

Acts 2:14-41: The First Christian Sermon

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself? The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know as I'm preaching how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Please bow your heads in prayer. Father, Father, it's very easy for the habits of thought of the world to intimidate us, to form us.

And we're not always aware of it, Father. Or if we are aware of it, we sort of try to put it away and pretend it's not nothing. We ask, Father, that you would do a gentle but wonderful work in each of our lives this morning, that you would bring your word deeply into our hearts so that your word will form how we think and our affections and our will and our imaginations and our creativity and our wisdom, that your word will form and direct and guide all of these things. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. So I've mentioned before many times that I became a Christian in grade 12.

And from the time shortly after I became a Christian, probably for about the next 15 years, I had different seasons of quite profound doubt about whether or not Christianity was true.

[2 : 3 6] And came close in many of those times to considering giving up the Christian faith altogether, becoming something else. I struggled with things like how Christianity could be true and evolution and given that evolution seemed to be true. I struggled with questions about science and Christianity.

I struggled with questions about Christianity being true in a world with lots of different religions. I struggled with questions about hell and sexuality and Jesus being the only way.

I struggled with the idea of the universe being really big and earth is very small, so how could God care about us? I struggled with apparent contradictions in the New Testament and the Old Testament, with what the Bible taught about, or appeared to teach about slavery and women.

And then, of course, interwoven throughout all those types of things were times when I was just struggling with, frankly, my own unworthiness and guilt about some of the things I had done and were failing to do as a Christian.

And so for about 15 years, this, by the way, includes when I was ordained. You know, like things like the things in the Bible and the contradictions in the Bible and other apparent contradictions in the Bible, like when you're studying the text very closely, you become aware of things which are there which you'd never noticed before, or teachings which had never struck you that, you know, that way before.

[4 : 07] And then I said my own feelings often of unworthiness and not really having the gospel in my heart. There have been many times over that. It wasn't like I was just one mess for 15 years, but there'd be seasons where these things would be very powerful.

And I'm not boasting or anything like that. And by the way, I'll find out in heaven probably that the reason I got through most of those times, in fact, all of them was probably because somebody was praying for me, and that's what got me through them.

It's one of the reasons why it's really important for us to pray for each other, especially pray for those of us who are in positions of leadership. And in every case, I come to understand better how these different things worked, understand better what the Bible actually said about slavery, and whether in fact there were contradictions, and how to understand Christianity and science.

I've come to think these things through. God gave me wisdom, and I'm sure I'll find out in heaven it was because of people praying. But there was one other consistent thing that kept giving me pause before I gave up on the Christian faith.

And that one consistent thing that kept giving me pause before I gave up on the Christian faith is what's talked about in the text that we're going to look at today. And it wasn't that it was the Bible that said it.

[5 : 28] It wasn't as if I just said, oh, well, the Bible says it, so therefore I'm just going to accept it. But by the way, I think if the Bible, if you're a Christian and the Bible does say it, you should accept it. I think that's just the case.

But when you're in a period of doubt, just because the Bible says it doesn't always necessarily cut it. But what I came back to time and time and time again that helped to ground my search for other answers was what, like, the text that we see today, which is an ancient historical biography, an ancient eyewitness-based history of the early, the first 30 years of the Christian movement, the Jesus movement, there was no other way to account for what happened in Jerusalem and what happened in the ancient world.

There was no better way to account for it than what Peter is going to tell us about right in a couple of minutes. I just kept coming back to that, that once you've studied it and looked into it, there's just no better account.

Everything else just doesn't work. And if it, dang it, if Jesus really did rise from the dead, if he really, if the grave really was empty, and he really did rise from the dead, and he really did appear to people, then there is going to be an answer to those other questions.

And I'm just, this is just my personal testimony, that time and time and time again, and I'm sure in heaven I'll find out that in the midst of my depression and some person was praying for me and that, you know, God put that thought in me, just reminded me that's just the truth.

