

In our passage last time we read about the coming of the Holy Spirit. A group of believers, which included at least the twelve apostles, were gathered in one place. A sound like the blowing of a violent wind filled the place and something that looked like tongues of fire came to rest on their heads. In the midst of the sound, they began to proclaim the wonders of God, and people from all corners of the world could hear and understand what they were saying in their native languages.

Unmistakably to the believers, the Holy Spirit had come upon them, just as Jesus had foretold. It was a mystery to the other people in Jerusalem, but a part of God's purpose was to draw the attention of the Jews who had gathered for the celebration of Pentecost.

It is in this setting, when people were curious, and wanted to know what was going on, that Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached the first gospel sermon. In tonight's passage of scripture, we will study the content of that sermon, and hopefully gain some insights that will help us to reach others for Christ. Please read along with me, Acts 2:14-36.

Notice in verse 14 that Peter did not stand alone, he had the other eleven apostles at his side, confirming that everything he said was true. This is an important concept for the church today. We can be far more effective in doing God's work when we stand together. In our church, the pastors stand together. The deacons are like associate pastors who stand with us, and defend the church. They watch the pastor's backs, and the center of their focus is to protect the church. All of us together form the body of Christ, and we function at our greatest capacity when we are all in one accord. We support, lift up, and encourage one another as we take biblical stands in an unbiblical world.

The skeptics in the crowd said that the disciples were drunk. Peter begins his sermon by discounting their godless gossip. He overcame the lie with the truth. They were not drunk; they had been filled with the Holy Spirit. An important part of the mission of the church today is to stand upon the truth, as it is revealed in the word of God. We stand against abortion, because it is clearly against God's will. We oppose gay marriage, because it spits in the face of God's word. We refuse to go along with the crowd, if what they propose is in opposition to the clear principles of the bible. With the support of his brothers in Christ, Peter did not have to stand alone, and it was easier for him to boldly speak the truth to a group of unbelievers.

Peter's purpose in this first sermon was to show that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, and Savior of the world. He begins by using Old Testament prophecy to explain what was happening in the moment, and to show how other prophecies were perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The people were looking for the Messiah, and Peter's message was that Messiah had come, and they had killed Him.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32. Verses 17 and 18 deals with what was happening right then, and the remainder of the quote looks to the future as a warning for the lost, and to hold out the offer of salvation. Verse 17 begins with the phrase, "In the last days." We talk a lot about the possibility that we are in the last days, but in the context of this passage, the coming of the Holy Spirit ushered in the last days. Here the text implies that the last days include the time between Christ's departure, and His return. This time period is also sometimes called the church age.

During the time of the last days, Joel said that God would pour out His Spirit on all people, men and women alike, and there would be signs, which showed that they had the Holy Spirit on them. They would prophesy, and have visions and dreams. That was happening right

then, while Peter preached. This was the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, and it will continue to happen until the Lord's return. Today prophecy takes the form of proclaiming what the Spirit reveals concerning the truth of Scripture. The more we learn from scripture, and the more we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we get a clearer vision of God, His will, and what to expect in the future. Then, we dream about the soon return of Christ, in fulfillment of Scripture.

Joel's prophesy reaches into the future, speaking of wonders and signs that remind us of other prophetic writings in the bible. As the time of the end approaches, terrible events will occur before God pours out His wrath on an unbelieving world, but Peter brings a message of hope contained within this prophecy, that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

This is the exact quote that Paul used in Romans 10:13, which is the final statement in what we call the Roman Road. This is the hope and promise held out in the gospel. It is the purpose behind Christ's sacrifice. It is God's will for all people, but the promise requires faith and a commitment.

Notice that Peter used prophecy of scripture as the authority behind his witness. Whenever we share our faith, in order to be effective, we must stand upon the authority of scripture, and have the filling of the Holy Spirit. This is what Peter did, and this is the only way our witness can work today.

Beginning in verse 22, Peter shares the gospel message. No one can be saved, apart from understanding, and accepting, the gospel in faith. First Peter says that God accredited, or validated, Jesus by miracles, and signs, and the Jews were eyewitnesses to these things. They could not deny the supernatural miracles that Jesus performed in their midst. In our witness today, we may not be able to say to a lost person that they have seen Christ do miracles. He is still in the miracle business today, but we have to rely upon the scriptures and our personal testimonies of how God has worked in our lives, and has answered our prayers.

Jesus, Himself, called for faith in Him through the evidence of the miracles. The miracles speak to the deity of Christ. They show that this promised salvation comes at the hand of God and verse 23 shows that Jesus' sacrifice was according to God's set purpose and foreknowledge. The gospel was God's plan all along, and the people who Jesus came to save, killed Him by nailing Him to the cross. The word wicked means lawless. People who reject God and the authority of His law over their lives are responsible for Jesus death, and they are lost in their sins.

