

An Apostolic, Gospel-Centered Church

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Preacher: Rev. Jonathan St. Clair

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My name is Brian. I'm a member of the Alameda Community Group here at Christchurch. Today's scripture lesson is a reading from the Acts of the Apostles. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice, and addressed the crowd. 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.

[1 : 22] 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,

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?

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.

[3 : 38] Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

All right, good morning. Thank you so much, Brian. Thanks, Arpy. And thanks to Andrew's brother, Nate, for leading us in worship. It's just a wonderful time in the season of Andrew's sabbatical to see so many people just leaning in and helping out.

I do want to just add on to Arpy's announcement before we begin, that we have two congregational meetings a year. One in the fall and one in the spring. And we're going to begin this spring meeting hopefully right around 1145, as soon as we end our service.

We hope that most of you will stick around and learn some good information and just engage with the life of our church family together. Anybody that needs to slip out, we'll let you just kind of quietly slide out after the benediction.

And again, we have Christchurch kids extended to 1230, and we hope, parents, that you'll take advantage of that. If you're a member of the church, we just want to encourage you to know that the reason the session is called, this meeting today is to just help us live out the promises we made as members of this church body, that we promised that we would serve Christ and his church by supporting and participating in this congregation in its service to God and its ministry to others to the best of our ability.

[5 : 21] And we also made promises that we'd promote the unity, purity, and peace of the church. And one of the ways that we can live out these promises we made is to just come to these family gatherings and seek to help build up our church family together.

I want to invite you to turn in your pew Bible. I know we just read the scriptures, but I want to invite you to actually hold a Bible this week. At least one day of the week, you can say you had a real Bible, a real book in my hands.

And you can turn in your pew Bible to page 883. And this sermon is my attempt, having been away at presbytery meetings in Nevada for several days this week, to just unpack this text a little bit for you, page 883.

We've been exploring Acts chapter 1 and 2. And Jesus promised to give the person and the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit to his church. And we're looking today at the first Christian sermon that was ever preached on the day of Pentecost.

We already looked at the opening of Peter's sermon where Peter says, no, actually, we are not drunk. We are not filled with alcoholic spirits. What's happening right now is that we're filled with God's Holy Spirit.

[6 : 37] And now we come to the heart of this first Christian sermon. And we're going to just dive right in. And because we have our meeting today, I'm going to leave verses 38 to 41.

And we'll come back to those next week. But what I want to talk about for a minute is gospel, truth, outside power, heart conviction, and mind change.

Gospel truth, outside power, heart conviction, and mind change. Let's start with gospel truth. So we talked a few weeks ago about at the beginning of Acts chapter 2, Jesus is fulfilling the promise that he made that he pour out the Holy Spirit on his disciples and that he would fill the church with the Holy Spirit.

And it wasn't just one or two leaders that began to speak the gospel truth on the day of Pentecost. We'll remember that the whole congregation of about 120 disciples, when they were filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit enabled all of them to begin to declare God's mighty acts of salvation.

And eventually, one of those 120 steps up to the microphone, his name's Peter. And you'll remember that Peter failed Jesus the most. Now, if I had been the captain of that team, I'd have been like, hey, Peter, you're off the team.

[7 : 59] But that's not how Jesus works. Jesus thought it'd be good for Peter to be the leader and the spokesman of the team as his greatest failure. And Jesus loves empowering failures with the Holy Spirit and transforming them into new people.

And so Peter steps up to the microphone. And we now come to the heart of this first Christian sermon ever preached. And what does Peter say? What does Peter think is essential truth that needs to be communicated?

What does everyone need to hear? Well, Peter says in verse 22, people of Israel, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth. Every good sermon starts and ends there.

Christianity is Christ. Christianity is the person and work of Jesus Christ.

And Peter begins to carefully unpack the history of Jesus in stages. And he says, 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.

[9 : 12] So Peter begins saying, Jesus is a real historical human being. And though Peter will go on and affirm Jesus' divinity, he never does that at the expense of Jesus' humanity.

And this is just what baffles the mind. How can one person be both God and man? How can Jesus be the God-man? But Peter says that's what he is. And if you look at his life, he came and he fed the hungry.

And he healed the sick. And he raised the dead. And he cast out evil. And he forgave people's sins in a way that no one had ever experienced. He came and he made people whole in body and in soul.

He came indicating that he was here to put the world right. And these signs and these wonders that Jesus did in his lifetime, they were God's seal of authenticity, confirming Jesus' authority, confirming that this truly is the Son of God.

This is the one who's come to rule and to reign and to launch the kingdom of God on the earth as it is in heaven. But the gospel is not only about the life of Jesus, it's also about the death of Jesus.

[10 : 25] And so what is Peter's emphasis here? He goes on in verse 23, he says, 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 says, Jesus' crucifixion is attributed equally to the wickedness of human beings and to the eternal purpose of God.

