

## Introduction

This probably doesn't come as a surprise to you, but I love good preaching. I often listen to other preachers to encourage my soul and to learn from them in regards to art of preaching. I've often said, I'd love to hear some of the sermons that were preached from this very church over the past 126 years. And there are many great preachers throughout the history of the church that I'd love to hear preach. Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers is one. Charles Wesley, the circuit riding Methodist is another. John Calvin, AW Tozer, Martin Luther, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards ... the list goes on and on and on.

But if there is one preacher, one sermon, I'd love to hear live and in person it would have to be this preacher and this sermon we will look at today. The mere fact that Peter stood up and began to preach is amazing enough, but what happened in response is truly remarkable in how the Spirit of God poured out that day. Over 3,000 souls were added to the Kingdom that day! The energy, the atmosphere had to be electric on that day when Peter preached and the multitudes said, "What must we do?"

They say that every good sermon has one central idea that weaves everything together. Good preaching pulls that central idea from the text of Scripture and teaches from that, calling for us to change. And Peter's sermon is no different. He calls on those that hear his words - including us today - to consider that in light of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we know that salvation has come, the Kingdom is here and the offer of forgiveness is for everyone!

## The Gospel isn't Foolishness but Fulfillment

When we left our text last week, we saw the crowds mocking Peter and the other disciples. "You are all drunk and filled with New Wine." Peter stands for the group and rebukes them, saying that it's barely mid-morning. What the crowds have witnessed is something remarkable and completely new. What they have witnessed is the fulfillment of God's plan and purpose in the redemptive work that existed from before creation.

One of the joys of the Bible is that whether you are in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, every account points us to the good news we find only in Jesus Christ. Sometimes, it is obvious, like when we read through Isaiah and sometimes it's more obscure like when we read through Proverbs, but every single account in Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, points us to the glorious good news that Jesus Christ came for lost sinners like you and me. Peter stands up and tells this crowd that the gospel message that the Kingdom is here is for all who would turn to Christ in repentance.

Peter's sermon is a very prompt fulfillment of Jesus' promise to the disciples. Compare Acts 1:8 and Acts 2:14

**Acts 1:8 ESV** - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

**Acts 2:14 ESV** - But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

We see the connection between Jesus’ promise they would be witnesses and to Peter lifting up his voice and actually being witnesses. But this was not the only thing that pointed to this day. Peter quotes the prophet Joel in verses 17 to 21, thus demonstrating that the good news of the gospel is for everyone. Peter proclaims that the Kingdom is near, salvation is here and it’s for everyone!

Let me ask you this - do you view the gospel message, the news that God’s work in Christ is making all things new for those who repent and believe, as foolishness or fulfillment of God’s promises to humanity? Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 1:21-23

**1 Corinthians 1:21–23 ESV** - For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,

I recently learned that when Crowfoot, the chief of the Blackfoot Nation in southern Alberta, Canada, gave the Canadian Pacific Railway permission to cross the Blackfoot land from Medicine Hat to Calgary, he was given a lifetime pass in return for the permission. The record shows that Crowfoot put it in a leather case and carried it around his neck for the rest of his life, never using it for it’s purpose. He kept the promise of the railroad close to his heart, but never trusted in it’s promise.

Likewise, Peter reminds the nation of Israel that God’s promises are well and good - but we must fully trust in them. That’s why he quotes Joel in verse 21 and reminds us all that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved! Salvation is here because the Kingdom is near and everyone can take advantage of it - they just need to turn to Jesus in faith and trust, standing, as the old hymn says, on the very promises of God. My greatest fear as your pastor is that some of you may hear the promises of God and appear to receive them, as Crowfoot did the railroad pass, but never full trust in the promises and receive the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Peter wants you to know that the cross, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ isn’t foolish. It’s not folly. It’s the fulfillment of all of God’s Gospel promises from before creation. This calls on us to trust that the gospel is truly good news and not foolishness. That trusting in Christ and living in his way is worth it even if the world says that it is foolish. Living for Jesus may seem like foolishness to the world, but it is proof of the fulfilment of God’s plan to redeem people for his purposes. Will you trust in that plan today?

### **The Gospel Calls Jesus King**

The other day, George overheard a conversation that Julie and I had about the funeral arrangements for Senator John McCain. I think he thought we said “King” not “McCain” because he then said, “Wait, the king died?” Julie told him no and that we don’t have a king.

