

Treasures Jesus together

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 November 2013

Preacher: Steve Jeffrey

[0 : 0 0] Father God, we pray that you would give us the same mind that you have on the Lord Jesus and that we would agree with your assessment of him and that he is Lord and Christ.

I pray, Father, that you would continue to shape us as a church that pursues your glory. And individually, Lord, we ask that you would help us to see a commitment to your church and the impact that it makes for all of eternity, not just for our lives but the lives of others.

And so be with us now as your word is opened. I pray that you would speak to us and challenge where we're at with you and your people. Amen. Edward Lorenz was a mathematician working in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology back in the 1960s on the computer modelling a weather system.

So sorry, Rob, if I get this completely wrong. He devised a program which, once he typed in certain data, could calculate what the subsequent weather pattern was going to be.

One day, he made a mistake. He meant to type in a six-digit number, 0.506127, but instead, he only typed in the first three digits, 0.506.

[1 : 1 5] It was a minute error, only one part in a thousand. As it turns out, the difference in the weather patterns was enormous. It was as if, this is how he describes it, as if a tiny atmospheric disturbance in China, no greater than the beat of a butterfly's wings, a week or so later becoming a Force 12 hurricane in New York, his discovery became known as the butterfly effect.

It explains why our weather forecasters, sorry, Rob, have a difficult time predicting the weather too often in advance or even getting at the weather that we like to have it weekend by weekend.

And so instead of blaming Rob of weather zone, we should blame it on the butterflies in China. That's much better as a Rob blame it on the butterflies in China.

His discovery is that a little thing over here can have a magnifying effect that just grows and grows and grows. And so the term butterfly effect.

Unfortunately, there is no butterfly effects in our lives magnifying the little contribution that we make to the world. On a whole, individual actions on our part are a bit like stones tossed into a very large lake.

[2 : 3 6] We make a splash, but the ripples just die out very quickly. We are remembered by just a few and our contribution to humanity remembered even less. Most of us have to face the fact that we will drop the little pebble of our lives into the turbulent ocean of world events and in no time at all, the surface will bear no trace of our passing.

It's depressing, but it's a fact of life. I know virtually nothing about the younger lives of my grandparents and nothing about my great-grandparents.

It is this purposelessness that is one of the chief anxieties of people. But it doesn't have to be bleak and meaningless. Because the ripples of one life did not die away with death.

The effect of the life and ministry, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus have increased in amplitude and expanded in diameter right across the globe from 2,000 years ago with a bunch of blokes in Galilee.

At the beginning of Acts, we see that Jesus returns to heaven after his resurrection. But his impact and his influence in the world is not over.

[4 : 09] Jesus is still at work in this world and this is what the book of Acts is about and why it is so relevant for us today. The very first sentence in Acts says, in my former book, in my former book, Theophilus, this is Dr. Luke writing, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach.

And the word began there at the beginning of Acts is the word that helps us understand the relevance of this book. What Luke, the author, stresses here is that what Jesus did on earth was the beginning of his doing and his teaching.

Jesus is not done with his work and with his teaching. He's not dead and he's not absent. He's alive and he's present. He's still speaking. He is still working. He is still building his church.

Whenever people come under the authority of his name and receive the forgiveness of sins and trust in his power, his influence continues to spread and increase. And that is what we long to see happen here in Chatswood through this church and around this city and indeed across this world.

And my prayer is that as we go through this commitment series, our annual commitment series here in Acts, Jesus himself will speak and act and give us a glimpse of his purpose for the church and the part that we play in that and therefore the purpose of our lives.

[5 : 36] May such a glimpse of Jesus and his purpose cause us to make a radical commitment to what he is doing to make his name great in this world.

Because in the end, it's all about Jesus. He is Lord and King and Ruler and Creator and Sustainer and Inheritor of all that is. The ripple impact of Jesus' life and ministry as obscure as he was in first century Palestine has only increased and will continue to increase for all of eternity.

And so we pick up our text today partway through Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. So if you haven't got your Bibles open, turn to Acts chapter 2. We're kicking off at verse 22. The promised Holy Spirit has arrived and a large crowd has gathered to see what the fuss is all about.

