and applying our minds and understanding what the sermon is actually saying.

[1 : 0 3] Well, I wonder if you've ever been in the situation where you have failed to see something that's been right in front of you. You've been in that situation? I am in that situation a lot. My wife, Jean, can testify whenever I look for my wallet, it seems.

I frantically search the house. I can't find it. I've got to be somewhere. I go, where's my wallet? Someone's taken my wallet. Jean, can you please help me to find my wallet? She takes about four seconds. She finds it. I say, where'd you find it? She said it was right next to your bed, on your bedside table.

But I looked there, and I couldn't see it. And yet, there it was. It was right in front of my eyes, and yet I couldn't see it. I don't know if you find yourself in that situation often, but I think we can quite easily find ourselves in that situation when it comes to God and the Bible.

And spiritually, we can fail to see things that are right in front of our eyes. Anyway, this sermon that Peter preached that started the church got 3,000 converts on that day and millions more after that.

Why was it so effective? What made it such a good sermon? As a preacher, I was really interested coming to this passage asking myself, why was the sermon so good? And really, in summary, the reason that the sermon was so effective is because it caused people to see something that was right in front of them that they weren't able to see before.

[2 : 2 3] And really, if you boil it down, all good sermons should do that. And all good sermons do that to a certain extent. They help you to see things that you wouldn't otherwise have been able to see. They help you to see things about your life and about this world and about God that you wouldn't otherwise have been able to see any other way.

And that's what this sermon did to a huge extent for these people. But why now in the Bible, you know, why in Acts chapter 2 was this sermon so effective and helped so many people to see things that they weren't otherwise able to see?

Well, it's because the Holy Spirit had come. It's because of what had happened at the beginning, just before Peter preached the sermon. The Holy Spirit had arrived, and it was only possible for people to see things that they wouldn't have otherwise seen because the Holy Spirit was here opening people's eyes to that.

And as we read the sermon, what we see is there basically are just two points to Peter's sermon. And so there's going to be two points to the sermon, which are going to be the same two points as Peter's sermon.

There's two realities that these people needed their eyes open to in a new way, and that we need our eyes open to, I think, not just once in our lives, but constantly.

[3 : 38] There are two realities that are foundational to who we are as Christians. These are two realities that are foundational to the church, and there are two realities that we tend to forget, even as Christians, day to day, and we need a reminder of.

So we're going to look at those two points this morning. The first of these life-changing realities is that the Holy Spirit has come. That's Peter's first main point of his sermon.

The Holy Spirit has come. Now look with me in Acts chapter 2. I trust that you brought your own Bible this morning. We don't have a few Bibles for obvious reasons. If you haven't, then I just encourage you to bring your own Bible next week.

There will be slight differences in wording because we use different English versions. We do have the privilege of having many different English versions. And so you'll understand that.

But look at Acts chapter 2. And some amazing things happened. You should know the story of Pentecost. A violent wind, tongues of flames of fire that separated and rested on the apostles.

[4 : 45] Then they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages that they'd never formally trained in. It was amazing supernatural things. And the crowd looking on did not know what was going on.

They totally misunderstood these events. We see at the end of that first section in verse 12 and 13 that they thought the apostles had been drinking. That's the best explanation they could come up with for explaining what was going on.

They didn't know what was going on. And so what Peter does is he starts his sermon. In verse 14, Peter stood up, raised his voice, proclaimed to them, Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let me explain this to you and pay attention to my words.

I think that should be the intro for every sermon. After the Bible reading, the preacher should stand up and say, let me explain this to you and pay attention to my words. That's what Peter did. Because his job as a spirit-filled preacher was to show them what they couldn't see.

They were looking at this event. They didn't know what was going on. And Peter's job was to explain what was going on, what was in front of their eyes, using the Bible to help them to see, to help them to understand.

[5 : 54] And so that's exactly what he does. What he does is that he goes back to the prophet Joel we read earlier, and he said that this, what you're seeing around you, is a fulfillment of what Joel said would happen. You Jews should know this.