[7 : 01] Like, there's just no better account for it. So let's look at this today. If you would take your Bibles, some of you, if you have these, I think there's still some of them left if you don't have one. These are a journal, Acts of the Apostles.

And we're going to look at Acts chapter 2, verses 14, to the end of this sermon, or this sort of witness, so to speak.

And just before we start reading it, I mean, I always feel funny when I talk to people and I quote the Bible.

I mean, I don't feel funny. I have to re-say that. But there'd be really good ways to take little clips of what I said and make me look like I'm saying the opposite of what I'm saying, is when I have the opportunity to talk to a person outside the Christian faith about the Bible, or about why I'm a Christian, one of the things I tell them is I said, you know, it looks like this.

It looks like, obviously, a holy book and, you know, and all of that. And this one looks obviously like a very, very, you know, it's like artsy type of thing, nice paper and all of that. But what you need to understand is that what we're looking at today is an eyewitness-based history that talks about...

[8 : 16] So he wrote one book, an eyewitness-based biography of who Jesus was and what he did. And then he immediately wrote another book, which describes approximately the first 30 years of the Jesus movement.

And this eyewitness-based history, and not only is the writer interviewing eyewitnesses, but he himself was an eyewitness for some of the stuff that happens in this history.

And he completed it probably within months of the end of the book. So at the most, it's 30 years away from these early events. But at the smallest, it's just maybe a month or two after the last event in the book.

And so this is first recognized as... This was first recognized as a really good, true history.

And then Christians came to give it an extra status, which is that it's the Bible. So if you're watching this, or if you're struggling with whether you're not... You're going to walk away from the Christian faith. You're sort of going through a period of deconstruction.

[9 : 22] Or if you're watching this and you're sort of curious from the outside, that's... Just begin by that. A very simple thing, that it's an ancient history, eyewitness-based, and in many cases, eyewitness history.

And what's just happened before this in the story is... And last week, I gave the actual dates. There's so many historical references in both Luke and what we now call the Book of Acts that they can date a lot of events in it.

So we know that Jesus was probably born the year 4 or 5 BC, for instance. And we know either that he rose... He was crucified and rose from the dead either the 7th of April, the year 30, or the 3rd of April, 33.

And I think it was the year 33, but it could be either one of them. And so this... What we just saw is what happened a little bit between Jesus' resurrection and his...

Well, the end of that time when he was on earth. And this book gives eyewitness testimony that Jesus had really physically risen from the dead. And then it talks about Jesus ascending into heaven and making particular promises.

[10 : 36] And then it describes the 10-day period where they're praying and they make some decisions. And then what we just looked at last week was a very remarkable event. It's a very public miracle.

It had four particular aspects to it. I mean, that would be eight. So four. Four particular aspects to it. First of all, they're in a room, maybe like this, obviously a bit smaller.

And as they're sitting and praying, all of a sudden they hear a mighty... It sounds like a tornado is in the room. And not only does it sound like there's a tornado in the room, the sound is coming from above down here.

Now, it was... I was thinking about this this week a lot. If that happened to us right now, we'd all be looking at Andrew and think, what's Andrew doing to mess with us?

Because there's a sound system. And that just is a bit of a joke. He figured out some way to rig the sound system so it could sound like there's a rushing mighty wind that comes from up to down. But there's no sound systems back then.

[11 : 39] And so this sound, which is going to be so loud that it's going to draw a huge crowd from outside of the room, there's no reason to understand. The other thing, which I've really been thinking about it this week, is that there was no movement of air in the room.

So it sounded like there's this huge rushing wind coming from above into the room. It's very, very loud. It's so loud that it's going to attract a huge crowd of people to come and try to figure out what's going on.

And they would have also seen that there's no wind. It sounds like there's a tornado or something, or a huge storm, but there's no wind. And that would have been unbelievably puzzling.

And the second aspect of the miracle, which the outside crowd can't see, but the inside, 120-so people, they could have seen one fire appear in the room, and then that one fire separate into individual flames of fire and descend on each person and rest on them.

