

Cut to the Heart

Acts 2:14-41; February 18, 2018

Introduction: Here's where we are headed today. The sermon that I'm about to preach was written roughly 2000 years ago by Peter. It was pretty good. 3000 people got saved. So my goal is just to try not to mess it up. In all seriousness, I don't expect 3000 people to get saved today, but I am praying for at least one. Is today your day to respond to Jesus?

Let me give you a quick fly by of where we're going.

- Peter explicitly covered three separate OT passages and alluded at least to one other.
- As a result, I'm not only preaching Acts 2:14-41, I'm also preaching roughly four other texts (get ready to learn today).
- Now, we're not told how many minutes Peter preached, but I've only got roughly 40 minutes, so we're going to jump in fast and get started.

Context:

- Last week Tanner covered Pentecost. Here's what happened:
 - The 120 or so followers of Jesus were in the upper room praying and waiting for God to send his promised Spirit.
 - As they were praying, God pour out his Spirit and they all began to speak in other tongues.
 - There were in Jerusalem Jews from all over the Roman empire who heard them. What was miraculous was that each of them heard in their own language the mighty works of God.
 - Some asked, "What does this mean?"
 - Others mocked them saying, "They are filled with new wine."

Transition: The crowd's questions to understand what was going on was the initial impetus for Peter's sermon. So let's start with Acts 2:14.

I. The OT Promised the Pouring out of the Spirit (2:14-21).

Read Acts 2:14-16

- At this point, Peter is no longer speaking in tongues but is rather addressing them in his own language.
- He calls them to "give ear to my words." In other words, "listen carefully to what I have to say" (NET).
- He initially corrects a misunderstanding stating, "[In spite of what you think (NET)], these people are not drunk" and gives two reasons to support his point:
 - It's 9am in the morning (2:15).
 - The third hour was equivalent to 9am in the morning.
 - Enough said. Who's drunk at 9am, especially the followers of Jesus?
 - Rather, there's a better explanation

- The OT promised that this would happen (2:16).
 - Peter points to and reads from Joel 2:28-32 and explains rather that it's the pouring out of the Spirit that has led to this miraculous phenomenon of speaking in tongues.

Read Acts 2:17-21 and explain Joel 2:28-32a

- The Context of Joel: Joel, a prophet, pronounced judgment on Israel and the nations but also looked forward to a new messianic age, namely, the “last days” when God would pour out his Spirit and restore his people. Peter sees the “last days” as beginning at Pentecost (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 1:2; James 5:3; 2 Pet. 3:3) though they will continue until Jesus’ return.
- God will “pour out his Spirit”... (cf. 2:33 and 10:45).
 - “Later Jewish interpretation connected the Joel citation to other OT texts that explained the Spirit’s coming in the eschaton, a link that was conceptual in nature (Isa. 32:15; Jer. 31:31-33; Ezek. 34-37, esp. 36:22-32)” (Bock).
- *The Spirit’s distribution will cross all boundaries.*
 - **Gender:** sons and daughters (there are women in the upper room; cf. 1:14).
 - **Age:** young men and old men
 - **Social class:** male servants and female servants
 - Even the lowest of classes will be blessed. Servants and women were two often overlooked groups of people at that time.
 - You may be forgotten by others, but you won’t be forgotten by God.
- *The pouring out of the Spirit will lead to:*
 - **Prophecy**
 - Peter actually repeats the phrase “and they shall prophesy” in 2:18 which was originally in Joel 2:29. He does this to show us where his emphasis was.
 - This large group of 120 people, telling of the mighty works of God in different languages, under the constraint of the Spirit, provides an example of what the OT broadly described as “prophecy” (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26-33).
 - **Visions** (we’ll see these later in Acts)
 - **Dreams** (we’ll see these later in Acts)
- *What about the wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below?*
 - Peter quotes this full prophecy but he doesn’t come back and explain these verses to us. Most likely, from Peter’s point of view, these were things that were still in the future. Most likely, they are probably in the future from our point of view as well. There are a number of passages in Revelation that mention blood (Rev. 6:8; 8:7-8; 9:15; 14:20; 16:3), fire (Rev. 8:5, 7-8, 10) and smoke (Rev. 9:2-3, 17-18; 18:9, 18) concerning the events leading up to the final judgment and the second coming of Jesus. Peter’s point and the point of Joel is that the clock on the “last days” is ticking.
- Why then did Peter quote the entire prophecy? He wanted to get to Joel 2:32 (cf. Acts 2:21).

