

The First Gospel Sermon

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome here for this Sunday, May 26, 2024. My name is Kent Dixon, and it's my joy to be the pastor here. So we're continuing in our sermon series, Acts to All the World, and through the series, we're exploring the New Testament book of Acts.

Last week, we considered the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, 10 days after Jesus ascended to heaven. We recognize that the Spirit's arrival fulfilled the promises of Joel and John the Baptist and Jesus himself.

And that the arrival of the Holy Spirit also marked the beginning of a time of judgment, but also of salvation, that had been foretold by Joel and John as well.

We heard about all the miraculous events that happened that day. We also recognized that some people were amazed. Others were confused. And some were even cynical. We recognized all of those kinds of reactions.

And after he explained the meaning of the miraculous events that happened that day, Peter quickly diverted, he diverted the attention of the people who were listening from the miracles to the message.

[1 : 1 4] A message that involved a crucified and risen and exalted Jesus Christ. Do you remember the first sermon you ever heard?

Think about it. If you do remember it, do you remember what it was about? Do you remember what last week's sermon was about? I was a person in the pew not that long ago, remember?

Oh, that was a really good pastor. And zhoo, gone. Were your emotions stirred by that first sermon you heard? Did it impact you?

Did God speak to you through the message in a specific way that resonated with you, that made a difference? Do you remember the preacher? Nope.

One of the most impactful sermons I ever heard? Billy Graham. At a crusade here in Edmonton at Commonwealth Stadium. Crazy. And yes, I'm that old.

[2 : 1 6] So maybe you were too young to have remembered much in that first sermon you heard. Maybe you were distracted by other things. Too hot, too cold, too hungry. Or maybe you would have rather been anywhere else but in a church, in a pew, listening to someone talk.

Or maybe you felt you were listening to someone talk about something to which you couldn't relate. You knew very little about. So most of you know me pretty well right now. I hope, I think.

For better or worse. And you know how much I like information and facts. Right? So I get excited when I learn new stuff. And when I think about things in new ways.

That's just the way I'm wired. So let's consider preaching for a moment. Stay with me. Just as an example, say that you're 50 years old.

Okay? Let's start with that as a baseline. You've attended church religiously, pun intended, every Sunday since you were little. Stay with me. And let's say you began to understand sermons on at least a basic level around 8 years old, roughly.

[3 : 2 4] So that is 42 years of sermons times 52 sermons a year, give or take. That is 2,184 sermons.

You remember them all? Take lots of notes. And that's assuming you were at every service, every week, all year over that time frame. And if you're 70, that's 3,224 sermons.

80, 3,744 sermons. And so on. Exponentially. And let's just say that for argument's sake, that an average sermon length is 30 minutes.

Give or take. Shrewan, was that you? Give or take, right? So if you want to know, I'm around the 30 minute mark average, roughly. So you can start your clock now.

So that's a particularly significant investment of time. So 30 minutes. So listening to 2,184 sermons could add up to 65,520 minutes.

[4 : 33] 1,092 hours. 45.5 days. 6.6 weeks. Or over a month and a half of solid non-stop preaching.

Let that sink in for a minute. So that's potentially a very significant amount of time you, I, all of us, lots of us have invested. Right? So.

Now. Setting that stage. So why am I talking about preaching? The purpose of it. The content of it. As I preach today. Well, it's largely because we're going to be looking at the first gospel sermon this morning.

You ever thought of that? When was it first? When was the gospel first preached? Well, welcome to this morning. Preaching is intended to teach and remind us of God's promises.

Of his plan for humanity as it's revealed in the Bible. It should hopefully both inspire and encourage us in the joys and challenges of our lives.

[5 : 40] It should also remind us that we are sinners in need of a Savior. Does that sound like a good summary of what preaching should be? Preaching should declare that Jesus Christ lived, died, and was resurrected to make a way for us to receive forgiveness of our sin.

Does that all sound familiar? I hope. So preaching should point us to Jesus as the hope of our own resurrection and encourage us to share that truth with others.

Does that also make sense to you? Because Jesus Christ is alive and coming again to judge the living and the dead. And when he comes, God will be with his people and his kingdom will reign forever and ever.

Louder? That is why we exist. This is the truth upon which we are anchored, I hope. So does that summary sound familiar?

It's the message that we know as what? The gospel. Thank you. The gospel. That's the gospel, folks. Right there. And I sincerely hope that you have heard it thousands of times.

[6 : 59] That it has changed your life as it has changed mine. So, let's look at our passage for this morning. If you want to turn to Acts 2, verses 22 to 41, it's a big chunk, but I will read it if you want to listen, or you can grab a Bible from the pew in front of you.

