

Acts 2:14-41

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[0 : 0 0] preaching at a church like Trinity is the wide variety of people in the congregation each week. If you look around, you'll see young people and old people, single and married people.

You'll see families with their first new baby trying to get used to that. You'll find families with up to nine children. You'll find people who've lived in New Haven all their lives and people who've just moved here maybe in the last month. People from all six continents, people with multiple academic degrees, and people who've never finished high school. And we're all here together. And sometimes you might wonder, how in the world did I get here with all these people who are so different than me? And I want to say it's a privilege to be one of your pastors. It's a privilege to proclaim to you God's life-giving word and to equip you for the works of ministry that God has called you to here in New Haven. It's a privilege to see God take people who may have little in common with each other and bind us into a united body in Christ. Now, this fall, we're looking at the first seven chapters of Acts in our sermon series under the title, When God Built His Church.

And three weeks ago, we looked at the first half of chapter one, and we saw that the mission of the church is to bear witness to Jesus. Acts 1.8, Jesus said to his disciples, you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. Two weeks ago, we saw how God equips his people to fulfill this mission by his word, the testimony from the apostles, and by his spirit who is poured out on all the believers at Pentecost. And today we're looking at Acts chapter 2, starting at verse 14. We're looking at Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. This is the first Christian sermon that we're looking at today.

Now, Peter's addressing a particular group of people in a particular situation, but in his sermon, we see the unchanging message of the church, a message that God calls us to proclaim for all people in all times and in all places. So turn with me to Acts chapter 2. Just to give the context, I'm going to read starting at verse 1, but we'll be looking especially at starting at verse 14 through 41. So I'll start reading in Acts chapter 2, verse 1. 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 a spirit enabled them. Now, they were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked, are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own 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, they've had too much wine. 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. Listen carefully to what

[3 : 52] I say. These men 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 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 to the 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 path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence. Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on the throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the 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 didn't 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.

[6 : 28] Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus, whom you crucify, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, repent and be baptized, every one of you. In the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord our God will call. With many other words, he warned them and he pleaded with them, save yourselves from this corrupt generation. Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day. Peter's sermon has three parts, an introduction in verses 14 through 21, the main message in verses 22 through 36, and finally a call to respond in verses 37 through 41. And we'll look at each of those three sections in turn. Now, a good introduction helps a speaker connect with their audience.

And Peter faced a very diverse audience on the day of Pentecost. Pentecost was one of three annual festivals where all Jewish men were required to come to Jerusalem, and many came with their whole families. And every year it happened in late May or early June, and so the population of Jerusalem swelled with pilgrims coming from all over the known world, from Rome, from North Africa, from Greece, from modern-day Turkey, and from many other places. And they came to offer the first fruits of their crops to the Lord, to celebrate God's provision for another year. That's what they were commanded to do at Pentecost. And they also remembered the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, when God had come down in fire and revealed His will to Moses for the people. And on this day of Pentecost, about 120 of Jesus' disciples were meeting together for an early morning prayer meeting. And suddenly, God came down in fire.

In some ways, just like He had on Mount Sinai, God came down in fire and with a mighty rushing wind. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began speaking in other languages.

And they must have spilled out from this upper room into the street, because it said a crowd gathered, and each one heard them speaking in his own language. Now, this rather unusual phenomenon provoked a range of reactions. Amazement and confusion, people asking, what does this mean? And, of course, mocking and making fun.

Ah, they're just drunk. And Peter stands up in this context to proclaim his message. He's speaking to long-time Jerusalem residents and foreign visitors, native-born Jews, and later-in-life converts, the curious and the cynical. And he begins by saying, these men are not drunk, as you suppose.

[9 : 54] It's only nine in the morning. In other words, he's saying, your way of thinking cannot explain the reality that you are experiencing. Now, back then, people would eat and drink together in families or larger groups. There weren't any fast food restaurants or package stores where you could just go by yourself and get something to eat or drink. And Jewish people in that time would eat their first meal around 10 in the morning. So it would have been almost impossible to be drunk at nine in the morning. Now, even today, if you walk to church, even if you walk down Crown Street past all the clubs or by Toad's Place, you probably didn't see many drunk people this morning. Right? I mean, nine in the morning. Who's walking the streets of New Haven? Not many people.