You might expect Peter to get up and to preach on the coming of the Spirit, but as Jesus is the focus of Acts, so he's the focus of this sermon. This former coward, Peter, who denied Jesus, stands up in front of more than 3,000 people and says in Acts 2.23, you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death, that's Jesus, by nailing him to the cross.

And again in verse 36, God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. It's pretty strange here, but Peter gets up in front of this crowd of more than 3,000 people and it seems that he's holding them accountable for the death of Jesus.

[7 : 23] On the most part, they weren't even likely there. So how can he say that? It seems a little tad rude, actually.

What he's getting at is that the essence of the crime against Jesus was not the ending of his physical life per se.

It was the rejection of God in Jesus' life. Jesus was handed over to be crucified on the grounds of blasphemy. That is, he claimed to be the Son of God.

He claimed that God had endorsed him as Messiah. And so if a person rejects what Jesus claims, then you vote for blasphemy.

And to vote for blasphemy is to endorse in the depth of your heart the cry of the crowd in front of Pilate, crucify this man.

[8 : 30] And what Peter does with his sermon here is he draws the clearest possible contrast between what the crowd did with Jesus and what God did with Jesus.

And Peter shows us four ways in which God endorses Jesus and the stark contrast between the way God treats Jesus and the way the crowd treats Jesus and by implication the way that we have treated Jesus.

Firstly, God endorsed Jesus by working miracles and signs and wonders through him. Verse 22, 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.

The miracles were God's certification of Jesus. They were God's vote, God's testimony. When Jesus did a miracle it was God's endorsement of Jesus.

and what did the religious leaders do when Jesus said, Lazarus, come out of the tomb and they're standing over there and they're watching a dead man walk out of the tomb, what did they do?

[9 : 52] Okay, guys, huddle, how are we going to kill Jesus? God's endorsement of Jesus and their rejection of Jesus.

Secondly, God endorsed Jesus by planning his death for the sins of all people. Verse 23, 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 to the cross.

God plans Jesus' death, the people plan Jesus' death and the difference between God's plan to crucify Jesus and Pilate and the crowd's plan to crucify Jesus was that Pilate and the crowd were rejecting Jesus as a mere pretender and God was honouring Jesus as the saviour of the world.

God planned the death of Jesus not to disown him or to dishonour him or to reject him but to glorify him as the perfect, flawless lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Thirdly, God endorsed Jesus by raising him from the dead. God's powerful response to their rejection and crucifixion of Jesus is 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.

[11 : 23] So Peter stands before the crowd of 3,000. You crucified him. It's your treatment of Jesus. God raised him from the dead. That's his response.

Fourthly, God endorsed Jesus by exalting him to the right hand and putting all his enemies under his feet. Verses 34 and 35, Peter quotes Psalm 110 to show the significance of Jesus' exaltation.

It says, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. And so this particular endorsement of Jesus, where God takes him and moves into his right hand, exposes the ultimate horror of rejecting Jesus.

In rejecting Jesus, they have rejected the one whom God declared to be the Lord of the universe by exalting him to his right hand.

And so the decisive thrust of Peter's sermon is summed up in verse 36. Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

[12 : 48] God endorsed Jesus as the worker of miracles on earth. God endorsed Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for sins.

God endorsed him as Christ, the Messiah, by raising him from the dead. God endorsed him as the Lord of everything by exalting him all the way to the highest place in the universe and making him supreme over all of his enemies.

And so the crucial issue in this sermon of Peter's is not the rejection or the killing of a man, but the denial of God.

You see, to reject Jesus, is Peter's point here, is in fact to reject God. To vote no to Jesus is to stand in opposition to God. That's the issue. And that is what cut them to the heart.

Peter means for his audience here to feel the clash between their rejection of Jesus and God's acceptance and endorsement of Jesus.

[13 : 59] What matters here ultimately is not that they killed a man, but that they are standing in opposition to God. And this is a shocking thing for these people to hear and extremely hard for them to admit.

