

## Sermon- Leaning on Scripture to Illuminate the Signs of the Day

Scripture: Acts 2:14-41

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Friends we will continue our journey into the events of the Day of Pentecost for two more Sundays including today. Our focus today will be on Peter's sermon. This was not a preplanned sermon. When the events of Pentecost happened some people in the crowd were in awe and others were coming up with silly speculations. Peter understood clearly what God was doing and wanted to explain it to the gathered Jewish diaspora. So he gets everybody's attention and preaches and this sermon is what we are looking at today.

Now there are some important aspects of this sermon that I want to bring to your attention. When the people saw the signs of Pentecost the crowds had asked the question, "what does this mean?" Now I want to start by pointing out that the crowds we are talking about are mostly all Jewish people. Some of them are inhabitants of Jerusalem while others are Jews who had migrated to the neighboring countries but who returned to Jerusalem for the big festivals. So when Peter speaks to them his goal is to connect the signs and wonders they were observing that day to the Old Testament prophecies that they might have been aware of, but never thought to apply it to what was going on. This by the way is the most important aspect of any sermon. A sermon is supposed to be a portal or a bridge between our present situation to God's Word that speaks for all people and for all time. In this case, Peter proceeds to quote the Joel 2:28-32 prophecy in its complete form. Let me read it for you in full as well.

***In the last days, God says,***

***I will pour out my Spirit on all people.***

***Your sons and daughters will prophesy,***

*your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams.*

***18 Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.***

***19 I will show wonders in the heavens above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood and fire and billows of smoke.***

***20 The sun will be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood  
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.***

***21 And everyone who calls  
on the name of the Lord will be saved***

This prophecy is the strongest indication we have that the Holy Spirit came on all 120 of the disciples gathered in the upper room and not just on the 12 men who were the designated Apostles and held a special place of honor. Now in the Joel prophecy, he foresees this remarkable event in which God pours out His spirit on “all people”, men and women, young and old alike. When that happens they will begin prophesying. That prophesying will be accompanied by wonders seen in the heavens which means the sky and signs on the earth below. But here is the critical piece of this. He says that this will happen in the last days. Peter takes this prophecy and connects all the key things going on in Joel with all the key signs and wonders of the day of Pentecost- the tongues of fire that comes down from the sky, the prophetic speaking of this mixed group of men and women, young and old on the earth. But Joel’s prophecy had also mentioned that this would only happen in the last days. So Peter explains that not only are all the dots connecting making the events of the day of Pentecost, the fulfillment of the Joel prophecy, but he also points out that it means then that we are in the last days. And

when you are in your last days, you better be focused on the things you must do before the end comes.

That brings Peter to the topic of Jesus. Because if you don't know Jesus you are not prepared for the last days. So Peter proceeds to explain. He tells the people that Jesus of Nazareth was the man who they had heard about who did many signs and wonders so that God could show them that Jesus was the man who was "accredited" by God Himself. But in spite of Jesus good words and high endorsement, his listeners along with wicked people had put Jesus to death by nailing him to the cross. However, Jesus was so special that He could not even be held down by death. Because God raised Jesus up from the grave.

And to understand why God did that, Peter points to another scripture. In Ps 16, verse 9 and 10 David had written,

***"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,  
<sup>10</sup> because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful<sup>[b]</sup> one see decay."***

Now Peter assures his audience that David was not referring to himself because he had died and was buried and his grave is still there. But in fact Peter says that David with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was describing what would happen to the Messianic figure who was to come. And because Jesus was this Messiah, He could not remain dead. David was prophetically declaring this fact a 1000 years earlier. And because Jesus was resurrected from the dead, that is the ultimate proof that Jesus was the Messiah that was prophesied alone time ago by King David.

Peter explains that not only did Jesus meet the impossible requirements of being the Messiah but who He is was illuminated by another of David's prophetic Psalms. In Ps 110:1 David wrote these words,

***"The Lord said to my Lord:***

***"Sit at my right hand***

***<sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies***

***a footstool for your feet"***

Now David had many enemies, but Peter argues that David did not ascend to the throne of God! So the words, ***"The Lord said to My Lord..."***, is yet another example of David referring prophetically to the Messiah who he is referring to as "his Lord".

