

Promise and Sermon

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[0 : 00] The passage which we're to look at this morning from Acts chapter 2, in which Merv Hansen has just read for us, is really the first sermon in the Christian Church.

The one you're about to hear is the 4,762,56927, approximately. And the first person we meet in St. Luke is St. Luke, the Gentile Greek physician.

We meet him because he, of course, is the author of this book, in which the record of this sermon is established.

He records in a condensed form, no doubt, the sermon preached on the Feast of Pentecost. Now, the Feast of Pentecost is a Jewish feast commemorating the 50 days between the Passover, when the Jews left their captivity in Egypt, and the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Pentecost, which is a Christian celebration, commemorates the 50 days between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the giving, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.

[1 : 48] Well, this sermon was preached with an Aramaic accent, with a Galilean accent, in Aramaic.

It was quoting the Hebrew Bible, and it was passed on to us by a Greek-speaking medical doctor who quotes the Greek Old Testament called the Septuagint, which was the Old Testament translated for the great library of Ptolemy in Egypt in the 3rd century BC.

So, there's a lot of background to this. The Septuagint, and the Hebrew, the Aramaic, and the Greek, and the Galilean accent thrown in.

And, St. Luke introduces Peter, who is the preacher. And he addresses a huge crowd, mostly of Jews and from all over the Mediterranean world.

They were looking with curiosity at the relatively small band of Christian believers who are sharing with them, in their own languages, the mighty acts of God, supremely that of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[3 : 30] The crowd, with sophisticated contempt, accounting for it all by supposing that these people are drunk.

And that's why Peter points out to them that then, as now, heavy drinking is used primarily at the end of the day to try and, at least momentarily, break away from your reality.

These people had found their reality. They weren't trying to break away from it. And that's why, Peter says, they're not drunk. To do what Peter wants to do.

He's trying to explain this phenomenal event, which they are all witnessing, of the speaking in various tongues to the vast crowd in Jerusalem.

He quotes from the prophet Joel, Joel, who lived in the 6th century BC.

[4 : 40] Or in one of those centuries at about that time, is probably more correct. Joel had then prophesied that there would come a time when the Lord would pour out his spirit on his people.

Now, they were used to seeing men, you know, unique and godly men, endowed with God's Holy Spirit and speaking prophetically, even as Joel was.

But Joel said, in his prophetic role, that there would come a time when everybody would be gifted with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit would be poured out on all God's people. Which should account for the fact that we're all here this morning.

Joel had promised that people of all ages and all genders who through the most dreadful circumstances of history, blood on the moon and darkness, these people would come to the great day of the Lord in which everyone who called on the name of the Lord would be saved.

[6 : 19] So, this pouring out of the Spirit was to enable people to endure the impact of history and come finally to the great day of the Lord when, as they called upon the Lord in their need, they

would be saved.

Well, Peter, having quoted Joel, then takes up his sermon and in it he introduces a man accredited by God, which could mean anybody almost.

But he's accredited by God because he was the agent of miracles and wonders and signs. The man came to fulfill God's set purpose and God's accreditation was given to him in that where he went and where he ministered, there were miracles and signs and wonders.

And Peter says, this is the man whom God identified in this way as being from him.

Well, then Peter goes on to explain to them about that man that this man fully accredited by God knew nailed to a cross.

[7 : 53] the wickedness the wickedness of violent men the indifference of passive men the arrogance of self-righteous men all contributed to this man who was accredited by God by in their ignorance nailing him to a cross.

So, Peter sets up the confrontation in which they all are confronted by the man whom as we now know and as they should have been aware this man was the incarnate son of God in him was the incarnation of God the incarnation of beauty the incarnation of truth that incarnation word means in human form beauty and truth and wisdom and love were all incarnated in the man which you Peter says to the crowd which you nailed to the cross well so Peter then explains what happens after that and in order to do that he quotes from King David who lived a thousand years before Christ and quoting from David David said I saw the Lord my heart and tongue rejoiced my body lives in hope I am not abandoned to the grave my body does not suffer decay my end is joy in the presence of God and Peter says this man of a thousand years before Christ said this apparently of himself but Peter says he wasn't talking about himself he couldn't have been because we know where his tomb is we know that he suffered death we know that his his grave is abandoned and that he suffered decay but he says what David is talking about

David remember is the king David the king is talking about another king another king whom David recognized would be in his line in his succession and it was that king Peter says of whom David said when he came to the point of death that king his heart and tongue rejoiced his body lived in hope he was not abandoned to the grave he did not suffer decay and his end was joy in the presence of the Lord so that's that's how Peter construes David's prophecy of a thousand years before now Peter says this is a king