And then they obviously start to burst out of the room. It's as if these two aspects of the one miracle push them outside of the room. And when they're pushed outside of the room, the third aspect of the miracle is there, that even though they still speak with working-class Galilean accents, they're speaking dozens and dozens and dozens of languages fluently.

[13 : 03] And the whole crowd that's gathered by this point in time, that's the second thing they see. They don't see the thing with the fire, but they see the second thing. And then the fourth thing, the fourth aspect of the miracle, is not only are they speaking in all of these different languages, but they're declaring God's praises with quite great clarity and confidence, a type of clarity and confidence that you would not normally expect for people of their socioeconomic status, which is how we would talk about it today.

And so there's been a big crowd gathered, and they ask the question, what does this mean? Like, what on earth is going on, and what does it mean? And so now our story takes up.

Peter answers that question, what does it mean? And here's how it begins in verse 14. But Peter, standing with the 11, lifted up his voice and addressed them.

So what it is, there's been about 120 people that this has happened to, and they're all sort of there, and there's a huge crowd all around them, but Peter and the 11 others, apostles, they sort of step forward, and as they step forward, Peter's going to be the one who's going to speak.

And here's what he says, 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.

[14 : 24] So just sort of pause there. What I left out in the event before is, so you have the sound of the wind, without any wind. You have these Galileans speaking other languages with Galilean accents.

You have them declaring God's praises. And people are saying, what on earth does it mean? And some people said, well, they're just drunk. Now, so Peter now just dismisses that.

It's a really interesting feature there, and it's actually something that should be very hopeful to us, is there are some people who are just flippant. They're clever with words.

They're quick with words. But they're unserious and flippant. And they'll say things in an unserious, flippant type of way to try to knock you off your feet.

They've been around for 2,000 years, and they're still around today. Not everybody's serious. They might look very serious, and they might have a serious list of degrees, and they might, you know, have everything about them.

[15 : 29] You know, they might have, in our day, you know, the right type of beard and the right type of tattoos and the right type of seriousness and the right type of hair and all of that type of stuff. But underneath all those appearances of seriousness, they're flippant and unserious.

I mean, really? Being drunk accounts for the noise? Like that. So it would be rude to say to such flippant people and laugh at them, although maybe that's what they need is a belly laugh at their expense because they're trying to undercut you.

But it's an unserious explanation of what they've all seen. And so Peter continues then in verse 13, verse 16.

So he said, I'm going to tell you the explanation. I'm going to tell you the meaning and the significance of what you've just all seen. They haven't seen the fire, but they've seen the other three things. In verse 16, it goes like this.

But this was what was uttered through the prophet Joel. So now he's quoting somebody who wrote, nobody knows exactly when Joel was written, but let's say 600 years earlier.

[16 : 34] And, you know, once again, if you're a skeptic or somebody deconstructing your faith, well, just remember what's going on.

Now, it's not as if Joel, Peter just got up one day. You have just 120 people. And all of a sudden, they just seem to start saying to the bystanders, by the way, did you know that the Holy Spirit just fell on us?

And why do I think that? Well, here's this text in Joel. And they go, well, that doesn't really follow. Like, why should we believe that just because you said it? See, here's the thing, and here's where it's easy to become flippant and unserious.

Something has to account for what just happened. Something has to account for it. So Peter's giving an account. There was a flippant, unserious response.

Now Peter's going to give an account. And he begins, he begins by talking about a promise that was made by, Peter's going to say, God made a promise.

[17 : 44] Over 600 years ago. And that promise that he made 600 years ago explains what we just saw. Listen to how he goes. So verse 16, but this was 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. And in those days I will pour out my spirit, and they shall prophesy. And just pause before I go any further.

The language pour out is, it would be as if, it's not just so you pour out a little bit of, it's not like if you, you know what it's like?

