

# The Sermon that Launched the Church

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 03 March 2024

Preacher: Liam O'Brien

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Okay, as you see, we're looking at Acts chapter 2 from verse 12 to 41 in our portion of Scripture today. And I would just like to say you're all welcome.

Glad that you're here. Glad that you have the opportunity, I have the opportunity of looking into the Scriptures. It's been a little bit of a while since I stood in a pulpit, so this might be an interesting experience both for you and for me.

We'll see. All right. So, in Homer's Iliad, we read of Helen of Troy, of whom it was said she had a face that launched a thousand ships.

This morning, we're going to look at something far more significant, the sermon that launched the church. Many times, as the men here bring us to the Word of God, they pick one main thought from the passage they are covering, making the message easier to remember and to meditate on later. However, the passage before us today is so significant that I feel we need to look at the entire passage and what it can teach us. So, let's look to the Lord and see what we can glean from the sermon that launched the church.

[ 1 : 1 6 ] So, we're going to turn to the portion of Scripture today, Acts 2, 12 to 41, and Elisha has graciously agreed to do the reading this morning. So, thanks, Elisha.

So, it's Acts 2, starting in verse 12, which is on page 1093 in the church Bibles.

Starting in verse 12. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, what does this mean? Some, however, made fun of them and said, they have had too much wine.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and addressed the crowd. Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you. Listen carefully to what I say.

These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning. No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. In the days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people.

[ 2 : 2 1 ] Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days.

And they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below. Blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Fellow Israelites, listen to this.

Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. And you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

David said about him, I saw the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand. I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

[ 3 : 3 6 ] My body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead. You will not let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life.

You will fill me with joy in your presence. Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet, and knew that God had promised him an oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, The

Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

[ 4 : 55 ] Peter replied, 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call.

With many other words, he warned them, and he pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation. Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day.

Okay, thank you, Alicia. We've just sung the hymn, Man of Sorrows, What a Name, and if you would allow me a moment, I just want to read one or two verses.

Now the debt is paid, It is paid in full by the precious blood that my Jesus spilled. Now the curse of sin has no hold on me, Whom the Son sets free, O is free indeed.

See the stone is rolled away, Behold the empty tomb. Hallelujah, God be praised, He is risen from the grave. Hallelujah, God be praised, He is risen from the grave.

[ 6 : 18 ] Well, appropriately, it will be the first visible earthly act of this risen, exalted Savior that we will be looking at in our scripture portion today.

The headings in your Bible can be useful in giving an idea of what the following text contains. We just need to be careful in our reading and study not to give huge credence to the headings, because it is a text that's inspired, not the headings.

In the passage before us today, most Bibles will say that verses 14 to 41 is Peter's sermon, and leave it at that. Some will break it at verse 37.

Who is trying to ring me? My daughter. Not now. In this passage before us today, most Bibles will simply say that 14 to 41 is Peter's sermon.

And leave it at that. Some will break it at verse 37 and give the extra heading of the response to Peter's sermon. But this sermon is so much more than just Peter's sermon.

[ 7 : 33 ] This is the sermon that launched the church. Peter, newly filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, has come out of hiding, and now courageously proclaims the gospel of the risen Christ for the first time.

This message comes from his heart. He entreats and pleads with his listeners. He repeatedly asks his listeners to pay attention. Verse 14.

Peter, standing up at the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known unto you, and heed my words. Verse 22.

Men of Israel, hear these words. Verse 29. Men and brethren, let me freely speak to you. In other words, listen, listen, listen.

Peter is letting his audience know that what he has to say is worth listening to. It is worthy of their attention. When we were growing up, both our parents and our teachers emphasized the difference between hearing and heeding.

[ 8 : 48 ] It is possible to hear something, but not heed it. And I'm sure that we could all tell stories of the consequences of not heeding some important instruction.

My dad gave me some specific instructions about putting oil in the family car, which I borrowed for a particular trip.

And you might be able to guess what happened, or more appropriately, what didn't happen. And all I can say is, it was an expensive outcome.

And in my notes, I have a little sad, smiley face, one of those. You get the idea. Anyway, back to Peter. Peter wanted his audience to both hear and to heed.

He expected a response. The message was critically important, and they needed to listen and to act. So listen, listen, listen.

[ 9 : 49 ] But before we dive in, let's step back for a moment to take in the greater context. Three weeks ago, Rob preached on the first part of Acts chapter 1, focusing on verse 8.

And it says, But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. And Rob mentioned that being a witness, you could be a witness in three different ways.

Through our words, our actions, and our attitudes. And I think that most of us would agree that verbally sharing the gospel with others is the most daunting of the three.

When this happens, it will mostly be, for example, a one-to-one conversation, or it may be, on occasion, a time when you share a testimony in front of a group, in front of others.

And all of this can be nerve-wracking and a source of tension. Yes, we can rely on the Holy Spirit, but that doesn't always get rid of the butterflies in the tummy. We could think of many things that could hold us back from sharing our faith verbally as often as we should.

[ 11 : 00 ] For example, fear of what someone might think of us, fear of not getting the message right, and there's probably a host of other roadblocks to effectively sharing the gospel.