And what that means is that the cross was not an accident. The cross was certainly not a tragedy. No, the cross was a covenant commitment that was made in eternity past by God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

That one of them, Jesus, would come and he would stand in our place. That he would come and bear our sins.

That he would take our curse. That he would die our death. That the judgment and condemnation that we all deserve for breaking God's law of love. And all the debts that we had accumulated to the love that we owed to God and to one another.

[11 : 36] That Jesus would come and take those upon himself. And Peter says, that was the deliberate plan of God. This great exchange. This great substitution that the God-man would take the curse that you deserve so that you could get the blessing that he deserved.

But the gospel doesn't end with the cross of Jesus. Peter goes on and he says in 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.

And then Peter begins quoting from memory. One of those great psalms that all of us should probably just commit to memory like Peter did. Psalm 16.

And why is Peter quoting the scriptures? Because that's what a good sermon is. A good sermon is a feast on the scriptures. And because in this psalm, Psalm 16, Israel's king, David, he wrote many, many centuries before that the body of God's Messiah, Messiah, the body of the Messiah who would come, would not be allowed to remain in a sphere of decay and death, but we would be snatched out of death.

And after quoting Psalm 16, Peter begins to reason with them from the scripture in verses 29 to 32, that the body of King David, who wrote Psalm 16, Peter says his body is right over there in his tomb.

[13 : 14] And all of you can walk right over there and you can go to the tomb of David and you can see that his body is in that tomb. But Peter says if you walk over here to the tomb of Jesus, what will you find?

You'll find that it's empty. You'll find that his body is not there. Why? Because Jesus is the one that King David wrote about in Psalm 16.

Jesus is God's promised royal descendant from the house of David. Jesus is the one that God promised would sit on the throne of David.

And you see, God, Peter wants all these people to know, God, when he makes a promise, he always fulfills his promise. And God was not going to let Jesus be abandoned to the realm of the dead.

God was not going to allow Jesus' body to see decay. And Peter's telling them that what happened to Jesus was part of a sovereignly ordained eternal plan as revealed in the scriptures long ago.

[14 : 28] That God was not going to allow Jesus' ministry and Jesus' work to end at the cross. And in fact, Peter says Jesus was such a righteous person and such a powerful person that Peter says in verse 24, God freed Jesus from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

Death had no permanent power over Jesus and over the body of Jesus. He wants this crowd of people to know that in the resurrection, God actually reversed the human verdict on Jesus. When everybody condemned Jesus, that God reversed that verdict and showed that Jesus' cross was not a defeat. Jesus' cross was a victory. And that in the resurrection, God the Father is publicly declaring that Jesus has actually accomplished the salvation that he came into the world to secure. So let's pause here for just a little bit of application before we move on. Some of you are here and you're exploring Christianity for the first time. And what I want to encourage you to do is to get clarity about this question of whether or not Jesus rose from the dead.

Because absolutely everything hangs upon that. If Jesus is dead, then all of the curiosities and questions you have about Jesus really don't matter that much.

[16:04] You should just move on to another interesting topic and subject. But if Jesus is alive, then you need to deal with him as a matter of utmost importance to your life.

The gospel or the good news is not an abstract affirmation that God is love. Neither is it a vague declaration that God loves you.

The gospel, the good news is that God the Father so loved the world that he gave his crucified yet resurrected son. And God the Father is saving the world through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's the heart of the gospel. And the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, he says, If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

And you are still, if he hasn't been raised, all of us are still in our sins. He says, if only for this life we have hope in Christ, we Christians of all people are the most to be pitied.

[17:10] If Christ has not been raised. But if Christ has been raised, then that must be the turning point of human history. And Peter says, because of God's utterly faithful reliability to the promises that he made to King David, Jesus somehow went through death and he came out the other side thoroughly alive again.

And in his cross and in his resurrection, he dealt a blow, such a blow to human sin. He dealt such a blow to death that neither of these were ever going to recover again.

That's the heart of Christian faith. And Peter's claim is that the one who's been raised from the dead and the one who's poured out God's spirit, that that one is God's Messiah.

That one is the true son and the true heir of King David. That one is the rightful and final king of Israel. And therefore, he is the real Lord and sovereign of this world.

And if you follow Peter's argument, if Jesus is the true Lord of this world, then the only sensible thing to do is to bow down before him. Because he's greater than you.

[18:34] The only rightful thing to do would be to surrender the control of your life to him because he's much better at controlling your life than you are.

He rose from the dead. But here's the second point of application. If you're a Christian and you believe this gospel truth, you've staked your life on this gospel truth, the question for you is have you come to terms with the implications of God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge for your life? Right? If God's plan and foreknowledge included the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross, if the death of God's only beloved son is included in God's plan, then don't you think your troubles and your trials and the testings of your faith might also be included in God's deliberate plan?