Because these 3,000 people have gathered for worship. It is the day of Pentecost. They are religious people that Peter is talking to.

They are moral people. They are worshipping people. But he is telling them that their minds are totally at odds with God. They claim to know God.

They claim to love God and worship God and follow God. But Peter says that they are diametrically opposed to God. And so if we say that we know God, but reject God's endorsement of Jesus, then we don't really know God.

And worse, we're actually against God. And this is what cuts Peter's hearers to the heart.

[15 : 22] They saw for the first time that their zeal for God had actually been a zeal against God.

And so after years of denial and running from God, the question is to Peter, what are we going to do? And Peter's response is twofold in verse 38.

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so they need two things.

They need forgiveness and they need the Holy Spirit. And what we desperately need and what God is willing to give is forgiveness.

We have violated God. We have disobeyed God. And there is only one hope that this God, through the atoning death of his son, might forgive us for our sin against him.

[16 : 30] And so I say to us all here today, worshipping people, as Peter did to verse 4 in verse 40 to the crowd, be saved.

Be saved from this crooked generation. On the basis of God's word, I declare that there is a God who rules the universe. verse. There is a holy law that he has given us, his word that we have trampled all over and ignored.

And in the name of Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness for our sin against God. That is our first need, our primary need, and God in Jesus Christ stands ready to give it to anyone who comes to him in repentance and faith.

Repentance involves turning from any conviction. It's a transformation of the mind. It's a turning away from any conviction about Jesus other than that he is the son of God, crucified, raised, ascended, reigns as Lord and king of the universe.

And that he is the lamb of God who has come to take away the sin of the world. And as Lord and Christ over all that he has made, he expects our allegiance.

[17 : 58] And so we see in verse 41 that about 3,000 people accepted Peter's message and were added to the church in that day.

That's astounding. In chapter 1, verse 15, it says that the believers numbered 120. and now there's 3,120 and 11 apostles.

My goodness, their staff teams are smaller than ours. That's massive growth. 3,120 people have repented of their rejection of God and now have a common focus, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this brings us, now left with 3,120 people, brings us to their second need and our deep second need as well. It's here, our need is to have God himself reign in our lives where sin and ignorance and rebellion used to reign.

Those 3,120 people and those here gathered at St. Paul's Chatswood need wisdom and guidance and love and joy and peace and patience and goodness and self control. We need extraordinary power for the task of living with Christ the Lord.

[19 : 16] We need extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit to pursue any discipline that we call to in commitment series. We need extraordinary power for revealing to this world that Jesus is Lord and Christ.

We need the power of the Spirit for the task of being a new community under the Lordship of Jesus. Notice that the call from Peter in verse 40 and 41 is a call to leave one group.

He says be safe from this corrupt generation. He says leave that group and join this new group the fellowship.

These new converts were brought together through a common salvation into a common devotion. There is no leave the corrupt generation and go and find your own way.

There is no individualism. There is no solo Christianity. There is no consumer Christianity. Even the term I think volunteering at church seems really foreign in this picture of the early church.

[20 : 25] The picture here is not a bunch of poor slaves who have sort of been given a job in some factory somewhere by God.

It's more poor slaves who have been made family members brought into the family business as joint owners and heirs of that business to do the work of their new generous father.

God And there are four things happening in the church where the spirit of God reigns. These believers were devoted, that is, they were seriously, continually, single-mindedly and earnestly pursuing and persisting in four things that are the keys to spiritual growth and maturity.

Have a look at it in verse 42. The first is teaching. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. Under the reign of the Holy Spirit, these new Christians were hungry for the word of God.

Being filled with the spirit and being filled with the word of God go together like peas and carrots. Where the spirit reigns, a love for God's word reigns.

[21 : 37] The backbone of a healthy Christian life is the word of God. 1 Peter 2.2 says, like newborn babes craves pure spiritual milk so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

And so friends, I want to encourage you to read your Bible, to mark it up, to bring it to church. Each of us must make sure that sometimes, somewhere in our week, we are being taught.

We have a core value written up there on our wall that says Christ centered Bible saturation. That's a value. A value is something that we say that we hold deep within us.