You read your Bibles. You know your Bibles. From infancy, you've been taught scriptures. You know this prophecy of Joel. Well, let me tell you, let me unlock for you these events.

It's a fulfillment of that prophecy that you know. You just don't know that that's what it is. And I'm here to tell you that. Okay, so in Joel, God promised to pour out his spirit.

But it's important for us to understand a little bit about the book of Joel, to know why that's so significant, the pouring out of God's spirit. Joel has three chapters. It's a short book.

It's a minor prophet, not minor in importance, but minor in size. That's why they're called minor prophets. It's a book that you can read in one sitting with a cup of coffee, and I encourage you to do that.

[6 : 49] But let me summarize it for you. Joel is speaking on behalf of God. God is speaking through Joel, and he is telling his people, Israel, how grieved he is that he has to punish them.

It's amazing how you see, you can almost feel God's grief that his people continue to disobey him, continue to live their own ways, and disregard him as their rightful creator and king and judge.

And he has to send punishment to them, but he's grieved that he has to. And he even sends them a warning in a plague of locusts to wake them up to the fact that they need to come back to him. But then he does more.

He doesn't only warn them and tell them to turn from their ways, but he promises that one day he's going to come down as his Holy Spirit and indwell them.

He's going to send them his Spirit so that they can obey his laws. Because he's so passionate about making a society of people who love him and love each other and obey him.

[7 : 51] And his people, Israel, failed over and over to do that, and it's because they didn't have his Spirit to enable them to do that. So he promises that he's going to change that, that he's going to send his Spirit and create, slowly but surely, create the society that he has planned for this world.

And then, if you look at Joel chapter 2, you don't have to turn there, you can look at it later, but Joel chapter 2 is kind of in the middle of the book of Joel where he promises to send out his Spirit.

And what he says is that after he does that, that's when the day of the Lord will come. And the day of the Lord is a scary day, the Bible talks about, when God will come back in all his glory and he will judge the wicked and he will do away with sin and wickedness and all the brokenness of this world once and for all.

But he delays that day and he first sends his Spirit so that we can be on the right side of him when that day comes.

And that's what we read in Joel chapter 2, which is what Peter quotes. After this, I will pour out my Spirit. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. There's going to be, everybody is going to know God's Word for the first time in history.

[9 : 04] And they're going to talk God's, speak God's Word to each other. I will pour out my Spirit, I will display wonders. And then he says, sequentially what happens after that, the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood on the great and terrible day the Lord comes.

And so that's what he says. I'm going to come down and I'm going to judge, but before I do I'm going to send my Spirit. And then Peter tells the crowd at Pentecost, that's what's happening now.

He says, what you see around you, that is God pouring out His Spirit. That is Him fulfilling Joel's prophecy. And therefore, the next thing that's going to happen is judgment. The next thing that's going to happen is the day of the Lord.

So it's a merciful act that God is doing and He helps the people to see that. But what it also means is that judgment is certain and judgment is coming. And Peter opens their eyes to this truth.

And we see that they get it by the end of his sermon. Many of them are cut to the heart. They repent and believe. But I want you to notice how the Holy Spirit helped people to see things they couldn't see before.

[10 : 09] They had this prophecy. They just didn't know it was being fulfilled in front of their eyes until Peter told them. The Holy Spirit opened their eyes to see what they couldn't see through, not through writing in the sky, not through an inner spiritual voice, but through a sermon.

And I think that's very important for us to just pause and notice. The way the Holy Spirit then and today opens people's eyes to see what they could not see before is through sermons, through this.

Through a preacher taking God's Word and opening it up and preaching it and through His people listening attentively to it. That is the way the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to see things that you cannot see anywhere else and you cannot find anywhere else.

Through something that looks rather ordinary. A sermon. So, that's what is happening here.

The Holy Spirit is helping people to see what they couldn't see before. They had failed to realize the reality of the Holy Spirit. They had failed to realize this vital first point that the Holy Spirit had come. Let me suggest to you this morning that I think so do we.