So, Peter says, 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 a 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. My body also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead.

[8 : 13] 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 the 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.

[9 : 32] When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? 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 promises 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.

Acts 2, verses 22 to 41. So you've likely heard this passage before, or parts of it, hopefully. And when you have, have you ever considered the fact that not only was this an early sermon in the history of the Christian church, but Peter's message was the first gospel sermon?

This was the first time, at least the first time we find it recorded in the gospel accounts, that the gospel of Christ was preached, that people were told how to respond to it.

[10:54] See, this is familiar to us. This is old, is good news. And to use the expression, it's old news, right? We know this. But we need to dig in and take a closer look.

So let's start with the sermon itself. What did Peter say? Well, Peter begins his sermon where all sermons should be grounded, at least in some way. Peter begins with Jesus.

Where else would you begin? In Acts 2, verse 22, Peter begins by stating, 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.

Peter proclaims Jesus as a man whose ultimate divine origin was made clear by the miracles he performed. Jesus' divine nature was confirmed and affirmed by God himself.

The miracles Jesus performed were done in the presence of, we've talked about this before, many witnesses, many of whom would have been listening as Peter spoke.

[12:08] Have you ever thought of that? All of these contemporary things that happened would have still been fresh in the minds of his listeners. People saw miracles that Jesus performed while he was alive, and those miracles confirmed his identity as the Messiah and the Son of God.

So continuing in verse 23, we read, and we just heard this a moment ago, 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. Peter reminds his listeners that just as the ministry and miracles were part of God's plan, his death and crucifixion was also predetermined and predestined.

Isaiah 53, 10-12 says, Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer.

And though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days. And the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied.

[13:26] By his knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities, Isaiah says. Therefore, I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors.

For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah and Jesus. So for Peter's listeners, and for us as well, it was their sin.

It was our sin. Have you ever considered that? Our sin is responsible for what Jesus did. What Jesus had to do.

Whether we like it or not, we are all, all of us, are involved in Jesus' death. It's just reality. There was only one way to pay the debt of sin then and into the future, and that was the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But we know, you hear me say this over and over, we know the story didn't end with his death.

Peter says in Acts 2, verse 24, 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.

[14:54] So, so far in this sermon, as we've looked at Peter's sermon, not this sermon, but that sermon, so far, Peter's powerfully and effectively presented Jesus as a good man who was crucified, who was raised from the dead, who was confirmed and declared to be the Messiah and is now exalted as both Lord and Christ.

Jesus was then and is still the Son of God. So as it should be with any sermon, there should be a desired change.

There should be an impact that happens with listeners. And that's not just that sermon, but this sermon ideally too. A sermon should not be, some of you have heard me rant about this.

A sermon should not be, must not be, simply a nice talk. Shouldn't simply be something that is intended to make people feel good about themselves. To pat them on the head and send them on their way with no recognition of the eternal stakes that are at hand.

Is that fair? So now that we've considered the sermon itself, the context, how Peter delivered it, let's see if we can determine how Peter's message was received by his listeners.

[16:11] What was the response? Well, Acts 2 verse 37 says, when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

Cut to the heart. That seems like a pretty deep and significant and intense reaction, doesn't it? Do you ever hear a sermon and feel cut to the heart?

I hope you've heard at least some sermons in your lifetime that have spoken to you deeply, that have helped you to change your perspective, perhaps, reminded you about the things that are truly important in this life and as followers of Jesus.

So we read that Peter's listeners were cut to the heart. So with that reaction, we can likely interpret them as feeling convicted, right? Feeling convicted of their sin in the light of an understanding, a deep understanding, of who Jesus was and is as Messiah and Lord.

But what's really striking there, to me anyway, is that they didn't just fold. They didn't just say, oh, we're so bad, we're terrible, let's feel guilty and that's it.

[17:31] They sought action. They sought to make things right. They were convicted and immediately moved into, but what shall we do? What shall we do?

They asked Peter and the apostles. That should be our response as well. What should we do in light of who Jesus is to us? In light of what he has done for us?

In light of eternity and our calling to introduce other people to Jesus? us. In light of our calling to share God's love for others. What can we do?

What should we do? So don't mishear me there either. I'm not talking about trying to earn or repay what God has done. That's neither possible nor expected.

Being obedient to God's call in our lives is acting on opportunities he brings us to serve him. It's not somehow working for our salvation.

[18:32] Obedience should flow naturally with gratitude and love. Hebrews 5 verse 9 tells us in various English translations that Jesus is the source, the author of our salvation.