It shapes and forms who we are. And the way we know that we actually value that value is that it gets worked out in practice in our commitment to actually reading and studying the word of God.

In other words, don't tell me you hold to that value and tick that box if you shelved your Bible over here somewhere. But let me say that more than study is needed.

[22 : 54] Yes, we want to be a Bible-believing church and saturation of the scriptures, but we want to be a Bible-living church, a Bible-obeying church, not just information being fed into us, but transformation of our life.

The second is fellowship. They devoted themselves to the fellowship, verse 42. Now, this kind of fellowship didn't occur before the day of Pentecost. The Greek word used here isn't even found in the Gospels, and the key idea to it is commonality.

Every time the word is used in the New Testament, it stands or it means some kind of sharing. That's what the word fellowship means. Now, we have a lot of ideas that come to mind when we think of Christian fellowship, and I would suggest that most of them are pretty tame, or lame even.

The foundational idea is that of giving, sharing, sacrificing. That is, Christian fellowship actually costs.

So, fellowship is not a sentimental idea of togetherness. giving, things like it's not tea and biscuits, or whatever it is that young people do, coke and pizza or something.

[24 : 23] It doesn't just happen because two Christians are sitting together and chatting. Just because you're a Christian, they're a Christian, and we just happen to be talking about football, a great night of fellowship.

fellowship comes through giving, and true fellowship costs. Many Christians have never known the joy of Christian fellowship because they have never learnt to actually give themselves away.

some visit a church or even a community group with an eye only for their needs, and they walk away saying there was no fellowship there.

I've heard it this year a couple of times. But we only have fellowship when we make it a practice to reach out to others and to give something of ourselves to others, regardless of what's happening in our lives.

thirdly, they devote themselves to the breaking of bread. Now the breaking of bread here might refer to the Lord's Supper, or it might refer to the fellowship they have over a meal, or both.

[25 : 36] I have a tendency to lean that it's about the Lord's Supper specifically, but most likely, what happened was that they had a meal together, a main meal of steak and chips, and then they would take the bread and the wine and they would remember Christ's death together.

What this means is that Christ and his atoning work was constantly before this new community. Daily, they would bring their hearts up to solemn and joyous contemplation.

There is a real sense of wanting to be together and to share together, and the ongoing basis of their being together and sharing together was their fellowship in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was the linchpin of their togetherness. Fourthly, they devoted themselves to the prayers. When they got together, they ate together, they prayed together, and they praised together.

This togetherness was not one of those churchy kind of togetherness things where you can come together and spend all night talking about church but never mention Jesus.

[26 : 47] This is Jesus at the center. When they got in touch with each other, they got in touch with God together. Where the spirit reigns, the hearts of God's people move up towards him in prayer.

What a wonderful picture of this new community of transformed lives where the spirit reigns. They've been rescued from sin through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They've been brought together in a new spirit-transformed community.

So make no mistake here, this is a work of God. This impressive community didn't just happen because a few people decided to turn over a new leaf and start some new club.

This was a radical transformation controlled by the sovereign hand of God and God enabled the apostles to do wonders and it says here that the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

This is God at work through the life and witness of his people and this sort of community cannot be manufactured by tweaking a few programs.

[27 : 51] The Christian community has its origin in and continues under the proclamation of the message that the crucified Jesus is Lord and Christ and all true fellowship is founded upon and focused on the gospel and the result is other person centered love as lives are transformed by that gospel.

The two are inseparable. Is it any wonder people were impressed with this new society growing up in Jerusalem? True Christian fellowship naturally overflows into mission as the world wants a slice of the Christian community and the power that's behind that community.

our world needs to see church communities witnessing to the reality of gospel shaped restored relationships. It is quite clear in Luke's mind that a Christian is not an individualist who enjoys some kind of private communion with God but a member of a new society inescapably bound up with every other Christian in a mutual solidarity of a radically deep kind.

It is a wonderful picture of the church right here where the spirit of God reigns. We see Christians relating to the word of God, relating to each other and the word of God and relating to God and each other and the word of God and relating to God and each other and the word of God and the world.