And Peter's saying, look, you know, all these people are Galileans. Now, Galileans were sort of the rural people who only know one language, and they speak it with a thick accent. And suddenly, they've become the most international, multilingual, articulate group in all of Jerusalem. And Peter says, you can't explain that by having too much to drink. Your way of thinking cannot explain the spiritual reality that you are experiencing. Now, I imagine that most of us today haven't seen or experienced exactly this type of miracle, hearing someone speak about what God has done in a language that they never have learned. I have heard of it once, but I was not there, and I never experienced it myself.

But maybe you have experienced something that was supernatural. Maybe you have experienced something that you can't explain apart from God. Maybe you've seen someone who was physically healed without medical explanation. Or maybe you've seen someone persevere through intense suffering with grace and love. Maybe you've known someone who is in bondage to addiction for many years, and through faith in Jesus, they've become a changed person.

Or perhaps you've felt the presence of dark spiritual forces, and you may not talk about it, but you know that they're real. Maybe you're here this morning, and you're not sure what you believe, but you've experienced something in your life that has made you ask the question, is there something more than what I can see and feel and touch? Is there a God? And is that God real?

Francis Collins describes how this happened to him in his book, *The Language of God*. He's a well-known scientist. He's now the director of the National Institutes of Health. He grew up in a well-educated and non-religious household, had a very happy childhood, studied physical chemistry here at Yale, and then went on to medical school at UNC.

[12 : 58] And he didn't believe in God at that time. He said, it seemed to me that religion was sentimentality and superstition. Feelings and old-fashioned beliefs that don't make any sense.

But in his third year of medical school, as he was doing his rotations, he encountered patients in the hospital who were facing serious illness and imminent death. He says, for many of them, faith provided them with reassurance of ultimate peace despite their terrible suffering. And he thought, if faith is just a psychological crutch, it's pretty powerful.

And if it's just a cultural tradition, why aren't these people shaking their fists at God for all the suffering they're going through? Why aren't they telling their family members, stop talking about some benevolent superpower?

Why are they clinging to their faith in this God? And he goes on, he says, I blushed and stammered.

I'm not really sure. This moment haunted me for several days. Wasn't I a scientist? Does a scientist draw conclusions without even considering the data?

[14 : 23] Could there be a more important question in all of human existence than, is there a God? And yet, there I found myself, having avoided any serious consideration that God might be a real possibility.

Suddenly, all my arguments for atheism seemed very thin. The ice under my feet was cracking. Would I have to take responsibility for actions that I would rather keep private?

Was I accountable to someone other than myself? The question was now too pressing to avoid. You know, he never saw a miracle, what we'd call a miracle.

But he realized that he needed to consider the reality of God. And his journey led him to faith in God and ultimately to faith in Jesus Christ.

So Peter says to his audience here, He says, your way of thinking, your worldview, your frame of reference cannot explain this reality that you are experiencing. But he says, the Bible can.

[15 : 28] The Bible can help you explain and interpret your spiritual experiences. Now notice that miracles or spiritual experiences are not enough.

The disciples experienced a powerful miracle, speaking languages they'd never learned. They experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit. But just because of that, it doesn't, no one in the crowd understood or believed.

A miracle wasn't enough to produce faith. And in the same way, you can have a lot of spiritual experiences. You can have exciting ones or scary ones. You can have all sorts of spiritual experiences.

But unless you look to God's revelation in the Bible to explain and interpret what you are experiencing, you will remain perplexed like the hearers were.

See, in the Bible, God reveals who he is and what he desires for us and for the world. And so Peter explains to the crowd, he says, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

[16 : 32] And so he quotes from the book of Joel. In the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people. He goes on to talk about I will pour out my spirit in those days and they'll prophesy.

Now the Jewish people at that time believed that the spirit of prophecy had ceased, had ended with the last of the Old Testament prophets around 400 years ago with Malachi and the last of the writing prophets.

But they expected a new and a special outpouring of God's spirit when the Messiah would come. And Peter says that time has now come.

Just as Joel and Ezekiel and other, Jeremiah and the other Old Testament prophets foretold. Now, I don't know how many of you have read the book of Joel lately.