- “Everyone”
 - At this point, Peter may have had only Jews in his sights, but Paul uses this text later to argue for the universality of the offer of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles (cf. Rom. 10:12-13).
- “Will be saved”
 - “The need for salvation surfaces because of the reality of coming judgment and the accountability that judgment requires” (Bock).
- “The name of the Lord”
 - The “Lord” in the OT is the divine name of God. It is pronounced as *Yahweh* or *Jehovah*. It was a special name that the Jews even considered unpronounceable. That’s why in many of our English versions of the OT “Lord” is in all caps to reflect this.
 - As a result, Peter’s audience would’ve thought the “Lord” referred to the God of Israel, but Peter wanted to make clear the connection between the “Lord” and Jesus, making him the one who saves (cf. 2:36; cf. 4:12). This is clear by the time we get to Acts 2:36 (cf. 7:59; Rom. 10:12-14; 1 Cor. 1:2)” (NT use of the OT).

Summary: Peter begins his sermon explaining the strange behaviors of the believers using Joel 2:28-32 but then seeks to explain the relationship between the pouring out of the Spirit and the identity and work of Jesus Christ. Peter’s primary focus from here on out is further explaining who this “Lord” is in Joel 2:32a.

This is his ultimate point and the point of our the sermon today:

- **Salvation is available to everyone who responds to Jesus, the promised Christ and Lord.** Jesus is the only way.

II. This New Day is Ushered in by Jesus, the promised “Christ” and “Lord” (2:22-36).

Transition: Peter now turns to identify the “Lord” as Jesus of Nazareth. His life, death and resurrection all confirm this reality about him:

Read Acts 2:22-24

1. Jesus’ life demonstrates the presence of God (2:22).

- Jesus’ earthly ministry was definitely full of mighty works, wonders and signs (he healed the sick, the lame, the blind, the deaf; the feeding of the 5000; turning water to wine).

2. Jesus’ death fulfills the wise plan of God (2:23).

- This verse clearly affirms God’s sovereignty over world events and yet human responsibility for evil deeds (though we may not always understand how these two are compatible, this is the teaching of Scripture - Acts 3:13-17; 4:27-28).
- God’s Sovereignty

- God's definite or predetermined plan
- God's foreknowledge
- Human Responsibility
 - "You crucified and killed..."
 - Lawless men is a reference to the Roman soldiers who carried out Jesus' crucifixion.
 - In the end, the Jews and the Romans were guilty of killing Jesus (cf. Acts 3:27). Bock says that the double charge is "emphatic...and made the nation as a whole culpable."
- Statement of Faith on Providence: "God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not in any way to be the author or approver of sin nor to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures."

3. Jesus' resurrection displays the power of God (2:24).

- "Loosing the pangs of death" (ESV) could also be explained by saying, "putting an end to the agony of death" (NAS, NIV).
 - The language used here is sometimes in to refer to the pains of childbirth. As a result, one commentator notes, "The Abyss can no more hold the Redeemer than a pregnant woman can hold the child in her body" (Bock quoted Bertram).
- Death couldn't hold Jesus in its painful grip because of the power, promise and purpose of God.
- In other words, the resurrection displays God's power over death and we know one day he will completely destroy death. Jesus' resurrection is the firstfruit of that day.

