

Gift of Gifts

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[0 : 0 0] and even a little bit about his return someday. But as we wrapped up Thursday evening, I got thinking, not that I had the energy for it, but that it would have been nice to have a day six and just talk a little bit about what happened after Jesus' ascension.

And so my message this morning is going to be focused a little bit on that. There's something wonderful and amazing that God did after Jesus ascended into heaven.

So I went back and read that story this week. And I didn't have time to make up slides for the scriptures, so there are Bibles in front of you if you didn't bring yours.

We're going to be in Acts 2 this morning. Acts 2. So Jesus has died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.

God has raised him back to life from the dead. He's been appearing to many of his followers over a period of about 40 days. And then, before their very eyes, Jesus was taken up into heaven.

[1 : 0 4] And not long after that, maybe a week or so, comes the day of Pentecost. It was a Jewish festival that happened every year. And it was something that they were commanded to celebrate in the Old Testament.

And so Jesus has been taken up to heaven. The disciples, they go back from the Mount of Olives after watching that into the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, and then comes Pentecost.

So you can just imagine the city of Jerusalem is filled with people. All these people are coming from all over the world to celebrate this feast. Let's read a little bit of the story in Acts 2.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

[2 : 1 7] Wow. Can you imagine what that would have been like? There they are sitting in this house all together. And then all of a sudden, they hear the sound of a rushing wind inside the house.

So next time we get one of those super windy days here in Davidson, which somehow it seems like we haven't had as many as last year, this year, you can open all your windows and your doors and let that sound fill the house.

And maybe it was something like that. Though it doesn't say that they were actually getting blown around. It was just the sound of wind. And as they're hearing this, they're looking around, and all of a sudden, they see something really strange.

Luke's description is kind of interesting. The dividing of fiery tongues coming to rest or settle on each of them.

Now we're going to have to use your imagination a little bit here. It wasn't actual fire. No one was burned. And it wasn't tongues like this kind of tongue.

[3 : 21] Sometimes we even describe flames of fire as kind of licking up things as they move. It's just kind of the way they move. So use your imagination. Something like fire licking out towards each of them and coming, Luke says, to rest or settle on each one of them.

What a strange sight that must have been. And all this is they're hearing the sound of rushing wind. And Luke tells us what this is. He says in verse 4, All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.

That's what this is. God's Holy Spirit is coming down upon them and entering into them right here in this room.

We might think back to Jesus' baptism and how the Spirit came down from heaven upon him like a dove. Well, it's similar here, but not a dove. Like fiery tongues.

What an amazing thing it must have been to see that and even more to experience that. And Luke tells us that there was a sign that went with this.

[4 : 29] He says, So this would have felt quite strange.

Just like with the prophets in the Old Testament, when God poured out His Spirit on them, many times they would just start speaking. They were saying the things that God's Spirit was giving them to say.

Well, here, the apostles and the believers who are all gathered together in this room begin to do that all at the same time. But interestingly, in this case, it's in a whole variety of languages.

All at the same time. I tried to think of what this would sound like. I'm imagining myself maybe in like a busy international airport with people just chattering away in all different languages.

And interestingly, this all seems to cause quite a stir in the neighborhood. Luke tells us in verse 5, Now there were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

[5 : 38] When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. And utterly amazed, they asked, Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?

Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus in Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs.

We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean? Some, however, made fun of them and said, Ah, they've had too much wine.

So all of this causes quite the stir in the neighborhood. Luke reminds us again that there are people from all over the world who have come to this festival. At some point, the apostles and the believers seem to move outside, and this whole crowd starts to gather.

They're hearing the apostles and the believers speaking in other languages. And I love Luke's description. He uses a few different words, but bewildered, utterly amazed.

[7 : 09] Like, what's going on here? Perplexed. I mean, think about it. Here's a group of at least, probably, well, we know for sure 11, but probably some believers as well.

And from the midst of this group, 15 languages are being spoken at the same time. At least 15, if we count up all the people groups that are described here.

All speaking for God, as God's Spirit gives them words to say. I mean, can you imagine for a moment if you had a megaphone, and you talked into it, and out the other side came what you said, in 15 different languages at the same time.

That's maybe a little bit of an analogy of what's happening here. God is speaking, and this group of people is like that megaphone, and it's coming out in every language that's represented in the crowd there.

Some have suggested that the apostles were just speaking one language, and that the people were all hearing it in their own. But as I read it, this isn't mainly a miracle of hearing.

[8 : 22] This is a miracle of speaking. It says in verse 4, they spoke in other languages. So it probably sounded like quite a racket. No wonder people were so bewildered and perplexed.