Let me just throw a caution here in against idealising it, this church, in Acts 2.

[29 : 37] It's a wonderful picture. But if we're not careful, we can paint an unrealistic picture of it. The kind of blessings God has given them in his mercy and in their weakness and in their imperfection comes with groaning.

right here in Acts 2. They're in honeymoon period. Everything's fantastic. And they will be for a couple of chapters. But here in Acts 2, we have the beginnings of a vintage administrative hassle and pressure.

It's not obvious here. We'll see it next week. Meeting the needs of 3,000 people and leading them into joy-filled mission is very messy.

And it will always be messy. These are, you go from a church with 11 leaders and 120 members, a few extra here, you know, fill up these seats and you've got some sort of a picture of what the early church was like.

And then jam 3,000 extra people in amongst it. 3,000 new babies in Jesus. Now, in my family, you put one new baby in the house, it's chaos.

[31 : 04] It's chaos for 12 months. It's just madness. Sleep deprivation, all the concerns, worries, anxieties, and 3,000 of them, man, I'm moving to Brazil.

It's an issue is what's happening here. It's important for us to realise it unless we think that out there somewhere there is a perfect church that I need to go and find and to be part of.

Or unless we have the other response and we fold our hands here and groan and whinge and complain and when this church gets perfect, then I'm going to make a contribution then.

In Acts chapter, sorry, in 2 Corinthians 11 verse 28, Paul, in chapter 11, he gives his long list of all his issues and struggles in ministry and all his burdens in ministry and right at the end of the list he says, apart from other things, there is a daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

This is the apostle Paul speaking. The apostle Paul was blessed by God in planting multitude after multitude of successful churches.

[32 : 23] His ministry was blessed. The effect of this blessing, this wonderful blessing and this success and this growth was what he called the daily pressure of concern for all the churches.

With blessing comes groaning. With blessing comes hardship and difficulties. That's normal. When you look around the church and you see blessing and successes, you'll also see mess and sin and mistakes and difficulties.

That's normal. And we are feeling it right here now as a church. Let me tell you, I am feeling the daily pressure for just one church.

I couldn't imagine what it would be like to be the apostle Paul. Let me tell you that God has wonderfully blessed us as a church in the past 12 to 18 months. There is some great ministry momentum.

A number of people have come to Christ and committed to our church family. For the blokes amongst us and who didn't make it yesterday morning, you missed out on a great man's breakfast.

[33 : 40] Jeremy Kirk, who comes along here occasionally but mainly in our morning congregation, gave a wonderful testimony of how he came into this church as an unbeliever, just thinking I'd be good for the kids.

In no time at all, Debbie's leading him in our for course. Eyes came alive to the gospel. Andrew Green at the same time invites him to come along for journaling and prayer, Bible reading and prayer on a Wednesday morning and he said on one of those Wednesday mornings, bang, he said that was the moment, decisive moment where he felt the spirit of God came on him and all of a sudden joy, eyes came open.

This is the moment Christ flooded into his life. That was a wonderful testimony. The time to build pledging was an amazing expression of unity and commitment across the church.

The \$680,000 that we pledged over the next three years was not just a few people throwing in masses of bucks, it was across the whole church. And yet, there is a deep groaning as we are faced with hard decisions right now with our budget for next year.

And it's right in the midst of such blessing, of such joy. Church is messy. And can I suggest that even as I'm calling you through this series to commitment to the local church and St. Paul's here and our vision that we have for the future and our core values, expect it to be both joyful and hard.

[35 : 23] Expect both of those things to go together. As messy as the church is, Ephesians 3 says that God's universal plan for all ages is that through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms according to his eternal purposes which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When we align our purpose with God's purpose to make Jesus known through the church to this universe, then our life, one life, our drop in the lake, that ripple doesn't peter out but it grows in magnitude through all of eternity.

And so my call today and through this series is for us all to reassess our commitment to the Lord Jesus and his purpose is being worked out through his local church here, St. Paul's even to all the universe.

Amen.