Joel is a small book in the middle of the minor prophets. But Peter knew his minor prophets. Peter knew all the parts of the Bible that maybe some of us just tend to overlook.

[17 : 37] Peter wasn't just randomly swiping passages from the Old Testament to prove his point. He knew that Joel had spoken about the coming day of the Lord, a day of God's terrible judgment and symbolized by an invasion of destroying locusts.

And Joel had called on the people to repent and turn back to God with fasting and prayer and mourning, turning their hearts back to God. And Joel had promised that God would listen and God would bring restoration.

And before that final day of judgment, God would pour out his spirit like a torrential downpour on a parched earth. And God would provide a way of salvation, a way of deliverance from that terrible judgment for everyone who would call on his name.

And Peter says, that's exactly what's happened through the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has, and now, because of Jesus, God has poured out his spirit on all his people and God has opened the way of salvation to everyone who will call on Jesus' name.

And then he gets here to the heart of his message in verse 22 through 36. And Peter goes on to speak of what Jesus has done in Jesus' life, in his death, in his resurrection, and in his exaltation to pour out the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's promise, these prophetic words.

[19 : 17] So Jesus' life, verse 22, in his life, Jesus demonstrated God's saving power through his miracles. It says, Jesus did miracles, wonders, and signs. Now, in the Old Testament, those words weren't used just to describe any miracle.

Most times, 13 out of 17 times, they refer particularly to the miracles that God did to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt when they had been slaves.

So the plagues against Pharaoh, the parting of the Red Sea, providing the manna in the wilderness, those are the signs and wonders that God did to rescue them, to bring them from slavery in Egypt to freedom and worshiping him.

So one example, Deuteronomy 26, 8, says, the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders.

There's several, many other verses you could quote from the Old Testament with those same words. See, Jesus' miracles demonstrated that in him, God had come to rescue his people. Just as God had delivered the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt through Moses, through Jesus, God was delivering his people from sin and death and his miracles were a sign of his saving work.

[20 : 40] Verse 23, Jesus' death. In his death on the cross, Jesus fulfilled God's eternal saving plan. And Peter says, Jesus' death was by God's set purpose and foreknowledge.

It wasn't an accident. It wasn't a failure. Jesus wasn't a helpless victim of circumstances. He was the true Passover lamb. In the Passover, when they were being brought out of Egypt, they had to kill a lamb and put its blood on the door of each household so they would be protected from the destroying angel.

And as the true Passover lamb, Jesus' death protects us from judgment and accomplishes God's eternal saving purpose. Now at the same time, so Peter affirms God's sovereignty in Jesus' death in that way.

But at the same time, Peter also affirms human responsibility side by side. He says, you put him to death with the help of wicked or lawless men. God came to earth and we killed him.

God came to earth and showed us who he was.

[22 : 07] And in fact, he came to the people who he had already revealed himself to. You know, Peter was speaking here to the religious leaders. He was speaking to people who knew God's law.

They were called to be a light to the nations more than anyone else on earth. They should have been expected to respond positively to God's Messiah. They should have been faithful and righteous, but they weren't.

They collaborated with the Romans, the wicked or lawless men Peter refers to, to condemn and crucify Jesus. And yet, Peter says, Jesus' death wasn't the end of the story.

God raised Jesus from the dead. God reversed the verdict of condemnation and death that had been pronounced on Jesus and he replaced it with a verdict of righteousness and life.

God freed Jesus from the agony of death. Literally, that word means the birth pangs of death. It's an interesting image. The image is of a pregnant woman delivering a child.

[23 : 10] And one commentator wrote, the abyss, the grave, can no more hold the Redeemer than a woman in labor can hold a child in her body. Death could not hold Jesus because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

God raised Jesus from the dead. And Paul would later write, Jesus is declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. So we see Jesus' life, Jesus' death, Jesus' resurrection, and finally, Jesus ascended and exalted as Lord and Savior.

Verse 33-36, he's risen and he is reigning. He is Lord. Jesus is no less than God himself.

He is the Christ. That word means the Messiah, the anointed one, the Savior. And Peter concludes his message in verse 36 by saying, God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

So if you want to summarize Peter's message in one sentence, it would be this. Jesus is the crucified Savior and the risen Lord. Jesus is the crucified Savior and the risen Lord.