Peter, too, may have had fears or doubts. He probably only had a common boy's Torah education, and he was just a fisherman.

He had already shown fear earlier by hiding with the other disciples. So what did Peter do, and what can we do? The answer is to rely on the Holy Spirit.

The Acts of the Apostles can also be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Already in this chapter, we've seen his power demonstrated in an amazing way.

But this will continually be the story throughout the book. For example, he will restrain missionaries from going to certain places, as well as directing them where they should go.

[ 11 : 59 ] He will change the hearts of those bitterly opposed to the gospel. Throughout the book, we will learn that he is the joy of believers, that he is the power to share the message in next-to-impossible situations, and that in all things he can be relied on.

So let me encourage you by sharing this prophecy from the Savior. It's Luke chapter 12, verses 11 and 12. Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

In this portion of scripture today, Peter spends his time both preaching and pleading. And in this sermon that launched the church, it also contains the keys to effectively sharing the gospel.

It would be a good template to tuck away in your brain for when you next need to share your faith.

The work of the Holy Spirit is a given in the book of Acts.

We always need his power. Having the template and the keys described in this portion of Acts may not get rid of the butterflies, but it might give a structure to your thought processes.

[ 13 : 22 ] For something as important as sharing the gospel effectively, then everything helps. So I'm coming to the outline. So let me give you a broad outline of the message, which in turn are the keys to sharing the gospel.

the sermon that launched the church are the four things. Identify with your listeners from verse 12 onwards. Support what you say with scripture, verse 16 and following.

Make it personal, verse 22. And then extend a complete invitation, verse 37, to the end. This is what Peter does in this passage.

And let's trust the Holy Spirit to make it real for us as we seek to learn from this portion of scripture. So, identify with your listeners, verse 12 and following.

The first key is to identify with your listeners. The art of persuasion begins with letting your audience, be it one or many, know that you're aware of their situation and can identify with it.

[ 14 : 36 ] Have you been in the same circumstances? Do you share things in common? Let me give you an example of how this worked for me once. Many years ago, as part of a door-to-door visitation program, I met a Muslim man named Ali.

Ali. In contrast to the usual uninterested response that we got, Ali invited us back repeatedly, on and off, over a period of several months because he had an interest in the scriptures.

To engage more fully with Ali, I made it my business to seriously look into the Quran. In as much as I could, I wanted to enter his world.

Our time with Ali came to a natural end, but when it came, I was quoting the Quran and Ali was quoting the scriptures. I was convinced, I am convinced, the connection was extended for as long as it was because I showed an interest and respect for his world.

It was an amazing experience. God can do great things. So let's get back to Peter. He is with 120 disciples and in front of him, as verse 5 says, there is a crowd of devout men from every nation under heaven.

[16:00] And verse 6 says, they're confused. And we can see that they're amazed at the disciples speaking their own native language and probably, as is often the case, a minority of that devout crowd who are sneering and mocking about the disciples imbibing new wine.

And interestingly, the word for new wine is, wait for it, glucose. Have you ever had your younger children come home from a birthday party and you know they've had too much sugar and when they arrive in the door, they're wired?

Well, I guess in this particular portion of scripture, it's the adults that are wired. And this is what Peter is facing. Anyway, Peter is facing a chaotic situation.

He wants to get to the key idea found in verse 36. Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

That statement in any other circumstance would be explosive. Joseph. So what does he do? He begins by identifying with his listeners.

[17:26] He first indirectly reminds them that it's Pentecost. What's Pentecost? It is the end of the wheat harvest. Fifty days after Passover, when all Jewish men were to appear before God in Jerusalem.

It is basically the harvest festival, a time of rejoicing. So Peter identifies with his listeners and begins to deflect the confusion and the mockery of the crowd by cracking a joke.

As one translation puts it, these people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o'clock in the morning is much too early for that. He is using humor and his knowledge of Pentecost and is basically saying, this is Pentecost, my friends.

When we don't eat or drink much in the morning, it's only 9 a.m., much too early for any of that kind of behavior. By identifying with his listeners, Peter begins the task of overcoming their confusion and possible objections by putting himself in their shoes.

But Peter's task is only just beginning. He has a long road to travel before he gets to verse 36. So what's the next step?

[18:49] Support what you say with Scripture. Peter knows his audience. They are mostly devout Jews and would all be familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures.

In the remainder of his sermon, he takes specific quotations from Joel 2, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110. And in speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit, he makes them realize that these old Scriptures are actually relevant for the period in which they're living.

And not just any time, but this exact day. Notice in verse 17 and 18 how God is doing a new thing. The working of the Holy Spirit is for sons and daughters, young and old, men and women.

No one is excluded. In Old Testament times, the working of the Holy Spirit was confined to prophets, priests, kings, and selected craftsmen.

Now it is for all. Notice what it says. everyone who calls. That's a powerful new concept for these Jews. Peter may be preaching this message, but it is only the Holy Spirit that can make this real in their hearts, as we shall see later in this passage.