George then said, “Except Jesus!” And this dad just smiled and agreed. In our country, because of our past, we often neglect this fact but it is true - Jesus is indeed King of all that He creates and redeems.

As Peter continued his sermon, he shifts the focus squarely on Jesus and states very clearly that the disciples believed Jesus is the Messiah and Christ. Peter makes it abundantly clear that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. He bases his argument on two key areas - the very person and work of Jesus himself and the pages of the Old Testament, in particular the writings of the greatest King in Israel’s history, King David.

If we look back at our text today, back at verses 22 to 24, we see that David is passionately contending that the miracles that Jesus did validated the claims he made that he is the Messiah. In other words, WHAT he did verified WHO he is. He not only talked the talk, but he walked the walk as well. And the greatest miracle of all was his resurrection from the dead. People knew Jesus had died on the Passover. Word got around. Now, Peter is standing up and claiming that Jesus is not dead but alive. Again, we see the proof that the resurrection changes everything. The Kingdom has come, salvation is here and available for everyone.

But Peter doesn’t stop there. His appeal that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, isn’t just based on an experience. So many false religions and cults base everything on feelings. I remember when talking to someone who was a member of a false church, they asked me to read their book and ask God to show me the truth. I said, that I pray that very thing every time I read the Bible and when I read their book and God told me their book was false and full of lies - and I asked if I could show them some. They countered “Well, my experience was different. My experience tells me it is true.” You can’t argue experience with experience.

No, Peter doesn’t just lean on his experience that he saw Jesus alive - he appeals back to Scripture and the fact that David, the great king and prophet is still dead and in the grave. Peter said not only DID Jesus rise from the dead, but he contends that David predicted it back in Psalm 16. Peter contends that when King David wrote this Psalm, as we see in Acts 2:30-31

**Acts 2:30-31 ESV** - Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

So, what is Peter driving at? He is driving at the truth that Jesus came to fulfill the Messianic promise given to Israel. He is the Christ, the King and that the Kingdom of God has come. Far too often, we make two vital mistakes when it comes to understanding the cross and the resurrection. First, we keep the focus on what the resurrection means for us personally. And all of that is truth. The resurrection does mean that sin, death, hell and the grave were defeated on the cross and empty tomb. But it also meant that the Kingdom of God had come because the King of God, the Messiah, the Christ has come as well. The King has come. The Kingdom of God is here. Salvation isn’t JUST for you or for me - it’s for EVERYONE who would turn to Christ in humble repentance and faith.

Second, we have this mistaken idea that the Kingdom of God is far away - that heaven is a place that we go to when we die. Instead, Peter is pointing out that because the Messiah came for His people, the Kingdom of God is HERE. It is NOW. It is where our citizenship lies today. Yes, there are aspects of the Kingdom that are yet to come, but we know that it is also a reality today for each one of us. Jesus said in Luke 17:21 that the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

When he preached this text, John Piper had this to say:

The King has come. The King has dealt with sin once for all in the sacrifice of himself. The King sits at the Father's right hand and reigns now until all his enemies are under his feet. The King's righteousness is now already ours by faith. The King's Spirit is now already dwelling in us. The King's holiness is now already being produced in us. The King's joy and peace have now already been given to us. The King's victory over Satan is now already ours as we use the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The King's power to witness is now already available to us. And the King's gifts—the gifts of his Spirit—are now already available for ministry. 2

Timothy Keller wrote in his book *The Reason for God* “If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn’t rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said?” The Resurrection of Jesus was the final miracle that proved beyond a shadow of any doubt that He is exactly who he said he is. And if Jesus is indeed King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the reality is that we need to hear from Him and do exactly what he commands us to do - first by turning from our rebellious life and to Him in humble repentance along with then seeking obedience to his teachings and instructions for life.

Friends, for a great many of us, we have made Jesus our savior without making him our Lord. To be honest, I’m not sure exactly how that works. The Scriptures foretold that Jesus would come from the line of David - it is his throne. And the Scriptures told us that Jesus would die but rise again. This is true. And since it is true, then we must consider the implications of this including how this Jesus that they crucified is now both Lord and Christ. We must be people who respond with obedience to his instructions.

### **The Gospel Makes Sin Personal**

I went to get my hair cut this week and as always, I chat with the person cutting my hair. In that conversation, we talked about how people use words to hurt others. She shared with me that when she was in high school, she was confronted with how mean she was. She couldn’t believe it, of course, until later when her counselor made her write down everything she said or thought for a week. When she was done, she had to look at it and see that she was a mean person because she tore others down to build herself up. When confronted with the truth, she knew she had to make a change.