[24 : 30] This is the central message of the first Christian sermon. And it's at the core of almost all the sermons in the book of Acts. And it must always be the central message of the Christian church.

You know, some people wonder, what is the church really all about? You know, the church's message is not primarily a political platform or social program.

It's not primarily moral or psychological advice on how to become a better person. It's not primarily a series of mystical, spiritual experiences. The church's message must be about Jesus, crucified and risen, Lord and Savior.

This is the message that God calls us as his church to proclaim to one another and to the world. This is the message that we want to be defined by here at Trinity.

So every Sunday, whether we preach from the Old Testament or from the New Testament, we're committed to preaching sermons that exalt Jesus as Lord and Savior.

[25 : 41] Jesus said, all the scriptures testify about him. And we want to proclaim that week by week. In our Sunday school classes, in our small groups, we want to apply God's wisdom to the variety of needs and problems and challenges that we all face.

But our greatest need is always for Jesus Christ himself. Someone put it this way. If our greatest need was information, God would have sent an educator.

If our greatest need was technology, God would have sent a scientist. If our greatest need was money, God would have sent an economist. But since our greatest need is forgiveness, God sent a Savior.

Church, may we treasure Jesus, our Lord and our Savior. May we proclaim him and love and enjoy and praise him above all as our Savior and our Lord.

You know, this message isn't just spoken to the church or to people who are already believers. Most of the people that Peter was speaking to didn't believe. Some of them were questioning and saying, what does this mean?

[27 : 00] Some of them were mocking. And so Peter seeks to persuade them. He appeals to the Old Testament scriptures.

He appeals to reliable historical testimony and he appeals to the Holy Spirit's power to say, this message makes sense. Peter's speaking to a Jewish audience.

they already receive the Old Testament scriptures as God's word. And so Peter quotes from Psalm 16 and Psalm 110, verse 25 through 28 and verses 34 through 35.

And you might think, how did Peter find those verses? You know, those Psalms were written by King David. But then Peter says they're applied to Jesus. How does he get there?

Well, Psalm 16, right, we read this one earlier in the service. David was facing some kind of danger or distress and he wrote this Psalm to express his confidence that God would not abandon him.

[28 : 01] Psalm 110, it's a royal Psalm. It's about the king that God has appointed to rule over the nations. But Peter reasons David, even though he wrote these Psalms, they can't be talking only about David himself.

Because Psalm 16 talks about someone who was not abandoned to the grave whose body never decayed. Now, David's tomb was a landmark back then in Jerusalem.

In fact, Herod had built a big monument to it. So you could go and see David's tomb. His body was still there, decayed. And so Peter says, this Psalm can't just be talking about David.

And Psalm 110 talks about David's Lord who's seated at God's right hand. but David never ascended into heaven. So David isn't seated at God's right hand, so can't just be talking about David.

So they must be talking about someone else. And God had promised David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne, would be a king over all the nations. And Peter says, look, Jesus fulfills that description.

[29 : 15] Jesus wasn't abandoned to the grave. His tomb was empty. He was raised to life. And he's ascended into heaven. He's seated at God's right hand. Jesus fulfills the descriptions of these Psalms.

Exactly. And so Jesus must be that promised Messiah, that promised Savior, that promised Deliverer, that promised King.

See, the Old Testament Scriptures, they're an unfinished story, crying out for resolution. There are a long list of God's promises that are waiting to be fulfilled.

And Peter says, look, the resolution and the fulfillment is found in Jesus. And personally, as I study the Old Testament, I'm continually amazed at how the Old Testament Scriptures and the Old Testament story points forward to Jesus.

That's why I'm teaching that Sunday school class. But whether or not you come to that Sunday school class, or whether you go to another one, come to one of them. But as you read the Old Testament, think and look about how it points forward to what Jesus would do to fulfill God's promises.

[30 : 29] Now, Peter appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures, and he also appeals to reliable historical testimony. Verse 22, he says, Jesus of Nazareth did miracles, wonders, and signs as you yourselves know.

Now, no one in Jesus' day disputed that he did miracles. The people who opposed him said he was demon-possessed. They didn't say his miracles were fake.

They said that he was possessed by an evil spirit. And so, Peter says, you know he did miracles. You know he healed people with compassion. You know he fed the 5,000.