What does that mean? Have you ever thought about that? Do we truly understand what it means when scripture refers to Jesus as the author of salvation? We sing about it, right?

That's a familiar lyric that we sing from scripture. It means that everything that is available to us through salvation is because of Jesus.

It's secured by him. It's guaranteed in Jesus. Preacher and theologian Charles Spurgeon, you may know that name, he wrote, he, Jesus, is the designer, the creator, the worker, and the cause of salvation.

By him, salvation has been accomplished. He's the author of salvation in this sense that every blessing comes through him.

[19:45] There's the response. So what's the reply? Having convinced and recognized, you know, having convinced his listeners, for us having recognized how they reacted, his listeners reacted to the message, they were, felt cut to the heart.

They were sincerely seeking what they should do next. So how did the apostles respond? What was their reply? Very short slide. Acts 2, verse 38, and Peter said to them, repent and be baptized. And every one of you in the name of the Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Luke 24, verses 45 to 47, then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and said to them, thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.

And that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem. Peter's listeners were told to repent.

And as we heard in Luke there, repentance was what Jesus wanted his apostles to teach. That's the message he wanted them to deliver. And so as a reminder, to repent essentially means to do differently after.

[21:17] It doesn't mean I'm sorry, do it again. I'm sorry, do it again. I'm sorry, do it again. That is forgiveness, but it's a little thin on our end, right? Repentance means to say, I'm sorry, give me the strength to go a different direction, to do differently after.

Acts 2, verse 38 says, 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.

So Peter and the apostles immediately followed repentance with the directive for them to be baptized. Just as Jesus, we looked at, wanted them to proclaim.

What did Jesus direct them to do? Well, Matthew 28, verse 19. Jesus said, go therefore and make disciples of all nations. This is a familiar verse to you.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It was a directive. Then in Acts 22, verse 16, Luke says, and now why do you wait?

[22 : 28] Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name. There's a progression of steps in the journey here. And the Holy Spirit is promised to all who obey Christ.

Acts 2, verse 39, we heard this this morning, says, for all whom the Lord our God will call. That's who the Holy Spirit is open to, to all whom God will call, whom God has given to those who obey him.

Acts 5, 32. The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey his call and respond. So what's the result? That's now the reply. So what's the result of the sermon?

We read in Acts 2, verse 41, those who accepted his message were baptized. And about 3,000 were added to their number that day.

3,000. Now, I don't know if we can get 3,000 in there, but I'd be happy to try. I'd be happy to create a line.

[23 : 35] You know, we're big Disney fans, right? So, standing, waiting in line for an attraction, I'd like to see a queue that forms here and goes all the way out there. Praise God, that would be awesome.

So, Paul and I talked about this, not the Apostle Paul, the Hey Paul. Paul and I talked about this after, you know, Paul's a retired pastor. We were talking about it after the service last Sunday. Could you imagine baptizing 3,000 people? We're both thinking, how many did you baptize at one time? I've done three, Paul's done two or three. That's a lot, ish.

So, Peter would have been extremely busy, we were talking about it, right? Likely, very wrinkly by the end of his duties there. And even if the Apostles split, we talked about this math too, if the Apostles split the dunking duties, that's still 250 each, that's a lot.

So, regardless of the logistics though, we talked about this last week, that Pentecost was an action-packed day. It was one day. The Holy Spirit came with a rush of wind and tongues of fire.

[24 : 47] And almost immediately after, the gospel of Jesus Christ began to be preached. preached, the fuse was lit that day. It began to be spread to anyone who would listen.

Jesus was proclaimed as crucified, raised, and exalted Lord that day. And 3,000 people immediately responded to the gospel.

Wow. So, the first gospel sermon powerfully conveyed the message. It's three pieces to this message.

Believe in Jesus. Repent of your sin. And be baptized. The power and invitation of that first gospel message is still available today.

So, let's close our time this morning with a prayer of commitment. A prayer of recommitment, if that's helpful. So, pray this with me silently.

[25 : 49] Dear Jesus, I want you to be my first love. Help me to follow you in every moment. I want to commit or recommit my life to you.

Please help me to become the person you want me to be and help me to always live a life that is pleasing to you. I want to be a witness to others of your saving grace and power.

Forgive me when I take back control of my life. I want you to be Lord of my life. Renew my passion to walk more closely with you. You know all my desires and my plans.

Help me to fulfill your unique call and purpose in my life. Renew my heart, Lord, I pray. Fill me with the joy of my salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

Lord, thank you for the hope I have in you. Use my life to bring you glory and honor and praise.

[26 : 55] Thank you, Lord Jesus, for hearing and answering my prayer and it's in your precious and powerful name I pray. Amen.