

## Peter's Pentecost Sermon Acts 2:14-40

### Introduction

Last week we looked at the coming of the Holy Spirit and the phenomena that accompanied his arrival. As mysterious as the Holy Spirit sometimes seems to us today, no one can say that he came in quietly. His arrival was quite dramatic as it involved the sound of a mighty wind, the appearance of fire, the miraculous speaking of foreign languages by the apostles and those present with them. And as we saw in verse 12, the natural response to these phenomena was for the on-looking multitude to question, "What does this mean?"

This week we are going to look at Peter's sermon that he gives in response to that question. Peter who had, less than 8 weeks prior, **covered** on the fringe of the crowd and **denied** even knowing his Lord three times **now boldly stands** with the other 11 apostles and delivers a powerful sermon.

It's interesting to note that Peter had no idea that he would be preaching that day. His remarks were unprepared and unrehearsed and yet he shows a great proficiency in handling the Word of God as he makes connections between recent events and the Old Testament Scriptures.

I believe this is nothing short of **another manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit** as Peter was given quick, accurate recall of the relevant passages and proper interpretation of those passages.

In fact, the Greek verb behind our English word "addressed" *may* indicate divine speech as it was also the verb used back in verse 4 where the Jesus' followers were given "utterance" of unknown languages.

What Peter experienced here is likely much the same as what many of us have experienced when we are given recall of passages and connections between them that we weren't aware we knew.

The woman who presented the gospel to my wife, Kathy, shared later with Kathy that she had experienced just such support from the Holy Spirit as she said she didn't realize she knew where to find the answers to the questions Kathy was asking until she asked them and that she had actually surprised herself with her ability to smoothly turn right to the relevant passages.

Peter's words that Luke has recorded for us in these verses can be read in around 3 minutes or so. But, in **verse 40** Luke states that Peter used "many other words as he bore witness and continued to exhort them."

So we know that what Luke records here are just the highlights of a longer discourse.

But what he records is very powerful and effective.

As you can see from your note sheets I have broken the passage down into three sections:

I. The **Explanation** of the Phenomena (Verses 14-21)

II. The **Proclamation** of Jesus (Verses 22-36)

III. The **Application** of the Message (Verses 37-40)

Follow along as I read, **verses 14-15** –

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. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

## **I. The Explanation of the Phenomena (14-21)**

Peter does a very wise thing as he takes advantage of the expressed need of the gathered multitude

While witnessing the phenomena they asked, “What does this mean?”

Whether they were asking “What is the cause?” or “What is the significance?” or some combination of the two, Peter saw the opportunity to give an answer that they almost certainly weren’t expecting

He answered their question but in doing so he also told them about Jesus as Messiah and he asked for a commitment from them

Peter’s first sermon in front of at least 3,000 people was quite powerful – especially for a rough former fisherman

### **A. Not drunk (14-15)**

Peter begins by calling on them to give their attention to what he was about to tell them

And then with what appears to be some amount of humor he tells the mockers that the people speaking in foreign languages aren’t drunk

His defense is that it’s only 9am – basically he says they wouldn’t have had time to get drunk yet

And then he refers back to the Old Testament prophet, Joel, to show how the phenomena that they people were witnessing was actually **a fulfillment of prophetic Scripture**

### **B. Fulfillment of Prophetic Scripture (16-21)**

In **verses 16-21** Peter quotes from **Joel 2:28-32** – He writes:

But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

As I pointed out earlier, this was an unplanned sermon on Peter's part

He had no way of knowing that he would be addressing the crowd on this day or of what events would lead to the sermon so he had no way of preparing for it in advance

And yet he was able to recall this passage and make the necessary connection between it and the phenomena of Pentecost

I believe this shows that Peter was prepared - even as he couldn't be sure what he was prepared for

He had spent the past three years travelling with Jesus during his earthly ministry

He had been involved with the 40-days of appearances and teaching by Jesus

Peter had been immersed in the written Word and coached by the Living Word

I believe the same was true of the woman who led Kathy to the Lord

**While the Holy Spirit can certainly give us utterance on his own, I believe he usually works through servants who have immersed themselves in the Word of God and prepared in advance for service**

And there is an intimate connection between being filled with the Spirit and being filled with the Word  
**Colossians 3:16** tells us that the person who is filled with the Word will also have conversation that is filled with the Word

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

As we fill ourselves with God's Word and yield to it we open ourselves up to the filling of the Spirit

Peter did just that

And what he reveals from Joel is that all of what has occurred is according to God's declaration

He says that the last days spoken of by Joel have now arrived - the phenomena are evidence of this fact

**The final age of salvation history began at Pentecost and we are now living in the last days**

The sound of a mighty wind and divided tongues like fire along with supernatural speech showed that God's Spirit had been poured out with liberality

The presence and work of the Holy Spirit was not new - the Spirit being poured out on "all" is new

Of course we must read the word "all" as it was intended

It doesn't mean everyone without regard to salvation

It refers to everyone who is **internally suited to receive him without regard to their outward status**