[11 : 21] Even though we're Christians, I think we often fail to realize this reality in our day-to-day lives. We fail to realize the reality that the Holy Spirit has come. And there's a few ways I think we do this.

First of all, when we fail to recognize how the Holy Spirit is working in sermons and in church. When we treat church just like any other social gathering or we treat sermons just like any other talk we can find on the internet.

Like a TED talk or any other YouTube video. As an optional extra. Some helpful input in our life to help us to live better. When we treat sermons like that, we actually are neglecting the work of the Holy Spirit.

And I think in lockdown, as we've been watching sermons on the internet, as we've had no choice, there could be the tendency to do that.

You know how you watch on YouTube our services or our sermons and then you see all these suggestions of what to watch next after you finish the sermon? And I think subconsciously, what we do is we just slot the sermon in with all the other things that are suggested.

[12 : 26] All the cake videos and the octopus documentaries. And we don't see it as something supernatural that God is using to open our eyes to things that we could find nowhere else.

On the internet or anywhere else. It's a divine means of grace, this activity. Us coming to church, us waking up and changing out of our pajamas and coming to church and me and Dylan spending a week in our studies digging into the word.

This activity is a supernatural means that the Holy Spirit opens our eyes. And it's this. You sitting, listening to a sermon is a way that you get information that you could get nowhere else.

And you get divine information you can get nowhere else. So that's one way I think we fail to realize the Holy Spirit has come when we fail to embrace the means by which he communicates to us.

But we also fail to embrace that he's come when we fail to embrace his power to overcome sin in our lives. When we think sin is still in charge of us.

[13 : 33] And we actually let it rule us without fighting it with the power the Holy Spirit gives us to fight sin. And as Christians we tend to do that.

Because why? Because Jesus died for our sins. And we go, yes, I'm a sinner. I'm terrible. I'm sorry, God. I'm sorry. I'm so thankful that I can be forgiven by the blood of Christ.

But then we don't make any efforts to stop that sin. We just carry on because we think, well, you know, I'm a sinner. I can't help it. But we can help it. God has given us the power to help it.

Romans 8. Turn there with me quickly. Romans 8.2. Romans 8.2. It says, The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.

If you're a Christian, if you've believed Christ and embraced Him and repented and received God's Holy Spirit, He has set you free from the law of sin and death, the rule of sin.

[14 : 35] And then verse 12, he kind of goes on and says, So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh. We're not obligated to it.

You don't have to obey it. You don't have to obey your sinful desires. When you feel that sinful desire and it's so tempting to speak or think or act in a particular way, you don't have to obey it if you have God's Spirit.

And I think we forget that. I think we forget that God has given us a supernatural power to overcome sin. We forget that the Holy Spirit has come and that's one of the things He does. And so we don't take seriously our struggle with sin, our fight with sin, believing that we can overcome.

But we can because the Holy Spirit has come. And I think there's one final way that we tend to forget that the Holy Spirit has come in our lives. And that's when we forget what that indicates about history and where we are in the stage of history.

The Holy Spirit coming, Joel said, means that the next thing that God's going to do in God's timeline is the day of the Lord. The next thing is God coming down.

[15 : 50] There's nothing else to happen in the biblical timeline. There's nothing else that needs to happen since the coming of the Spirit, but for God to come down in judgment and recreate this world and do away with sin and wickedness once and for all.

That's the next thing in His calendar. And the Holy Spirit coming assures us of that. But we forget that. I think that's a way that we forget that the Holy Spirit has come. We forget that that's the next thing that's going to happen.

It could happen tomorrow in the way we live. If you were sitting on the foredeck of the Titanic on the early hours of 15th April 1912, and you saw in the distance, in the gloom, a giant iceberg, and it was bearing down on the ship, and you realized that it's going to hit the ship, what would you do?

Would you just ignore it and carry on going about what you were going to do anyway? Or would you maybe pull up a deck chair and sit and watch the chaos unfold? Or would you warn people and get them ready for what's going to happen?