You know this is all true. Does it make more sense that he was demon-possessed or that he was empowered by God? And then in verse 32, Peter said, God has raised this Jesus to life and we are witnesses.

You know, if you read the accounts of Jesus' resurrection in the Gospels, Peter and the apostles were skeptical too. They didn't believe it at first. They didn't say, oh, yes, this is just what we were expecting, the fulfillment of all our hopes and dreams.

[31 : 38] No, they were surprised and shocked. They had to be convinced by seeing the empty tomb and seeing the risen Jesus because we're witnesses.

You can come and cross-examine us to see if we're telling the truth or not. This is really true. It really happened. You know, one of the most remarkable aspects of the four Gospels' accounts of Jesus' resurrection is that the first witnesses were all women.

Now, at that time, women were not allowed to be legal witnesses in either Jewish or Roman courts. So, if you were making up a story, if you wanted to make up a story about somebody being raised from the dead and you wanted anyone else to believe you, you would never make up the fact that women were the first witnesses because they would immediately dismiss that.

It was a misogynistic society. They'd immediately dismiss that. Totally unreliable. Unless that's how it really happened.

That the women did see the risen Jesus. That their testimony was true. And that they came and then told the apostles who then had to see it for themselves.

[32 : 56] Finally, Peter appeals to the reality of the Holy Spirit's power. He says, Jesus has poured out what you now see and hear.

And Peter could point to the miracle and say, look, Jesus has done this. You know, we may or may not experience a miracle like they did on the day of Pentecost. But are we seeking the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Are we seeking the power of the Holy Spirit here in our church? Are we praying that the Holy Spirit's work would be so evident that people would notice and say, what's different about you?

Let's be praying that the Holy Spirit's power would be so evident that people would see the reality of Jesus through the Holy Spirit's work in us. Finally, response.

Verses 37 through 41. Peter concludes his message with a call to respond. You know, a good sermon is not just about communicating information or presenting a theory or inspiring you with beautiful words.

[34 : 12] See, the gospel message always calls us to respond. Peter says, verse 38, 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.

Two commands, repent and be baptized. Repentance literally means a change of mind, turning from sin, turning to God.

Peter says, you rejected Jesus and handed him over to be killed. Now accept him, worship him, obey him. Second, be baptized.

Christian baptism is a sign that you've been washed clean by Jesus, a sign that you've died and risen with Jesus, that you belong to him, to his family. Now baptism in itself doesn't make you a Christian.

In the next chapter, in another sermon, Peter simply says, repent, then, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out. So baptism doesn't make you a Christian.

[35 : 20] You become a Christian by turning to Jesus in repentance and faith. But notice, Peter says, repent and be baptized, every one of you. And in verse 41, it says, those who accepted his message were baptized.

It doesn't say, some people accepted his message, but they decided not to be baptized because they didn't feel like it, or they didn't want to, or they were afraid to. In the New Testament, there is no example of an unbaptized Christian because baptism in water is a command, not an option for followers of Jesus.

And yet, it is a command that when obeyed in faith, brings great blessing, joy, peace, assurance that God the Father has accepted you and cleansed you and filled you with his spirit through Jesus Christ.

So if you're a believer here, if you haven't been baptized, talk to one of the elders or call the office. We'd love to talk with you about that and lead you through that process and talk through the meaning of that and the blessing of baptism.

And finally, two promises, forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. Peter says, God will wipe away the past and empower you for the future. God will clean out your house from guilt and sin and fill you with his very own presence.

[36 : 45] These are the promises that God offers to all who will come to him. As Peter said, it's for you, it's for your children, it's for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord will call.

as Isaiah had said so long ago. Isaiah said, I've seen, God says, I've seen your ways, but I will heal you.

I will guide you and restore comfort to you, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace to those far and near, says the Lord.

Lord, and I will heal them. Let's pray. Father, thank you for sending your son to live among us and to die in our place.

Thank you for raising him from the dead and seating him at your right hand to rule and reign as the risen Lord. And thank you for sending us the Holy Spirit to fill us, to comfort us.

[37 : 59] Lord, may we take hold of this message that you, Lord Jesus, are our crucified Savior and our risen Lord. And may we proclaim this message in the power of your Spirit.

We pray this in your name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.