Peter indicates via Joel that a person's sex doesn't matter, neither does one's age, or their socio/economic status

The Spirit will be poured out on male and female, young and old, and even upon slaves

With the result being that all will prophesy

Prophecy has two aspects

- The **foretelling** of future events - as Joel did
- and **forth-telling** God's Word - as I am doing today

All believers today are considered to be **priests and kings** - we saw this when we looked at **1 Peter 2:9**

But all believers are also **prophets** in that we are all charged and empowered to speak forth the Word of God to others

Jesus gave that commission to his followers in **Matthew 28:20**

Where he said we are to make disciples by teaching them to observe all that he had commanded

Peter's life proved to be a prime example of the truth he reveals here as we will see later on in Acts that he experienced visions and dreams and spoke forth the Word of God boldly

Some scholars see what appears in verses 19-20 as having already happened in the phenomena that occurred at the time of the crucifixion - with the darkening of the sky and so forth

But others believe that these aspects of Joel's prophecy are waiting to occur later as a part of the final days before the Lord returns

The mention of "the day of the Lord" lends support to the second view as that terminology is typically used of the day of judgment

I'm afraid the entire debate on that matter would take us too far afield from our purpose today so we will need to leave it for another time

Then in **verse 21** Peter quotes Joel 2:32 only in part as he stops short of Joel's prophecy of judgment and he ends his quotation on the high note of salvation

Another difference is that Peter changes who is understood by the phrase "the name of the Lord" from God the Father to Jesus of Nazareth

And this provides Peter with a natural segue into his proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah

## **II. The Proclamation of Jesus (22-36)**

Peter begins in **verse 22** with the life and ministry of Jesus

### **A. Jesus' life and ministry (22)**

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—

If he were in a court of law we would say that Peter made an appeal to the facts in evidence

He says that his audience knows what he is telling them is true

And he reminds them of the authenticating miracles of Jesus' earthly ministry among them

Peter uses **three different terms** to describe these miracles

First, he calls them "mighty works" which indicates that they were **a demonstration of God's power**

Second, he calls them "wonders" which shows that they were **intended to arouse the feeling of astonishment** in those who witnessed them

Third, he calls them "signs" which shows that they **embodied spiritual truth**

Miracles by themselves are very weak things and the miracles that Jesus performed during his earthly ministry were not done as ends in and of themselves - they were done to authenticate his ministry and draw people to the truth he preached – the same is true of the Pentecost miracles too by the way

And Peter reveals that God did all of them through Jesus publicly and that this was a well-known fact

Peter didn't need to elaborate on the specifics of the mighty works, wonders, or signs because they were still fresh in the collective memory of the crowd

It took willful, deliberate refusal to admit the divine origin of the miracles in order to avoid what for the deniers was the untenable truth of the divinity of Jesus

And it was this refusal to accept Jesus as divine that led to his crucifixion and Peter turns to this subject next in **verse 23**

### **B. Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (23-32)**

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

In this statement Peter bluntly indicates that his Jewish audience was responsible for the crucifixion

He utters the unvarnished statement that they had "crucified and killed" Jesus

And he points out that their instrument of death was "the hands of lawless men"

Meaning, of course, the Romans who were Gentiles and therefore outside the control of the Mosaic Law

But Peter indicates that this was all done "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God"

Here we see the curious mystery that appears repeatedly in the Bible

Peter simultaneously attributes the crucifixion to both the purpose of God and the sinfulness of men

Both are obviously true and the guilt of man must exist perpetually alongside the sovereignty of God

And just as with Joseph who said to his brothers, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good"

The crucifixion of Jesus which was meant to prove that he wasn't the Messiah actually validated him

Man may have killed Jesus but God brought him back from the dead and in so doing fulfilled another prophecy

Look at **verses 24-32** with me

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 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. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

In **verse 24** Peter makes the statement that it was not possible for death to hold Jesus so God resurrected him from the dead

This indicates a full, eternal return to life and not a resuscitation as we see with Lazarus and others who all had to die again eventually

Then in verse 25 Peter turns his attention to proving that the resurrection of Jesus was in fulfillment of the prophecy of David as found in **Psalms 16:8-11** as shown by the word "for" which indicates a cause

Peter's explanation of Psalm 16 is based on David's tomb which was still in existence and well-known

He uses logic to determine that David could not possibly have been writing about himself

Everyone knew that he *had* indeed died, been buried, remained in the grave, and decayed there

Someone else had to be the subject of the statements to the contrary in order for there to be a literal fulfillment of the prophecy - and that someone had to be the Messiah

When we looked at Psalm 22 this summer we saw David write about the death of the Messiah

Then in **Psalm 132:11** we read how God swore an oath to David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever

And the only way that a Messiah who suffers and dies as shown Psalm 22 can also reign forever as seen in Psalm 132 is if he is raised from the dead

Then in **verse 32** Peter switches from proving the resurrection to proclaiming it as he reveals that he and the 11 men standing with him are witnesses of Jesus having been raised from the dead

**Peter basically says that the Old Testament points to a risen Messiah and they bear witness to Jesus as that risen Messiah**

### **C. Jesus' ascension and glorification (33-36)**

And having been resurrected, Jesus has also ascended to glory as Peter point attests in **verses 33-36** Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

It's only natural once having been told of a resurrected Messiah to ask, "Where is he now and what is he doing?"