Well, the day of the Lord is bearing down on us. What are you doing to warn people and getting them ready for that? If the Holy Spirit has come, that is what we need to be doing. If we know that it's coming.

[17 : 11] If we see it and the Holy Spirit has opened our eyes to see that that is what is coming. Do we live our lives like that's a reality day to day? Okay, so that's the first truth, the first foundational reality that these people needed to realize that underlies the church.

The Holy Spirit has come. Do you realize that? What does that mean for you? Well, there's another reality that Peter wanted to help these people to realize that is foundational to the church.

And that is his second point. The Messiah has come. The Messiah has come. And this, I think, is another reality that we tend to forget. And I'll tell you why. But what does it mean, the Messiah has come?

Because that's really what he goes on to prove. The Messiah, if you don't know, it's a Hebrew word for anointed one. It is what the Old Testament, the Messiah is who the Old Testament speaks about as God's king who's going to come and establish God's kingdom on earth and rule God's people.

And the Old Testament points towards the Messiah and speaks about the coming of the Messiah and the Jews who are waiting for the coming of the Messiah. And sadly, many Jews still are. You go to Israel today, there are many Jews who are still waiting for the coming of the Messiah.

[18 : 30] And they have missed it. They do not realize, like these people at Pentecost did not realize the Messiah has actually come.

Jesus Christ. Christ is his title, Messiah. And that's why he's called the Christ. And his disciples didn't just make this up.

Jesus gave sufficient credentials, all the credentials that were needed to show that he was the Messiah. Verse 22, we're back in Acts 2 now. Look at what Peter says. So this is now, he's moving on to his second point.

And he says, fellow Israelites, listen to these words. This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know.

And he links this with the Joel prophecy, because the Joel prophecy said there would be wonders and signs when this age of the Spirit arrives. And lo and behold, when Jesus came, what were they? Wonders and signs.

[19 : 28] His signs, his miracles that he performed to show that he has within him the power of God himself, were his credentials proving that he was the Messiah, but they couldn't see it.

It was right in front of them. It was right in front of them. And they couldn't see that their Messiah had come. And so they killed him instead of worshipping him and obeying him.

But Peter goes on and says, even this was part of the plan. Look at verse 23. Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.

God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death. So, as Dylan reminded us earlier in the sermon, his resurrection was part of his work.

He had to rise. To rise ahead of his people. It was prophesied that he rise, and he couldn't rise unless he died. And so it was all part of the plan, God's plan for the Messiah, that he would die and then he would rise.

[20 : 32] It was part of the Messiah's work that he came to do on earth. To bring resurrection power to this world and to his people, so that we can have a hope of resurrection one day.

But that wasn't the end of the story. So if you just trace Peter's sermon, he doesn't end there. He doesn't say, he rose from the dead, hallelujah. Keep, you know, join us for tea after the service.

He carries on. He's not finished. Because he goes on to the climax of his sermon, which is not the death of Jesus or the resurrection of Jesus. It's the ascension of Jesus.

Look further. Verse 33. He has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit.

He has poured out what you both see and hear. He's now coming to the main point of his sermon. And he says the reason this is happening is because Jesus, the Messiah, has ascended to the throne at God's right hand to carry on his work.

[21 : 40] To carry on his work. And that is to pour out the Spirit before judgment comes. You see, the death of Jesus on the cross was not the end of his work.

The resurrection of Jesus was not the end of his work. The ascension was not even the end of his work. Because today, he is still pouring out his Spirit. And that is his work.

That is the Messiah's work. To pour out his Spirit before judgment comes. Why? Well, because, as we saw in verse 21, when judgment comes, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Implying that everyone who doesn't will not. How can you call on the name of the Lord? How can you recognize Jesus as Lord? It's right in front of the Jews and they don't recognize it.