It's as if you're three-year-old and you're two-year-old, or you're one-and-a-half-year-old, they come and they ask for some milk. And you get them their sippy cup, and you very carefully, because you're a good mom or a good dad, you know that if you pour this much in the sippy cup, they're just going to throw most of it out.

[18 : 50] So you pour this much in their sippy cup. And that's not what it's being talked about. What it's being talked about is when the three-year-old pours the milk for the one-and-a-half-year-old in the sippy cup.

That's what it's being talked about. And then they pour it, and you know what? It's really fun and cool to see the milk keep filling and falling out of the cup. Like, that's a cool, fun thing for a three-year-old to see.

See, in some way, you know, it was G.K. Chesterton who said that one of the problems that we have understanding the true and living God is that he's too young for us. We get old and grumpy, but God takes delight.

God is the three-year-old who just says, I'm going to pour out the Holy Spirit. I'm just going to keep filling that little sippy cup. It's just going to keep spilling out. That's how I fill up the cup. And we think God has to have all this dignity and everything, and he's like a three-year-old.

He's like a young kid. And so that's the image here. And so that's going to fit, by the way, because the word spirit is also the word for wind and breath. And so there's an automatic tie-in.

[19 : 53] They've just heard this unbelievable windstorm, but not seen any wind. The only thing they've seen other than the sound is that all of a sudden, ordinary Galilean working class and peasant people are speaking in other languages and praising God.

And Peter's going to say, this story, this poem 600 years ago is explaining what has just happened. That's what Peter's saying.

And one of the things, just as another aside, that's so glorious about this is look at it. It says, listen, it doesn't matter if you're a slave or free. It doesn't matter if you're young or old. It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor.

It doesn't matter if you're a male or a female. This is not a promise that's based on social class or skin color or ethnicity or education.

This is something which God is giving to anybody. Now, he's going to give the criteria for it, but it's just this massively, massively generous gift that has nothing to do with the normal ways that we in our culture and every culture value human worth.

[21 : 08] And he continues, verse 19, 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, the moon to blood.

Before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And here's how the quote ends. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And all of the people who are there, they would know that when that quote is made, we don't know when Jewish people stop saying Yahweh.

Now, maybe they do. I have a guy here studying at Cambridge. He's an apologist. Maybe he'll say afterwards, by the way, George, they figured that out one. And I'll correct it next time. But that's what he's saying.

The I am, Yahweh, the great Lord, all who call upon him will be saved. That's what he's saying. And it's really interesting, by the way.

[22 : 11] You know, some of the people that you read who are skeptics will say that you have to understand all of these ancient stories of Jesus and things like the Book of Acts as just a type of poetry or metaphor. They're not meant to be literal.

Well, that might be very convincing, except for the fact that Luke understands the difference between what we see here when he quotes poetry. He knows that we're to understand words like the moon and the sun and all these things being done in a very, very different way than trying to account for the phenomenon that just happened and also to account for what we're going to get to in a moment.

So Luke, so Peter gives this explanation, but the question then is in a sense, well, why did it happen now? Like, what's so special about now?

Or is there anything special about now that God would do something like that now? And so Peter continues, verse 32. 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.

[23 : 21] Now just sort of pause here for a second. Some of you probably remember the story, the ancient story. It's recorded in three of the eyewitness biographies of a group of men who want to bring their paralyzed friend to be healed by Jesus and they can't get through the crowd.

And so they go up onto the roof of the building and probably to the great dismay, I mean, hopefully some of these men who make a hole in the roof were expert roof builders and could fix it later.

We never find that out in this story. But they make a hole in the roof, they lower the man right into where Jesus is for Jesus to heal the man. And Jesus begins by saying, Son, your sins are forgiven.

And of course, that shocks the whole crowd because only God can forgive sins. I can't tell you all of your sins are forgiven on my authority. That's like a complete, that's a crazy talk. That should get you locked up in the Royal Ottawa Hospital.