In our text, verses 23 and 36 show that Peter makes a startling claim. In those verses, Peter lays it out that these people - these good, moral, religious people - were the ones who crucified Jesus. It wasn’t the Romans. Pilot washed his hands of it, remember? When given a choice between their prophet King and a known murderer terrorist, the crowds chose Barabbas. They shouted “Crucify!” when asked about Jesus.

We live in a culture today that does not want to talk about sin as a general rule. As the Christian hip hop artist Shai Linne said in his song *False Teachers*, “Today the only heresy is saying that there is heresy.” No one wants to talk about or confront sin. But Peter wasn’t afraid. I picture him sticking his finger out at the crowd and saying “YOU! YOU crucified Jesus Christ!” The truth is that without the bad news of sin, the gospel loses so much of its good news.

This morning I read an interview with CJ Davison who works with churches in least-reached areas of the globe to help them share the gospel. He said in this interview, “In the United States, it seems the gospel is no longer seen as good news. Our culture prefers not to talk about sin. Therefore, “repent and believe” is not a message that is received well here.”<sup>2</sup> No one wants to be told they are a sinner and no one wants to be offensive, so we leave that part out and, as Davison points out, we limit our gospel presentations to “the culturally appealing parts of the gospel like, “Jesus loves you and wants to know you!” Less often do we share the difficult parts of the gospel like, “The earth is God’s. You have offended him. Repent and be reconciled to him through Christ.””<sup>2</sup>

I am convinced that the reason for that is we don’t want to truly deal with our own sin. We want the blessings of Christ and the Kingdom, but we don’t want to actually turn away from the world’s sinful offerings and the lusts in our own hearts. Sin is always easier to see in someone else’s life. It’s easier to say “Oooh, look at that person’s disgusting sin!” than it is to look in the mirror and confront our own. We dismiss our own sin and say that it is no big deal. MY sin isn’t so bad, I have a reason for it. As I have said before, we are never more clever or resourceful than when we try to justify our own sin. But the gospel won’t let us do that. We need to be people who boldly and lovingly confront sin - both in the lives of others and especially in our own lives.

## **Conclusion**

I mentioned at the beginning of our time today that of all the sermons I’d like to hear, this one is at the top. Well, as I think about it, maybe the Sermon on the Mount beats it out, but that’s because of Jesus. In any event, as I neared the end of writing this sermon, I remembered, I have heard a sermon on a day much like Pentecost. And while it wasn’t 3,000 saved, it was 60 or so adults in a village of maybe 150.

I mentioned in this week’s email update about a time when I was in middle of nowhere West Africa, showing the Jesus Film to a remote village. This was old school film, reel to reel like we used to have in school. Between reels, we’d share our testimony and when the second night was done, our host from the capital stood up to preach. Now, it wasn’t exactly like the day of Pentecost - I couldn’t understand what he was saying - but I know what he said. He said what Peter said. And what thousands of Gospel preachers have said ever since. This Jesus that you have just seen with your own eyes is the savior of all who come to him. You are all people who have sinned against this great God and need to repent. If you call out upon the name of Jesus you will be saved - who wants to cry out to Jesus today? Come down right now and do just that.

I’ll never forget because it was all surreal. I was in a haze - and not because of the bug bite that left my face swollen. But the Spirit was tangible in that place. The spirit powered gospel

preaching saw at least 60 new souls come into the Kingdom. And that's the reality. When we speak the gospel to people through the power of the Holy Spirit, people's lives are transformed and changed. I know, because I've witnessed it first hand. But more than that, we read about it in the pages of Scripture. Both testify that what I saw that night was a work of the Spirit and it is true.

I want to challenge us to ask the Spirit to renew our faith that with God all things are possible. We know that verse, right? Matthew 19:26? We cannot forget the context - Jesus said this after the Rich Young Man rejected the gospel. The disciples asked, "Who can be saved?" Jesus said with man, it's impossible. But with God's power, anything is possible. Anyone can be saved. Even you, even me, even that stubborn friend or family member we have all but lost hope for. This is the hope because of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that salvation has come, the kingdom is here and it IS for everyone!

*Let's Pray*

1 -<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/is-the-kingdom-present-or-future>

2 - <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2018/september/one-on-one-with-cj-davison-on-sharing-gospel-in-america.html>