No wonder they were amazed. How is it that this bunch of Galileans are able to speak 15 different languages all of a sudden? And these are not all neighboring dialects.

I mean, you've got as far west as Rome, as far east as Persia and Mesopotamia, as far south as Egypt, represented here. And what were these apostles and believers saying in all these different languages?

Verse 11, we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own languages. They were talking about the wonders of God.

It doesn't say exactly what wonders, but maybe something like we were doing at VBS, trying to highlight some of the big things about God and what He has done.

[9 : 27] Probably, most recently, about Jesus. So this wasn't just a bunch of jibber-jabber coming out of their mouths. This was intelligible speech. This was about God and His wonders.

And they realized, some of them, that this was a sign. They said, what does this mean? This is significant. What's going on? But not everybody felt that way.

There were those few who were making fun of them. Probably they were listening in on all the other languages they were hearing and thinking, whoa, like, these guys, they've had a few too many drinks here.

I don't know what they were thinking. This guy's doing his impersonation of the Romans. This guy's doing an impersonation of the Egyptians. Anyways, Peter then stands up and addresses the crowd.

Verse 14. 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.

[10 : 35] 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 last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people. 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.

He quotes a fair bit of what Joel said, the prophet, long ago. We're not going to get into all the details of that, but let's focus for a minute on his main point. Peter's main point here is, listen guys, what you're hearing and seeing in us today, this is what God said would happen a long time ago.

- [11 : 51] It's the fulfillment of prophecy. Long ago, God promised that he would pour out his spirit on people. And that's exactly what you're seeing happening right here, right now, with us.
- It's by his spirit that we are speaking in these other languages about the wonders of God. And now that we've got that all cleared up, let me tell you about Jesus.
- I love the way Peter just rolls right into that. Verse 22. Fellow Israelites, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth. 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. And he just keeps on going.
- [13 : 13] I love this. By the spirit of God, Peter is bald. Just over a month ago, he was cowering in fear. He denied the Lord.
- After Jesus died, he was hiding behind locked doors for fear of the religious leaders. Now, he is proclaiming to the whole crowd, probably the largest crowd he's ever spoken to with such boldness and passion.
- Let me tell you about Jesus. The first thing he says is that Jesus was accredited by God. That man from Nazareth named Jesus, he's attested by God.
- He's verified. He's validated by God. To all of you. In what way? By miracles, wonders, and signs which God performed through him.
- As you know, as you yourselves know. It's like he's saying, you all know what I'm talking about here. You know the things that Jesus did.
- [14 : 25] Some of you even witnessed the things that Jesus did. Maybe some of you even had a taste of the bread that he made at the feeding of the 5,000. And Peter just tells it like it is.
- God himself verified and validated this Jesus of Nazareth by the miracles that God did through him. And what happened with Jesus?
- He says, very pointedly, you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to a cross. What a rebuke.
- Peter's saying, you put to death the one that God attested to, verified, validated as the Messiah.
- But Peter also says this in verse 23. He says, this man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge.
- [15 : 33] In other words, God knew that you would do that even before you did it. More than that, it was part of his deliberate plan Do you hear that?
- He planned that it would go that way before any of it happened. We might be tempted sometimes to look at what happened to Jesus in that last week before he died and think of it as just everything spinning out of control here.
- And God's plan to install Jesus as the king has been foiled, it's ruined. No, says Peter, it's not. This plan was planned all along.
- God's deliberate plan. God is able to bring about his good and perfect purposes and plans even as wicked men do what wicked men do.
- Verse 23 and 24 again. You put him to death by nailing him to the cross, but God raised him from the dead.
- [16 : 43] God said, I love the way that Peter just declares it. He proclaims it. He doesn't say, I want to suggest something for your consideration.

Jesus is alive. No, he declares it as fact, but God raised him from the dead. dead. You have to know, too, that the religious leaders over these past 50 days have been working very hard to silence and squelch anything to do with Jesus rising from the dead.

dead. Well, here Peter just announces it to the whole crowd, not only the locals in Jerusalem, but everybody who's come from all over the place and gathered for the feast.

You can almost see the look on the religious leaders' faces. Oh, stop talking about that Jesus. God raised Jesus of Nazareth from the dead, says Peter.

And then he goes on and he reminds them of what David said by the spirit, which foretold that this would happen. We're not going to go into all the details of that in the next verses here this morning.

[17 : 50] But after quoting from that David's psalm, Peter comes to say this in verse 31. He says, Seeing what was to come, David 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.

Yes. I love that. He just boldly tells the whole crowd what he has witnessed in the past 50 days.