The idea is that Jesus died for sinners, like you and me. If we were not sinners, we wouldn't need Jesus. His sacrifice would mean nothing. But the truth is that we are all sinners, and Jesus sacrificed Himself for all of us. He who knew no sin became sin for us. He bore in His flesh the penalty we all deserve, and through faith in Him, and His sacrifice, we are forgiven of our sins, and are promised that we will live with Him in paradise, forever.

When we share the gospel with others, we cannot end with Jesus' sacrifice. The hope of the gospel is based upon Christ's victory over sin and death, demonstrated by His resurrection from the grave. The resurrection is central to our faith. Paul said if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Here Peter says that it was impossible for death to keep hold of Jesus, and there is a call to faith. In order for anyone to be saved, they must accept in faith, the truth that Jesus arose from the grave.

Peter returned to the scripture to show that this was a fulfilled prophecy from God, and to prove from scripture that Jesus was the Messiah. He refers to what David wrote in Psalm 16. In verses 26 and 27 we see the Messianic hope of Israel. Because God would not let His Holy One see decay, there is hope of life for all who believe. In verse 28, David foresees the gospel with

the words, “You have made known to me the paths of life,” and the coming of the Holy Spirit with the words, “You will fill me with joy in your presence.”

Beginning with verse 29, Peter explains how the prophecy of Psalm 16, and the Messianic hope of Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. David, who prophesied these things, was dead and buried, long before Jesus arose from the grave, but his faith in the One that God had promised, gave him confidence of his own resurrection as well.

God made a promise to David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever. Through the genealogies of Christ recorded in the gospels, we know that this promise was fulfilled in Jesus. In verse 31 Peter says that David foresaw the resurrection, and this was his faith and his hope. Old Testament people were saved the same way that people are saved today. They were saved through faith in God and His provision for forgiveness of their sins, believing it even before the saving act happened. We are saved today by looking back at what Jesus has done, entrusting our lives and eternal souls to Him.

In verses 32 and 33, Peter gives his eyewitness testimony. He has seen the resurrected Christ with his own eyes. He saw Jesus’ ascension into heaven, and what the people were experiencing at Pentecost was the fulfillment of God’s promise to pour out His Spirit on all who trusted Jesus. Peter again quotes scripture to show what God was going to do as they moved through time. Jesus had been exalted to the right hand of God the Father until the time that He made the enemies of Christ His footstool.

This speaks to our current situation. The world is in the process of moving further and further away from God. The enemies of Christ refuse to believe, they refuse to repent so that they can be saved, and they do everything they can to discredit Him in the eyes of others. The gulf between the lost and the saved grows wider each day. The room for compromise has diminished. Trying to straddle the fence becomes harder and harder, so that people today have to make a clear and definitive choice. Will you follow the world, or will you submit to Christ?

In our church we are taking some tough biblical stands, because that is what we are called to do. We have the truth, so we must live by the truth. There are not many ways for people to be saved; God has provided only one way to be saved, faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross.

Peter ends his sermon with verse 36, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Remember that the word Christ is the Greek translation of the word Messiah. Jesus being Lord and Christ speaks of His deity. The people crucified Jesus because they were sinners who did not believe in Him while He was with them. Jesus was crucified to provide salvation for those same sinners, and for us as well, because this was God’s plan all along.

In his sermon, Peter used the scriptures extensively to show that Jesus was the Christ. He presented the evidence of Jesus’ life and the miracles He performed. He gave his eyewitness testimony, and presented the gospel message in whole. Is our witness really any different today?

Our faith and our testimonies are based upon the authority of scripture. We too should be able to handle the word of God with confidence so that we can give evidence that Jesus is Lord. All of us should be confident in our presentation of the gospel message, speaking boldly of Jesus’ life, sacrifice, and resurrection from the grave. We were not there, but we have the eyewitness testimonies recorded in the bible, and we have our personal testimonies of what Jesus has done in our lives, and how we are blessed because of a personal relationship with Him.

We hold out the hope of the gospel: forgiveness of sins, a restored relationship with God, the opportunity to be born again, and the promise of eternal life, through faith in Jesus Christ and

His sacrifice on the cross. That hope is the basis of life for all of us who believe, and that hope is being held out to all who hear these words. If you have not yet received Jesus in faith, that hope can be yours tonight. Confess your sins to God; trust Jesus and His sacrifice for your forgiveness. Accept Jesus into your heart as Savior and Lord. Start telling people about your new found faith and you will be saved.