How do you know it? Well, because of the Holy Spirit. That's the only reason you know Jesus as Lord. That's the only way you can call on the name of the Lord. Because the Holy Spirit enables you to. He opens your eyes, through preaching of the Word, to something you couldn't see before.

[22 : 40] And so, unless Jesus ascended, pours out the Holy Spirit, no one will call on his name and be saved. So, do you see how the ascension of Jesus is as important as the cross of Jesus?

Him ascending and pouring out his Spirit is as vital for your salvation as him dying on the cross. And that's what Peter wants these people to see. That's the climax of his sermon.

Is the ascension of Christ and what that means. So that you can call on the name of the Lord. They had failed to realize that. They had failed to realize that not only was Jesus the Messiah, but he had risen and he had ascended to the throne of David.

He had said, as the Old Testament said he would. And he was ruling and he was making his enemies his footstool. Look at verse 34 and 35. Again, a prophecy.

Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. That is what he is doing through the pouring out of his Spirit, through his church. He is defeating his enemies. And they had failed to realize that that's what he was doing.

[23 : 48] But so do we, I think. I think we fail to realize the reality of Jesus as Lord. I think we often fail to realize in our day-to-day lives that he has ascended and that is what he is doing.

And who he actually is. And I'll tell you why I think this. Because when we think about the Gospel, and we think about Jesus and what he has done, we almost exclusively focus on his death and not his ascension.

We are interested in what the Gospel means for us. And that's what we are most interested in. What the Gospel means for me. That I can be forgiven. That I can be right with God. That I can have no more guilt of my sin.

And those are all true things because of what Jesus did on the cross. But we focus so much on that. We focus so much on what the Gospel means for me. That we forget what the Gospel means for Jesus.

But that's what Peter focused on in his sermon. Peter was far more interested in his sermon. This foundational sermon of the church. Peter was far more interested in what the Gospel means for Jesus than what it means for you.

[24 : 56] And helping people to see that. Helping people to see who Jesus really is. Is what made his sermon great. Helping people to see that Jesus is the King who is ruling now.

Pouring out his Spirit now. In preparation of coming back to judge. When every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. That was Peter's Gospel. He didn't even mention the cross and the atonement.

Until people were cut to the heart. And asked him what must we do. And he said, oh well you can actually be forgiven. But do you see that that wasn't the point. That wasn't the main point of his sermon. The main point was Jesus is Messiah.

Jesus is ascended. Jesus is the King. And he's coming back to judge. And he's pouring out his Spirit now. And the response was? Verse 37. When they heard this. They were pierced to the heart.

And said to Peter and the rest of the apostles. Brothers, what shall we do? You see, when you focus on who Jesus is as your message. That's the church's message. That's what this early church's message was.

[26 : 00] Not what Jesus can do for you. Which is what I would go as far to say most churches today. When they talk about Jesus. You look on TV.

On YouTube. It's all about what Jesus can do for you. How he can improve your life. But that's not what Peter spoke about. Peter spoke about who he is. And when you realize who he is. Then everything else falls into place.

That was Peter's gospel. But we miss that. And we fail to remember. Day to day in our lives. I think we fail to remember. That's who Jesus is. Yes, we remember he died for our sins.

So that we can confess to God. And have our sins forgiven. Wonderful. But we forget that he is king. Ruling. And we do that every time we fail to submit to him.

And commit treason against him. By living our own way rather than his. And let's admit we do that. Every time we do that. Every time we live our own way. Rather than how Jesus who is ruling as king wants us to live.

[27 : 01] We commit treason against our king. I think we fail to realize Jesus is Messiah. Every time we are ashamed to talk about him. As if he is not the king of the world.

Aren't we? But listen to what he said. Mark 8. Listen to what Jesus says. Because he knows who he is. He says to his disciples.

Whoever is ashamed of me and my words. In this adulterous and sinful generation. The son of man will also be ashamed of him. When he comes in glory with his holy angels.

When we are ashamed to talk about Jesus. It is because we don't believe he is the king of the world. And if we realized who he is.