David talking about the ultimate king who would sit on his throne a king Peter says of whom it was impossible that death should ever take him prisoner well God Peter says has made this Jesus that king and he is both our Lord and he is for us the Christ the Messiah so Peter points out the paradox that is at the center of Christian faith and that is that if you put before you the picture of Jesus

[13 : 04] Christ crucified it's on the basis of that that humanity is condemned to eternal death humanity becomes as it were the victim of eternal death because what was true and what was beautiful and what was wise and what was righteous all that was good you have crucified and so when you face the cross you find out who you are that's what happens you look at the cross and don't say they crucified him but you recognize that you crucified him by your life well Peter says and he goes on here that the same cross which is the evidence of our just condemnation get this now

Peter says is also the evidence of God's eternal love the one whom we have crucified becomes the expression of God's love for us and that's that's what what happened and and that's why you see at the heart of the Christian experience is repentance because we share in the death we share our guilt in the death of Christ but there is also forgiveness as we share through the death of Christ the expression of God's deep love for each one of us remember how

Joel had said all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved so the thing that makes it hard about Christianity for most people is that you have to come to the place of your condemnation before the cross of Christ and when you stand in that place of just condemnation you discover the reality of the love of God and your life is no longer a sharing in death but your life is sharing in the risen life of Jesus Christ well how does God give us the risen life of Jesus Christ he as Joel says pours out on us the Holy Spirit and so Jesus is among us not in physical form but in the person of the

Holy Spirit he is the one through whom we pray through whom we rejoice through whom we have fellowship he is the one by which we find our identity not as condemned sinners but as objects of the love of God well the passage goes on and the Holy Spirit is poured out and that Holy Spirit is the evidence of the risen life of Jesus Christ and the passage ends by saying that that when the

crowd heard this they said shout and Peter was there on this occasion to tell them exactly what they would do they would repent and be baptized in the name of

Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit that is share in the risen life of Christ and this promise is for you and it's for your children and it's for all who are far off and all whom the Lord will call and so Luke tells them that Peter with many other words warned them and pleaded with them to save themselves from the corrupt generation to which they had sold their souls and then Luke concludes by saying there were three thousand baptized and added to the number of believers in that day and you see what baptism is is that you come and are given over to death and drowned in the waters of baptism but even being drowned in the waters of baptism to acknowledge your culpability before the crucified

[19 : 05] Christ even as you are drowned in those waters so you are raised by the Holy Spirit to a new life and so baptism isn't a miserable confession of sin it's the claiming of a promise of new life which is yours because the crucified Christ by whom we are condemned is the one through whom God has shown his love for each one of us and Luke ends the passage by saying in these words that they continued in the devoted themselves to the apostles teaching to the fellowship to the breaking of bread and of prayer which is what we're doing this morning as the fellowship the people of God who are saved by his grace alone who are indwelt by his

Holy Spirit we come together to hear the teaching of the apostles concerning the person of Christ and then we are to have fellowship with one another in breaking bread in the communion or around a dinner table by breaking bread and by praying God now in order that you will have a chance to think about this I've asked several people to come and read it for you read the passage from which I've just preached so that you would understand and the way they're going to read it if those people would come up and get hold of a microphone the way we're going to read it is simply Luke is going to say what Luke said in the passage and Peter is going to say what Peter said and Joel is going to say what what Joel said and David is going to say what David said but there's one part that you need to say and because it belongs to the crowd and it comes just

I think it's in verse 36 sorry it's in verse 37 the last phrase in verse 37 says what the crowd said now I'm going to do Peter's part and Felix is going to do Luke's part and Merv is going to do David's part and Edie is going to do who are you going to do Joel's part yeah okay you can follow it then in the same chapter that Merv has read for us so will you just listen again and think of these people who bore testimony on the occasion of this sermon man get us to up with the eleven raise his voice and address the crowd fellow

Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem let me explain this to you listen carefully to what I say these men are not drunk as you suppose it's only nine in the morning now 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 heaven 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 men of Israel 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 set purpose and foreknowledge and you with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him on 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 live in hope because you will not abandon me to the grave nor will you 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 brothers

[25 : 07] I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died was buried his tomb is here to this day he was a prophet and knew that God had promised on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne seeing what was ahead he spoke of the resurrection of Christ that he was not abandoned to the grave nor did his body see decay God has 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 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 Christ when the people heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles 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 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 this message were baptized and about three thousand were added to their number that day they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship to the breaking of the bread and to prayer our God grant that as we partake on the breaking of the bread and are subject to the teaching of the apostles that if we have not been baptized into the death of Christ and shared his resurrection that you will bring us to the place where we have no other longing and we ask in Jesus name amen