Peter anticipates that question and he reveals that Jesus had ascended to be enthroned at the right hand of the father

And he reveals that Jesus having received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father has now poured out the Holy Spirit on his followers resulting in the phenomena that they had witnessed

And Jesus was continuing his ministry that he began on earth through his followers by the Holy Spirit

Once again, Peter turns to a prophetic Psalm of David, **Psalm 110:1**, to show that this was foretold

Perhaps Peter remembered Jesus teaching on the same passage as we see in **Mark 12:35-37** and now saw with clarity that Jesus had to be the "Lord" that David spoke of

Thus far, Peter's message has all the elements of a great message

He has spoken with simplicity and directness

He has supported his contentions with Scripture

And he has spoken about Christ

Now he turns his attention to **the application of the message**

### III. The Application of the Message (37-40)

The first thing we notice is the effect that Peter's message had on his audience in **verse 37**

#### A. Stricken with sorrow

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter's message was successful not only in **convincing their minds** but in **convicting their consciences**

Luke records that the audience was "cut to the heart" by Peter's message

Remember the heart is the inner life, the intellect, the source of motivations and intentions

Clearly they recognized the truth of all that Peter had told them

That Jesus was the Messiah - the hope that they had been longing for - and they had killed him

The reality of their guilt was off the charts

They had not only refused the Messiah they had actually teamed up with the Romans to crucify him

Where could they turn now to find any hope of redemption?

They were clearly convicted of their sin and they were grief-stricken over their situation

But there was more involved in their reaction than mere emotion

They asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Which shows that they sought a solution

We see a similar response to the revelation of sin in the ministry of John the Baptist

In **Luke 3:10-14** we see "the crowds", "tax collectors", and "soldiers" all come to John and ask him the same question, "What shall we do?"

It's the people who ask, "What shall we do?" who are the ones who are most open to being guided toward repentance and forgiveness

True repentance calls for a change of mind and a change in behavior

#### B. Called to repentance

So in **verses 38-39** Peter issues a call to repentance along with a promise

And Peter said to them, "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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."

Peter first tells them that they must repent and that means they must have a change of mind

They must change their minds about who Jesus is - they must truly recognize him as Messiah

They must turn from their rejection of him and embrace him as their Savior who forgives their sins

They must also submit to him as their Lord as demonstrated through the act of baptism

And Peter says that when they do, they will receive the Holy Spirit also - just as they had witnessed others doing that very day

Then Peter reveals that this promise extends to all - Jews and Gentiles - all are included who turn in faith to Christ

Luke concludes with **verse 40** which we looked at before that reveals that what is recorded here is just the highlights of a longer message

## Conclusion

Peter's audience responded strongly and appropriately to his message

They were cut to the heart by it but they didn't stop there

They sought to do something

Peter's exposition of Scripture had shown them their need and they sought a solution

And the church today must do the same

Coming to church has to be about more than joining with God's people and hearing a message

**We must be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit and allow God's Word to change us**

Then, **we must prepare ourselves to be used by God**

Peter didn't know he would be preaching on the day of Pentecost so he couldn't have prepared his message ahead of time

But he had prepared himself ahead of time

Clearly, Peter was steeped in Scripture and consequently the Holy Spirit was able to use him mightily as he made the connections in his mind and gave him the words to say

We must be students of God's Word and that means looking for connections in it and for applications to our lives and the lives and situations of those we encounter

**The church and her people must also be attractive to the outside world**

We must be winsome so that they will flock to us as the crowd did to Jesus' followers at Pentecost

This doesn't mean we need to take the route of the churches that have been labeled "seeker sensitive"

Too often those churches seek to attract by providing an entertainment alternative in the belief that if they can get people through the doors they can present God's Word to them

Unfortunately, they often water down the message so as not to offend those they have drawn and so forsake the role of the church to act as salt and light

Salt stings and purifies while light reveals both truth and error

But I believe the world is really, deep-down looking for something different in the church

Gallup did a survey earlier this year where they asked church attending adults why they went to church

76% of respondents said that they go to church to hear a sermon that accurately taught Scripture

And 75% said that it was very important to hear sermons that were relevant to their life

Imagine that – people want to hear Bible-based sermons that are meaningful!

Peter's message was quite blunt and it didn't make his listeners feel good

He didn't mince any words as he pointed out their guilt and his hearers were cut to the heart

But his message was biblical as he supported all of his points with Scripture

And Peter showed his audience the way to redemption but first he exposed their sins

- We need to seek to be affected by God's Word and expecting it to impact our lives
- We must be constantly preparing ourselves to be used by the Holy Spirit for kingdom-building service
- We must be attractive to the outside world as we show forth a difference that is winsome to them
- And we must constantly present Jesus as the solution to the world's problems

Let's pray