[20:08] So where do we go from here? Seeing Scripture fulfilled before their eyes would also lend credibility to Peter's next claim that Jesus, whom they crucified, is the Messiah they've been waiting for for ages past.

And this leads to a whole different message in which Peter makes it personal. We live in an age of relativism with no clear consensus on absolute right and wrong.

It is nothing new as evidenced by the records of the ancient Jewish people who continually spiraled down into doing what was right in their own eyes as recorded, for example, in the book of Judges. Today, people only want to hear only good things about themselves and about God. God is love, becomes the chief focus.

But a person cannot come to saving faith without first acknowledging their personal gift before God and then accepting their personal need for redemption. And here, that's why there's a picture of a courtroom on this slide and the need to make it personal.

[21:24] Spurgeon is accorded as saying, it is idle to attempt to heal those who are not wounded, to attempt to clothe those who are never being stripped, and to make those rich who have never realized their poverty.

So let's start with the bad news. Peter had no politically correct message for his Jewish audience. He tells it like it is.

Jesus is the promised Messiah. He was sent by God. You killed him. That wasn't exactly politically correct, was it?

As it says in verse 22, men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God, to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know, him being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified and put to death.

There is no pulling punches here. But it's not all bad news. There is also good news. Peter offers them hope.

[ 22 : 40 ] Jesus did not stay dead. He is the Messiah. He is alive and still engaged with us through the gift of his spirit. verse 32, God has raised this Jesus life and we are all witnesses of it.

Verse 36, therefore let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. And this is a key verse that I mentioned earlier that was the goal of Peter's preaching.

And the amplified version is interesting. It says, therefore let all of the house of Israel recognize beyond all doubt that God has made him both Lord and Christ, Messiah and Ninted, this Jesus, whom you crucified.

That's pretty hard hitting. But to know we have a risen Savior is a source of immense hope. The bottom line is that sinners need to realize that they are personally accountable to God and they must be personally reconciled to God.

it's not a hope-so situation. When we have the opportunity to speak to others about salvation and it is getting to the point of making it personal, let us show first that God is judge and that we're guilty before him.

[ 24 : 03 ] The good news will be even better then. And so we now come to the final key in this series. extend a complete invitation.

The final key in Peter's sermon is to extend a complete invitation to Christ. There is a clear call to action. This is a close follow-up from the previous key in which we must be clear that the gospel message includes the good and the bad and requires personal accountability to God.

when the crowd asked Peter what they should do, he didn't say just believe that Jesus is the Messiah, a form of easy believism that doesn't teach people that they're accountable for their sin. He said, verse 38, 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. Verse 40, with many other words he warned them and he pleaded with them, save yourselves from this corrupt generation. When it comes down to this final portion of the gospel message, there are three specific calls to action as evidenced by Peter's words. one, repentance, a desire to turn away from their sin.

[ 25 : 27 ] Faith, a turning towards God, trusting in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. And then finally, the third one, fruit, the outcome of their choice demonstrated by baptism, symbolizing new life and by turning from the corrupt society all around them.

You have to turn away and you have to turn towards. Then there is the demonstration that the turning was real. Only God, the Holy Spirit, can effect such changes in their heart and life.

So let's summarize what we've learned today. I love the graphic in this slide. An empty cross and an empty tomb.

salvation. And this is so symbolic of the resurrected Savior. Because Jesus returned to heaven, he could pour out the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And because of the ministry of the Spirit, Peter could give a master class in presenting the gospel message. He identified with his listeners.

[ 26 : 38 ] He brought them to the scriptures. He applied those truths to everyone and he called on each person to respond through repentance and faith evidenced by good fruit.

Does God expect all of us to be able to preach like Peter? Are we somehow missing out on some power of the Holy Spirit if we can't? No, that's not the case.

1 Corinthians 12, verse 7 and verse 11. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. and verse 11, all those are to work of with one and the same Spirit and he distributes to each one just as he determines.

As Rob said in the beginning of this book study, we may witness by word, actions, or attitude directed by the Spirit as he sees fit in each one of us.

But when we do have the opportunity to speak, keep in mind the keys to presenting the gospel as demonstrated by Peter in the sermon that launched the church.

[ 27 : 49 ] Let's bow our heads and pray. Heavenly Father, we just again thank you for the opportunity to come together. We thank you, Lord, for the truth of the gospel message.

And we thank you, Lord, that you equip each and every one of your children to be able to share that message in both deed, action, attitude, our words.

And Father, you've gifted us each one. Some can stand behind a pulpit, others will be terrified. We're all different, we're all your children, we're all equipped.

And whatever situation we find ourselves in, Father, I pray that we will rely upon your Holy Spirit. Help us to be wise in what we say and to trust the outcome to the working of your Spirit.

We know, Father, that we can look to you at all times. We thank you, Lord, for this passage in the book of Acts. There's a lot here and a lot that hasn't been covered. But, Father, you know our hearts, you know what we need, and you know, Lord, that your Holy Spirit will direct us today in the coming days as you seek for each one of us, Lord, to be a witness for you.

[ 29 : 04 ] And we thank you, Lord, for this time in your word, and we give you praise. In Jesus' name, amen.