And so Jesus turns to them and says, I'm just going to ask you a question. Which is easier to say to the paralyzed man, get up and walk, or your sins are forgiven? Well, the answer is that both are impossible.

[24 : 32] And so Jesus says, to show you, to show you that I have the authority to forgive sins. And he says to the man, Son, pick up your bed and go.

And he heals the man. So what Peter is saying here, there's obviously no logical or scientific connection between being able to instantly heal a man of paralysis and being able to forgive sins.

But we all understand at a very, very significant level this whole idea of attestation or authority or evidence. And so what Jesus is saying is the evidence that I have, that I in fact have the authority to forgive sins, is that I can say to this man, pick up your bed and walk.

I can heal you instantly of your paralysis. And he does. See, the same thing is going to be true of the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. If Jesus really did rise from the dead, see, I'm touching now on what helped me in my moments of darkest doubt.

If Jesus really did rise from the dead, if the grave really was empty, then Christianity is true. I might not know in the instant how to connect the Christian faith to evolution or to science or dealing with issues of slavery or the Bible talks about women or hell.

[25 : 56] I might not know in the moment how to solve those particular questions. But if Jesus really did rise from the dead, then it's true. And there's going to be an answer to those things because Christianity is true.

And it's not just true in a way that it now tickles my imagination and my intellect and I can think different things. It's true in a very, very different, a very, very powerful way that, well, Peter's going to get to it in a moment.

It's not just a matter of having different types of thoughts. It's a truth that's addressed to us to completely and utterly change your life. Well, let's see how, so, you know, so when he says in verse 22, you know, that we all know, you guys all knew that Jesus did these miracles.

Some of you even saw the miracles that he did. But then verse 23, this Jesus, the one he just talked about, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. So just sort of pause. Everybody knows that Jesus was crucified in that crowd.

[27 : 06] As I mentioned last week, when, you know, nowadays, I think there was just a man in Oklahoma that was put to death by lethal injection a short while ago, and a very small number of people get to witness that that happens in the bowels of the prison.

But the Romans, when they crucified, they wanted to make it as public as possible, and they did it in a public place, and so everybody knows that Jesus was crucified.

And they know that the Jewish rulers and the Romans were at work in it. But Jesus, Peter adds this other thing. Sort of in the background, the easiest way to understand what Peter's referring to is what happens, some of you might know the story of Joseph and his brothers, Joseph in the many-colored coat.

And so Joseph had this, he was like his father's favorite. He had this many-colored coat, and his brothers, his ten brothers in particular, really resented him. And so one day, they were out, you know, looking after their sheep and doing other types of stuff, and they just got sick and tired of Joseph.

So they actually made this terrible decision. They were going to kill Joseph, and then they decided, why should we kill him? We get no money. We might as well get rid of him and get some money. So they sold Joseph as a slave to wandering nomads.

[28 : 29] Well, in the providence of God, Joseph ends up becoming the second most powerful person in the country of Egypt, which is a huge, powerful empire at that time.

And circumstances, or God's hand, the brothers all eventually have to come to Egypt, and Joseph reveals himself to them, and Joseph reveals that, you know, there's going to be these years of famine and all of that.

And anyway, that Joseph's father and the brothers' father eventually die. And so now Joseph's ten brothers are very worried. The dad has died.

Joseph's the second most powerful person in Egypt. He might just be pissed off that his brothers sold him into slavery. might just be pissed off and might just want to take some vengeance.

So the ten brothers cook up a lie that their dad wanted to make sure that Joseph forgave them. And they go to speak to Joseph. And Joseph sees through the lie.

[29 : 32] And then Joseph, it's in Genesis chapter 50, he gives this very powerful line. He said, listen, I know you meant it for ill. I know you meant to hurt me and do it for ill.

But I know that God used your ill will ultimately for your good. God made something good come out of that. And that's, Joseph decided he would focus on the good, not the ill.