You know, God's plan to work out everything for his glory and our good includes all the bad stuff. But it doesn't just include all the bad stuff. It includes all the good stuff too. And what do I mean by that? Well, Peter says Jesus was freed from the agony of death.

[20:05] It was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus. That God raised Jesus to life. And what that means, if that's true, then that is not just God's deliberate plan for Jesus.

It's God's deliberate plan for all who put their trust in Jesus. You see, Jesus, Peter says, Jesus has a new body. He's the first bit of material reality to be glorified.

But more than that, he's the prototype of your resurrection. He's the preview of coming attractions for what God intends to do for you. And if you believe that, then you live completely differently than the rest of the world.

How many of us are living with fear? How many of us are living without hope? And without confidence? Peter's saying, God's deliberate plan for you, you may not know God's plan for you five years from now or ten years from now, but God's deliberate plan for you a hundred years from now, a thousand years from now, a million years from now, is to do for you what he did for Jesus.

And if that's true, we would have no fear. We would have hope. We would live with confidence.

That's the gospel truth.

[21:30] You with me? All right, cool. Gospel truth. Let's talk about outside power. There's gospel truth, but there's also outside power.

What does Peter say happened to Jesus after he was raised from the dead? Verse 32, Peter says, God raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

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. And notice those verbs. They're present active, that Jesus has received the Holy Spirit.

Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit. Peter's not talking about, merely about the historical Jesus. He's talking about the contemporary Christ. Right?

That the one who lived and died and rose is also the one who lives and reigns and saves today. That God raised Jesus from this place of cursedness, and he exalted Jesus to this position of supreme honor and absolute authority.

[22 : 34] And there he sits on God's throne to govern over our lives and to govern over all of created reality. And from that place, Jesus pours out the Father's limitless supply of the Holy Spirit.

And notice where the Holy Spirit is coming from. The disciples experience something that's coming into them from outside of them. And this is not an emotional experience that they're having.

It's not a psychological experience that's arising from within them, from the inside. No. The Holy Spirit is coming into them, not just from outside of themselves.

The Holy Spirit is coming into them from outside of this world. Divine power, Peter says, is coming into them from the triune God.

From the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Shoo! Down into the church. Heavenly power from outside of this world is coming down into their minds, and into their hearts, and into their bodies, and into their souls, and into their lives.

[23 : 43] Verse 33, again, 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.

And why is this important? Because our culture says that our problems come from outside of us, and that inside we have what it takes to solve them.

And that's the exact opposite message of Christianity. Christianity says that your main problem comes from inside of you. And that out there, beyond yourself and beyond this world, God has the power to give you what you need to be saved.

Christianity says that your deepest problem is that you are all about you. Your deepest problem is that you are homo incurvatus in se. You are a human being turned in upon yourself.

You are a self-centered person. And we're living in a world where people are bumping into one another all the time, thinking that I'm the center of the universe. No, I'm the center of the universe.

[24 : 52] And when you get married couples together doing that, when you get nations doing that, you've got a lot of conflict. You've got war. And that's why Peter's saying, you need a power, not from inside of you or inside of this world, you need a power that's outside of this world, that's from God himself, from God in heaven coming down into you.

Do we get that? So you've got to have the gospel truth of what God's done in Jesus, but you've got to have outside power that comes from the Holy Spirit. And then Peter goes on and he begins to talk about heart conviction.

Heart conviction. Listen to what he says in verse 36. let all Israel be assured of this, that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

And when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do? Now, I don't know if we have any cardiologists in the room, but if you go to your cardiologist and your cardiologist is, begins to warn you and your cardiologist begins to plead with you and saying to you that I'm sorry to tell you, but we've got to go into your heart.

We, we're going to, we're going to have to cut into your heart. You would do well not to ignore your cardiologist, right? You would do well rather to say to your cardiologist, what shall I do?

[26 : 30] What, what do you want to do to me? Well, spiritually speaking, our cardiologist with a capital C wants to come in and do work on our heart, right?

He doesn't just want to come in and do a cath and, and open up a blocked artery. He doesn't just want to open up our chest and get in to deal with, you know, heart disease or heart failure.

He wants to get into the depths of who we are. And, you know, in this text, Peter, Peter is loving the patients that he's working on, right?

He, he, he wants their hearts to be healthy. He wants them to live. And so he's speaking to them and he's, he's working on them surgically to cut their heart.

To be cut to the heart is a deeply existential experience where we come under the conviction of the truth of God's gospel and we come under the power of God's spirit.

[27 : 35] And I wonder if that's what we expect when we come to church. And I wonder even if it's what we pray for when we, you know, are getting ready on Saturday night to come to church.