Transition: Peter then points to three OT passages (1 strong allusion and 2 explicit quotes) which prepared us to anticipate these things about the coming Christ:

Reads Acts 2:25-31

1. Psalm 16:8-11b (2:25-29, 31)

- Explain the Psalm (25-28).
 - The presence of God causes one's heart to be glad and to live in hope.
 - "Hades" is the Greek equivalent of "Sheol" and though sometimes referring to hell, here it is used to refer to the general place of the dead.
 - To "see corruption" would be to experience or undergo decay (cf. NET, NAS, NIV). To explain further, God would not have let his holy one "remain dead once he had died." "The psalm is thus understood to refer to a person, once dead, not being left in death and suffering the consequent decay of the body" (NT Use of the OT).
 - The "Holy One" is singular, and not plural, pointing to a singular person.
- Peter's Explanation of the Psalm (29).
 - "Patriarch" is another word for "forefather."

- David died and was buried (29). In other words, he did see corruption.

2. Psalm 132:11-12 (2:30)

- David knew, through God's promise, which we call the Davidic Covenant (allusion to Psalm 132:11-12; cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16), that one of his descendants would be enthroned by God and would reign forever (see also Luke 1:32-33).

The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne. If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies that I shall teach them, their sons also forever shall sit on your throne." (Psalm 132:11-12 ESV)

Read Acts 2:32-33

A few conclusions (2:31-33).

- Since David couldn't be talking about himself in these verses (because he died and suffered corruption), he had to be looking beyond himself and speaking prophetically of the one that would come, the Christ, who would not suffer corruption through death (2:31; cf. Ps. 2).
 - This helps us see why Peter chose this Psalm. "...If what happened to Jesus fits what David prophesied in the psalm, then Jesus must be the Messiah" (NT Use of the OT).
 - This is the first time the word "Christ" appears in this passage (and in the Books of Acts).
 - The term "Christ" developed from the OT promised of an "anointed one" and call also interchange with the word "Messiah." When Jesus stepped onto the scene, it had become a technical term referring to the "hoped-for-anointed one," namely, a specific individual" (NET).
 - The point Peter is making is that not only did his flesh lack decay, his entire person was resurrected.
- Peter then looks around and notes that many standing there that day can testify that Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus, therefore, is the one whom David was speaking about in Psalm 16 (2:32).
 - The reference to "witnesses" points back to the command in 1:8 to be "witnesses."
 - Peter's point is that the resurrection isn't an idea the apostles created; neither is it a myth of fabrication. Scripture testifies and we are eye witnesses that it really happened.
 - In fact, it's the resurrection that completely changed their lives. Do you realize that just a month earlier Peter was denying Jesus (3 times). What changed? The resurrection!!!
 - Summary of the argument:
 - 1) The Scriptures say the Messiah will rise from the dead.
 - 2) Jesus rose from the dead.

- 3) Jesus must be the Messiah.
- Jesus, having been raised from the dead...(2:33).
 - Was exalted to the Father's right hand.
 - To be at someone's right hand represents supreme power and authority.
 - Received from the Father the promise of the Spirit.
 - He now exercises his messianic authority by pouring out the gift of the Spirit, that which the audience currently sees and hears.
 - Notice the interactive and differentiated relationships among the three persons of the Trinity.
 - God the Father promises the coming of the Holy Spirit.
 - Jesus receives authority from the Father as the exalted Lord to send the Holy Spirit in this new fullness.
 - The Holy Spirit is poured out on the day of Pentecost.

Read Acts 2:34-36

3. Psalm 110:1 (34-35)

- This verse is one of the most frequently cited OT passages in the NT pointing to the exaltation of Jesus.
- To "make your enemies your footstool" portrays the complete subjugation of your enemies.
- Peter goes here not to just affirm Jesus as sitting at the right hand of God but also to confirm the title of "Lord" to be used of him as well.
- Bock observes that Jesus's sitting in God's presence at his right hand "raises the question of who can sit in God's presence. Who is holy enough to do so? This description of Jesus's position suggests an intimate connection between Jesus and the Father and an equality between them." Indeed, in fact, the term "Lord" clearly pointed to the deity of Jesus.