Peter's making the same type of comment here. He's saying, listen, you folks all were complicit in the death of Jesus upon the cross. But when he says the foreknowledge of God, he's saying, but God knew that and was doing something for your good, even though you meant something terribly evil for him.

So you did mean something evil for Jesus, but God and Jesus meant something good for you. and they were using the evil that you did for something good for you.

You see within this the mystery of God's great love and compassion. And then it continues, verse 24.

[30 : 50] I have to watch the time. God raised Jesus up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Now, David wants to bring this all home and he wants to bring home to them. Well, let's see what he does. He quotes a psalm.

For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I might 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.

And so, Peter's going to point out that this psalm of David implies that David dies but doesn't die. He ends up being alive. And so, Peter continues, verse 29.

[31 : 47] 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. In other words, his body did see corruption. David can't be talking about himself.

Being therefore a prophet, verse 30, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on the 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. Now, pause.

What's happening is that Peter is explaining what just happened with the sound and the speaking in tongues. But he's now saying the reason this all happened is because of some horrendous event that had happened 50 days earlier, 53 days earlier, when Jesus died upon the cross.

But 50 days ago, three days after that, he appears alive. Now, we're going to see in a moment that 3,000 people give their life to Christ at the end of this talk.

[33 : 06] And this was the thing which I came back to time and time and time and time again. How can you explain, like, if they were to go ahead and said, we're going to say in a moment, God raised Jesus from the dead.

And they could all just laugh and say, listen, it's going to really stink after 50 days, but we can show you where the body is. Like, we can open up the tomb. We can show you where the body is. Or we can tell you, yeah, it was stolen.

Some of you who go to Jerusalem at that time of the year, you know that the ground's all very, very, very hard. And the town is crowded. You just can't get rid of a body that's going to stink to high heaven and not have anybody notice it.

And all they have to do is just show you where the corpse is. And then they can just laugh at these people and say, you guys are moronic fools to believe anything like that. But the grave is empty and they can't find the body.

And 3,000 people give their lives to Christ. 3,000 people. Because you see, what Peter is doing here is he's showing that the death and resurrection of Jesus isn't just this sort of weird one-off thing that God did, but it's connected to these larger stories and these larger promises.

[34 : 21] And these larger stories and these larger promises are true. And if Jesus really did die upon the cross and he really did rise from the dead, then these larger overarching stories are true.

It means there is a God who does exist. It means that if you call upon the name of the Lord, you will be saved. That you can know that. that the language of calling upon the name of the Lord to be saved means there is going to be a final judgment.

You will be judged for what you've done and if you've spent your entire life turning your back on God, at the end of the age, God will say, well, your will be done and your will has been to completely and utterly disregard God and as I've talked about in other places, the result is that, well, that you spend an eternity away from God.

It means that death becomes your shepherd. It means that in a sense an eternal decomposition and falling apart of yourself, that that's your fate and you can be saved by it not because of anything good, not because you're upper class, not because you're male, not because you're female, not because you're African or Jewish or heterosexual or homosexual or trans or none of those things are of any virtue.

The only thing that works is you call upon the name of the Lord and you will be saved. And who is the Lord? It's the Lord Jesus Christ. This man that you crucified because at the end of the day, who cares about one guy?

[35 : 53] We're just like, and you do something evil, but God takes that evil that you do and he does this remarkable thing that you can be saved and he's going to describe what that means.

Look at verse 33. I'm just going to skip down to verse 36. There's another scripture quote about the exaltation of Jesus.

Peter goes, let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. Remember he quoted from Joel, all who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

So the crowd, now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do? 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 give, you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord, our God, calls to himself.

And with many other words, he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation. So those who received his word were baptized and there were added that day about 3,000 souls.

[37 : 12] What else can account for the fact that within 30 years of the death and resurrection of Jesus, there were tens and tens of thousands of Christians and there were Christians even in Europe and throughout the Middle East and what we now know of as Northern Africa.