I wonder if it's what we ask God for as we're getting up on Sunday morning to come here. Are we looking for him to cut on the heart? Do you think most people would rather hear a message that cuts the heart and convicts the heart?

Or a message that affirms them and says, well, you're just, you're okay just the way you are. But see, if we go home and no one gets cut to the heart, if we go home and no one comes under the conviction of God, if we go home and no one feels called to repentance, then we're doing something wrong.

We're missing out on gospel truth and outside power. But you see, when both of those are present, people are cut. And that's why Peter preaches as he does.

He says in verse 23, he says, this man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. And you, I imagine Peter saying, and you all, you put him to death by nailing him to the cross, but God raised him from the dead.

[28 : 57] See, Peter's pointing out a contrast between our human activity and God's divine activity. That you killed, but God raised.

And there's a conflict there, right? There's a conflict between God's approval and vindication of Jesus, that God is all in on Jesus. And yet, the human beings in this picture are resisting and rejecting Jesus.

And that reveals that they are complicit in a great injustice, a great cosmic miscarriage of justice, a great cosmic travesty of justice.

And friends, this is true of anyone who resists Jesus. This is true of anyone who rejects the one whom God has approved and God has vindicated by raising him from the dead.

Peter wants everybody to know that the greatest of all injustices that you could do is to resist God and resist the one he sent to save you. And so he says in verse 36, therefore, let all Israel be assured of this.

[30 : 11] God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah. God's view of Jesus and your view of Jesus are completely out of alignment.

And that's the problem, Peter says. And when he says that, it says they were, they heard this, they were cut to the heart. And they said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

The enormity of a sense of cosmic guilt begins to overwhelm them and to convict their conscience. And they realize that even now, a divine judgment not only looms over them, a divine judgment looms over the whole world that's in rebellion against God and his son.

And this is so important. Every new generation needs to come under this heart-cutting, conscience-convicting truth that the world we live in is a world that when its creator God came, we crucified him.

And we are involved. We are complicit. We have blood on our hands. If you think you, if you had been there, that you would not have denied Jesus like Peter did, and if you think you wouldn't have betrayed Jesus like Jesus did, or abandoned him like the disciples did, or the, if you had not rejected him as the crowds did, you just don't know your heart, Peter would say.

[31 : 42] You don't know what's in your heart. When I look at my last week, and I look at the ways that I've ignored Jesus, or neglected Jesus, I think about the ways that I've, I've lived as a functional atheist, and relied completely on myself, and my own resources.

When I look at my own hardness of heart, I realize, oh, I probably need to be cut. I probably need God to come get into my heart, and soften me up, and do a work.

And the result was that they, they experienced God cutting on them, out of love. They experienced an intense inner pain, and they realized that we haven't just simply done something wrong.

We haven't just simply broken an impersonal moral law. We've hurt God. We've cut the heart of God. We've abused and mistreated the Son of God.

And they begged for direction. What shall we do? Can anything be done to avert the judgment that God would surely and rightly bring on people who so shamefully mistreated God's Messiah?

[33 : 00] You see, God's word, when it's preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, it pierces hard hearts. And it begins to soften them, and cause them to cry out, and realize their need for mercy, their need for help, their need for divine salvation.

So Peter brings them gospel truth, outside power, heart conviction, and finally, mind change. And again, we'll come back to this next week, verses 38 to 41.

But, there's this desperate question, what shall we do? And Peter's answer is simple and straightforward. He says, in verse 38, Peter replied, repent. It's just as simple as that. Repent. The verb is metaneo. The noun is metanoia. Your noia is your mind.

Metanoia means change your mind. Think differently. If God raised Jesus from the dead, then you need to change your mind about Jesus, and surrender your life to the one that God has approved, and vindicated, by raising him from the dead.

[34 : 20] That if God has made Jesus both Lord and King, then you need to radically change the way that you think, and radically alter the way that you relate to Jesus.

Metaneo is the first and necessary step, the first thing you have to do to become a Christian. But also, it's more than that. Metaneo is this ongoing, repeated thing that you do throughout your Christian life.

When Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany in 1517, this great moment that sparked a revival in the church that had lost its way.

Do you know what his very first of those 95 theses were? He said this. He said, When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, Repent, he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.

Luther is saying that Christianity is about a lifelong, daily, continuously repenting life. Changing your mind.

[35 : 37] Thinking differently. turning away from yourself and turning toward Jesus and God's grace. Repentance is an inward transformation that eventually produces a clear and distinctive outward change of life.

So friends, if you find yourself throughout this week going, what should I do this morning? What should I do tonight? It's the middle of the day.

I'm not sure what I should do. The answer is always metaneo. Repent. Change your mind about God.

Think differently about Jesus. Turn away from yourself and turn your life over to him. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.