That makes Jesus Christ both "Messiah" and "Lord". And because Jesus Christ is now exalted and seated at the right hand of the heavenly Father, the Father has given Him the Holy Spirit which He then, as promised, poured out on His witnesses. This pouring out is what Peter's listeners have seen and heard.

So Peter very carefully, arguing from Ps 16 and from Ps 110:1 explains that Jesus Christ is both the promised Messiah and Lord who ascended to heaven, and was seated at the exalted place of the right hand of God the Father. There the Father gave Him the Holy Spirit which He then poured out on His witnesses. That pouring out of His spirit was promised by Christ but also prophesied by the prophet Joel. And that is the explanation for the special signs that his listeners had seen and heard.

As you can see Apostle Peter does an amazing job of taking the mysterious sights, sounds and events of the day of Pentecost and demonstrated how they were a fulfillment of Scripture. Peter also explained that Jesus of Nazareth whom he proved to be the long awaited Messiah and Lord was actually nailed to the cross by them and

other evil people. Yet this Lord and Messiah was the One behind the signs and wonders of the Day of Pentecost.

After hearing all this, the crowds were shaken up. You will remember that when all this started, the crowds were asking, ***“what does this mean?”*** Now after hearing Peter, we are told that they were, ***“cut to their heart”***. And the question they were now asking is, ***“brothers, what must we do?”***.

This is the ideal situation for any preacher 😊 A sermon that evokes in his listeners a strong desire to take action in some way. And Peter was ready with his response. He says, ***“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. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”***

I want to just highlight this call to response with how sometimes we have asked people to indicate their commitment to Christ in the West. Because of the impression we have got from watching the big crusades is that, we think that going forward and saying a prayer of receiving Christ is the proper response to the work of Christ in your life. If you look at this sermon or in many places in the rest of the Book of Acts and the Epistles you will see that the proper response to the work of Christ in your life is “repentance and baptism”. The two go hand in hand. Again, what people really do and mean in the deepest selves is not visible to people outside. So we cannot judge and must not judge the validity of someone else’s response to the Gospel. That is for God to judge. But the important thing to note is that when Peter was asked by his listeners who were feeling really convicted about what they should do in response to Christ, he was clear in his response, “repent and be baptized” he said. “For when you do, the Holy Spirit will come on you as well”. And he also said that the promise was valid for them and their whole

family and all those everywhere who upon hearing this message preached to them would respond by repenting and being baptised.

Then Peter urged them all to do these things and be saved from this wicked generation. Now we are told that 3000 people were baptized that day. This you can clearly see was a real amazing move of God considering that they had no broadcasting technology and not even a single mic. So for thousands to hear, so that 3000 could respond in one day itself was a spectacular event.

So what does this mean for us, or the better question would be, what should “we” do now? I am glad you all asked 😊

Let me give you three things to take away from Peter’s sermon. The first take away is this. We have to be so well versed with Scripture that whenever something happens in our world we should be able to run to Scripture to see how it speaks to the situation we are facing. Be it sickness or death, plagues or other disasters, there will always be somewhere in God’s Word that speaks powerfully to your situation. So drink deeply from the well of Scripture. The more we know Scripture versus the more the Holy Spirit has to work with in bringing relevant passages to mind when God needs to speak to us.

Secondly, get to know Christ even better. You see Christ is Messiah which means Anointed One or Saviour. Christ is also Lord. So if He is our Lord and Saviour, it follows then that we should know Christ just for the sake of the relationship but also for the sake of being guided to live our lives according to Christ’s purpose for us.

Thirdly, when we are inviting someone else to respond to the Gospel, they need to know that the only appropriate starting point for them would be to repent of their sins and be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When that happens God will use us and them for his mission and glory.

I pray that we all will grow in our understanding and memorization of Scripture, that we get to know Christ even more and finally that we take the Gospel to the streets so that those whom God has prepared in advance may hear it and repent and be baptized. Let us pray.