What else can account for this remarkable thing other than the true death and resurrection of Jesus, that the grave really was empty and that something like what is just also here being accounted for, the gift of the Holy Spirit, is true.

And it's not just something now that means I have to change how I think, but it does mean you have to change how you think. It's going to change how you think about human beings and human values and justice and right and wrong.

And I could go into this story about there's something in this story which profoundly critiques critical race theory. That would be a whole other talk. It's a profound rejection of critical race theory at a very significant level.

Not the... It actually subverts critical race theory but fulfills it. The fulfillment of critical race theory is this profound equality.

[38 : 31] That's what critical race theory desires. and you get that desire in the description of Joel that it's for slaves and it's for the... and for slave owners and it's...

and it's for people of all different language groups and all of these things that critical race theory longs for is fulfilled in this but there's a profound rejection of the whole understanding of race and power structures which are all here and on and on and on and on and on.

There's all these things that are going to change... have to change the way you think or start to change the way you think but the bottom line is this. We human beings struggle with whether or not when we do wrong we all have this intrinsic sense that there's not just something that we've done wrong but there's some...

and maybe the other person will forgive us but there's this other sense that there's something more to forgiveness and... and what that is is an echo an intuition that there is a God who's involved in every wrongdoing that when you do something wrong it's not just against the person it's not just against the animal you can do wrong things to animals it's not just the creation because you can do wrong things to the creation that there's...

that God is involved in that act of wrongness and what we crave is forgiveness to be free but we also ultimately crave forgiveness from God and that's why Jesus died on the cross it's not just so we can think about science and evolution and critical race theory and the dignity and the worth of women and children and the unborn in a different way and understand their full dignity and worth it's this profound message that you can be saved that when you're in periods of darkness and depression and despair that's not going to be the final word about you when you put your faith and trust in Jesus the final word about you is that you've been saved that God has forgiven all your sins that he's given you the Holy Spirit to live within you that you have been made new you might not feel it but from God's perspective you've been made new he's received you to himself you now belong and own to him and he will never let you go you've been saved and it's true it's not like Santa Claus or the great pumpkin it's true it happened in history and you can be flippant and clever and give unserious incurious answers to all of these things but if you press into it you'll see that this is the truth and it's the truth for you and so the question to each of us as I bring this to the close is are you saved?

[41 : 12] are you saved? and if you're not there's no better time than now to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and ask him to be your Lord and Savior and baptism symbolizes what he does it's a public act but it symbolizes what he does there's three senses of the word baptized one sense is it's a washing you know when in one of the accounts when there's a woman who who wets Jesus' feet with her tears the word for that is there is baptized she baptizes his feet with her tears there's a sense of washing there's also a sense of immersion and which is going to symbolize it's that you know when Jesus washes you away you're clean the image of being immersed is going to be an image of identification with Jesus so he dies your death and he gives you his life and the third image is infusing and that's also the image that this is something that goes in the very center of who you are it's this receiving this news goes right into the center of who you are

Christ through the Holy Spirit infuses all that makes you you and takes all that makes you you your sexuality your money your intellect your creativity your imagination all that makes you you is infused by the Holy Spirit and you are saved and he will never ever ever ever let you go so are you saved if you aren't call in the name of the Lord and he will say yes and make you his own but stand bow our heads in prayer father first of all we confess before you that we don't even like using the word saved we know that that's the world makes fun of us if we use that word but father it's a bible word it's a precious word help us to know father how to talk to people who are curious about the Christian faith or are skeptical and help us to know wise ways to talk but father help us to cling to this profound and beautiful truth that when we put our faith and trust in Jesus that we are saved that I am saved that the final word about me in Christ is not you know be gone but enter in and welcome father help this truth to be true for me and father if there are any here listening or present may your Holy Spirit nudge them to call out to Jesus the Lord Jesus Christ that he will be their Lord and Savior so that they might be saved and we ask all these things and thank all these things in the name of Jesus your Son and our Savior

Amen thank you for so much this is ever sem