We wouldn't be ashamed to talk about him. That is the point he is making here. And I think we also fail to recognize the Messiah has come. When we approve of what his enemies do. When we are too comfortable with this sinful and wicked generation.

[28 : 00] And we fail to stand against it. As the people of the king should do. When we let his enemies get away with things. That we know he doesn't want. Then we fail to realize and remember that he is Messiah.

And that he is ruling. And that he is coming back. The Messiah has come. That is Peter's point of his sermon. Most people in the world have failed to see that.

Make sure you don't. Make sure you respond to that truth. Like the people. These 3000 responded to this. And I think this is something you don't do just once.

We do it constantly. When they heard this. Back in Acts chapter 2. 37. They were pierced to the heart. And said to Peter and the rest of the apostles. What shall we do? Peter replied.

Now this is a response to realizing who Jesus really is. Repent and be baptized. Each of you in the name of Jesus Christ. For the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive.

[29 : 01] The gift of the Holy Spirit. Make sure you repent. Each and every day. What does that mean? Well you know what the word repent actually means? Literally it means turn around.

It means change your mind. It starts in the mind. Repent. It's not just about. You know. Living better. Which is how we often think of the word repent.

Just changing our lifestyle. No. It's changing your mind about who Jesus is. That's what repent means. That's what Peter is calling these people to do. Change your mind about who Jesus is.

Realize who he is. And then all this other stuff in your life will follow. Because if you realize he's the king. Coming back to judge. You will want to obey him. You will want to live his way. And you will want to receive his spirit.

And so I think we struggle don't we? To repent. Because we think it's just a matter of changing our behavior a little bit. It's just a matter of changing our lifestyle. What we need to realize is repent.

[29 : 58] Is change your mind about Jesus. Realize who Jesus is. And then everything else will follow. And give yourself to your king. To be led by his spirit. And to serve him each day. That's what the first church's message was.

It's not about us. And what God can do for you. It's about Jesus. And who he really is. That's the gospel. And the response to the gospel. Is change your view about him.

Get your view about who Jesus is right. And that must be our message to those around us. Alright. We are called as the church. To take this message that Peter preached.

To the world. And so our message. Must be. When we share the gospel as Christians. When we share Jesus. That person that you're sharing with.

You need to realize. They need to know first and foremost. Who Jesus really is. Not just what he's done in your life. And what he can do in theirs. But who he really is.

[30 : 55] And only then will everything make sense. But of course we will only do that. We will only tell people who Jesus really is. If we're convinced of it ourselves. If we're convinced of this great foundational truth.

That the Messiah has come. And so we as Peter says in his letter. Later. The same guy who preached the sermon. Writes a couple of letters. And they're in your Bible. One and two Peter.

He says in 1 Peter 3.15. To Christians. Set apart Christ as Lord. In your heart. Always being ready to give an answer.

To everyone who asks you. For the hope that you have. So this is his great verse. About evangelism. About sharing the gospel. About being ready to share. But he says you can only do that. When you first set apart Christ as Lord.

When you realize that he is Lord of this world. When you realize who he really is. Then you will be freed up. And want to talk about him to others. That's when we'll serve and represent him.

[31 : 54] To the world as we should. And help others to see him for who he is. So that they too will call on his name. And be saved. Will we be a church. Who preaches the gospel that Peter preached.

At Pentecost. Let's pray and ask for God. To make us one. Lord. We thank you for this. Sermon. That is recorded for us.

In scripture. The foundational sermon. Of the church. And we thank you for. Being present by your spirit. With us. That we could see these truths. That we can now see and believe.

The truths. That people couldn't then. Until. You. Open their eyes to it. That. The spirit has come. And the Messiah has come.

Help us to live our lives. Each and every day. With these two truths. As. Reality. And help us to serve. Our Messiah.

[32 : 51] Our king. Each and every day. Help us to realize. That the next. Thing to happen. In. In the Bible story. Is. Jesus coming back to judge.

And help us to live our lives. In light of that each day. And glorify yourself through this church. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.