Jesus is alive, not just me, but all of us here are witnesses to it. we saw the empty tomb, we saw and heard the angels there, and we saw Jesus himself alive in the flesh over these past 40 days.

We're witnesses to the fact. Not only that, he says, but we saw Jesus exalted to the right hand of God.

[19 : 07] That word exalted means to lift up, that's exactly what the apostles and the believers who were gathered just a few days ago saw.

They saw Jesus being lifted up into the sky to heaven by God. And it wasn't just a change in location.

Peter says it was a moment of exaltation. It was a moment in which God installed him as king to the highest position of authority, the right hand of God.

Verse 36, he goes on, he says, therefore, let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah, or Lord and Christ.

Christ. It's sometimes easy to lose the significance of that word, Christ. But Christ and Messiah, they both essentially mean the same thing.

[20 : 14] They mean king. As in God's specially chosen and anointed king. So what is Peter saying here?

He's telling them that God has made this Jesus of Nazareth, the same one that you put to death. He has made him to be your new king, the king of Israel.

Well, how does the crowd respond to this? Verse 37, 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 responds, repent, 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. What a response.

[21 : 27] Luke tells us that the people there that day were cut to the heart. Peter's words really sunk in deep. Oh, you mean he is the one.

We killed him. What have we done? What do we do now? The guilt was setting in.

Peter gives him two things to do. First, he says repent. And here it means acknowledge what you have done.

Tell that to God. Confess it. And ask for his forgiveness. Some people have wondered why Peter doesn't just simply tell him repent and believe.

Well, believing is already in the mix here. It's included here. You can't really come to repent sincerely in your heart and acknowledge that you've sinned against God if you don't believe.

[22 : 35] Believing is what happened in that moment when they were cut to the heart. They believed what Peter was saying, that they had really crucified the king God had chosen for them, that he really rose from the dead, that he really had been exalted to the right hand of God.

they already believed. Now Peter's telling them what else they need to do. Now you need to repent. You need to acknowledge what you did to God and ask for his forgiveness.

You need to be baptized in the water, in the name of the Lord, Jesus. Jesus. And I can tell you, in verse 38, he says, for the forgiveness of your sins.

That's sweet, isn't it? Peter's saying, if you repent of your sins in Jesus' name, God will forgive you. Through Christ, God will forgive you.

Can you imagine how that must have felt maybe to someone in the crowd that day who was there shouting, crucify him. and then now has that realization. What have we done?

[23 : 51] God will forgive you. Isn't God a merciful and gracious God? But it gets even better than this.

Forgiveness is wonderful and precious, but God has more to give. Verse 38, repent and be baptized 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. Do you hear that?

God has a very special gift to give to those who repent and believe and have their sins forgiven. the gift is his Holy Spirit.

What is that? Well, it means that God will pour out his Spirit on you. It means that God will give of himself to you.

[24 : 59] That he himself will come to be in you and live with you. So, is this just for the Jewish people of that day?

No. It's for all whom the Lord will call, says Peter. Or we look back to verse 21. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

This gift is for everyone, the gift of God's Spirit. Spirit. Most of us here this morning have done what Peter said, have repented, have believed in the Lord Jesus.

Do you know, if you have, that you have God's Spirit, God himself living in you? Isn't that amazing?

we may not always see or feel his presence, but he is there. And he is the one who is responsible for so much of the good that we enjoy as Christians.

[26 : 10] The Bible tells us that he produces all kinds of good things in us. The fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control.

He guides us. He helps us understand what's true. The Spirit does so much for us, and sometimes I wonder if we just don't take it for granted.

He kind of works behind the scenes in us, invisibly. But maybe you're here and you haven't done that.

You haven't felt cut to the heart about your sins. Maybe you've never asked God to forgive you of your sins and come to that moment and been baptized.

Do you know that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for you too? It's for all who the Lord will call. Do you hear the Lord calling you this morning?

[27 : 15] Peter encourages us to call on the Lord and it's an amazing gift we get.

Not only forgiveness of sins, but God himself to come and live in us and with us forever. And if that's how it is, for those who believe, this changes everything.

It doesn't matter what we're going through. If God is with us and in us, it doesn't matter what we're going through. It makes all the difference. It tips the balance of the scales in our favor for everything.

it's a wonderful gift and thanks be to God for giving of himself, of his spirit. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank you for this last wonder of wonders, gift of gifts, yourself. Thank you that we're not left on our own, that we don't just get forgiveness and then we're on our own, but that you come and live in us.

[28 : 28] I pray that we would know that reality as a church. I pray that we would live in that reality, that we would find strength from you by your spirit, and that you would lead us in the days ahead in this world that we live in.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.