Peter's final and main point (36):

- As a result, Peter calls them to "know for certain" (ESV), to "know beyond a doubt" (NET), "to be assured of this" (NIV).
 - The term in the Greek is emphatic, strengthening the certainty.
- Jesus is the promised Christ and Lord and you (Jews and Roman soldiers) crucified him.
 - Peter here connects the "Lord" from Joel 2:32 (Acts 2:21) and Psalm 110:1 (Acts 2:34-35).
 - His point: "The Lord on whom one calls for salvation is Jesus, because he is the one mediating God's blessing of the Spirit as a sign of the presence of salvation and the last days" (NET).
- Oh, and by the way, you are the ones who killed him.
 - This point is made to establish their guilt and need for repentance.

III. Everyone who responds to Jesus will be saved (2:37-41).

Read Acts 2:37-41

Transition: As Peter finished his sermon Luke says they people were “cut to the heart.” Another translation says they were “acutely distressed” (NET). Thousands of them, as we will see, came to the conclusion that they were guilty of killing the Jesus, the Lord and Christ, the savior of the world, fully God. They respond by asking, “What shall we do?”

***You can't remain neutral with Jesus. He demands a response. If All of the Scriptures really pointed to Jesus and if he really did raise from the dead (and no one has ever risen like he's risen), this changes everything. How will you respond today?

Peter's answer to how they should respond has three distinct parts:

1. Repent

- To repent means to turn or change directions.
- Later on Peter will save, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (2:40).
 - “Crooked generation” implies that the people are corrupt, sinful and stand under God's judgment. But the good news is that if you acknowledge and turn from your sin to trust in the name of Jesus you can escape the coming judgment (Jesus takes your place).
 - In Peter's particular instance, he is calling them, as Bock notes, “to change direction from the attitudes that led them to crucify Jesus, and look to God through Jesus for forgiveness.”
- From our statement of faith on repentance: “Repentance is a gift of God, wherein a person being by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things.”

2. Be baptized (water baptism)

- This baptism was to be in the “name of Jesus Christ,” showing the authority that Jesus now possesses.
- What is the relationship between baptism and repentance?
 - Acts 2:38 really doesn't expound on the theological relationship between the reality (faith, repentance, salvation) and the symbol (baptism). We must look elsewhere in Scripture to clarify this.
 - In Acts, we often seen repentance preceding baptism (cf. 10:43, 47; 16:30-33).
 - Later in Peter's letter he actually gives us a clarifying statement. 1 Peter 3:21 says, “because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this [Noah being saved from the waters of judgment by the ark], now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience,

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

- In other words, Peter says it is not the act that saves you but the attitude behind it.
- Additionally, as we study the rest of Scripture we see that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
- As a result, we view baptism as the outward sign of an inward change. It’s the going public of what God has done on the inside. The washing of physical water through water baptism is the picture of how are sins are washed away on the inside as we repent and believe in Jesus. Each person is called to express a personal and visible turning to God through water baptism.
- Some of you need to take this step in obedience. Jesus commands you to be baptized and this should be done after conversion (repentance and faith; cf. Matt. 28:18-20). Your next two options are next week (2/25) or April 29.
 - If Peter can baptize 3000 on the same day, we can get you ready by next week.

2:41 tells us that 3000 people “received his word” and were baptized that day. To “receive his word” means to acknowledge and accept the truth of this message.

3. Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Spirit baptism).

- The same Spirit that the 120 received at Pentecost is now available to everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord for salvation.

This good news is available for all (Acts 2:39), though Peter highlights the sovereign work of God in calling people to himself. Peter’s point here isn’t to set limits on this salvation but to highlight God’s gracious initiative in salvation. **The Point: Salvation is available to everyone who responds to Jesus, the promised Christ and Lord.**