
Acts Post Pentecost

Sermon • Rev'd Andrew Hoggan • 31 May

Psalm 110:1-4, Acts 2:34-42,



Let's pray, Lord Jesus, open our hearts and minds to the truth of your word, amen.

As we begin our post Pentecost journey through the first 8 or so chapters of Acts I think it helpful to say why Acts?

- Firstly, it's a fitting book to do after Pentecost given it tells what follows when the people of God are filled with the Spirit of God.
- Secondly, I hope we find helpful given our desire to proclaim the gospel, and help folk become followers of Jesus here in Prebbleton.
- Thirdly, we need encouragement. It's good to be reminded that it's God's church, and as Jesus said, "I will build my church and the very gates of hell will not stand against it".

So why Acts? It gives a great window into what can happen when the Word of God is at work, when the Spirit of God at work, and when the people of God are at work. So let's dive into our text, picking up near the end of Peter's Pentecost sermon.

Peter is speaking in answer to the question promoted by the various signs that were seen and heard. The question, “ what does this mean”. Peter gives a recap of biblical history leading up to the time of Jesus, and he is showing that Jesus is central to the saving work of God. Yet we killed him.

Then, just before we pick up the text Peter says this, “this Jesus God raised up, and of this we are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this that you both see and hear.

Peter then quotes part of part of Psalm 110 having pointed out that King David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies
your footstool.”

Peter is making a comparison between king David, the best in the line of human kings, and Jesus, the true King. He is helping the Jewish hearers rightly understand the true status, nature and authority of Jesus. Vs 36 therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah this Jesus whom you crucified.

That must have been devastating for these Jewish believers to hear. No wonder then, that the ones who understand the connection Peter was making are cut to the heart, and cry out “ brothers, what should we do?”

In our two pre Pentecost messages, looking at John 14 and 16 and the promises Jesus made before his departure, we highlighted the importance of the Word of God, and the Spirit of God working together.

We see this happening as Peter preaches. We also see Jesus description of the work of the Spirit proving true.

In John 16 we also saw how Jesus, when he was speaking about the sending of the Spirit, the advocate, the helper the Spirit of truth, said this. “When the spirit comes he will prove the world wrong, or convict the world in regards sin, righteousness and judgement.

Listen to Peter again. “let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah whom you crucified,” “now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles brothers what should we do?”

Just as Jesus proved true to his word in regards his resurrection, his ascension, and the sending of the Spirit, so too did Jesus word prove true in regards the work of the Holy Spirit in regards conviction.

Let me say a word here about conviction. Some tend to think of it negatively. Holy Spirit conviction is positive. However challenging and uncomfortable it is, it's the Holy Spirit helping us see things as they are.

It is the Spirit of God working in our lives in the hope that we would turn to God for help. That's what happened as Peter pointed things out, as he proclaimed the Gospel. As conviction fell. As they were cut to the heart, they cried out "Brothers what should we do?"

Let's compare conviction with condemnation. It is the enemy of souls, Satan, condemns us, that we might flee from God, and stay lost in our sins.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus". **Conviction is positive. It is the Spirit of God helping us turn to Jesus and find the help we need.**

"Brothers what should we do?" Verse 38 repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" Peter talks of four things in that vs. two done by us, two by God.

What we do is repent. That is we turn again to God. We are baptised. That is we enter a community of faith by which we can be encouraged and equipped to witness to Jesus.

What does God do? He forgives. He gives the gift of the Holy Spirit. And encouragingly vs 39 shows the scope and source of this forgiveness and gift. "It is for you, your children and everyone the Lord our God calls to him.

There is a detail in the text that gives us an idea of just how gracious God is. The very fact that we call out to God is because God has first called out to us. "This promise is for you, your children and everyone the Lord our God calls to him." The call comes before the cry. Peter proclaimed the Gospel and the Spirit of God was at work in the heart and so they cry out.

I keep talking about the Word and the Spirit working together. This whole speech of Peters is really God's call to us that we might come to him and it reaches something of a climax in vs 40 "and he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them saying 'save yourselves from this corrupt generation".

I have noted in the margin of my bible that the “save yourselves” is a passive command. In other words the “save yourself” is something done “to us” rather than something we do to ourselves, or as it were by our own efforts.

Save yourselves in the Greek means “be saved”. The point. We are saved by grace. We are saved because of what God did and does. Vs 41, God was very busy that day. 3000 converts to Christ.

And God stays busy. The chapter ends “And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

Let's slow down a little and focus on the last Vs in our passage. It is, I believe, the key to everything that follows, and the reason that day by day the Lord added to the number of those who are saved.

As I highlighted on Pentecost Sunday, and again today. We need the Spirit and Word working together if we are to see spiritual progress in our lives and an expansion of Gods kingdom.

Vs 42, They devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers. Let's unpack that verse a little. We see these freshly Spirit filled believers devoting themselves to four things. To the apostles teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

Firstly, what does it mean to be devoted to something?

For a number of years I lived in a house next door to a Hare Krishna family. They would very often have visitors all decked out in orange. At such times I would smell the lovely aroma of Indian vegetarian meals, and hear the sound of chanting and the tinkling of bells.

Now these were sights, sounds and smells I was familiar with. Two of the members of the band I toured with in the 1980s became Hare Krishnas. I even delved into it. But that ended when in the early 80s got thrown out of the Ch Ch temple for asking too many questions.

Anyway, decades later, now an Anglican minister, I thought it interesting I would end up buying a house, only to find out who lived next door. I had a conversation one day that has stuck in my memory.

My neighbour described himself as devotee of Krishna. I told him that I thought the word devotee its such a great word”. I said I'm a devotee too” “I'm a devotee of Jesus”. One thing about a devotee of Krishna. They stand out.

These freshly Spirit filled believers in Jesus stood out as well. They devoted themselves to four things. The order of the list Luke gives is, I believe, significant. It is not by accident that Luke mentions the Apostles teaching first.

It's not that the other three things mentioned are less important, but if fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers are to be all they can be, the first thing listed, apostolic teaching, must be a priority.

Why? because "fellowship" is not just gathering together like some kind of club, or dare I say it cult. "Fellowship" it's a particular kind of gathering. A particular kind of community.

- A community shaped by kingdom principles and practices.
- A community shaped by the life and example of Jesus.
- A community shaped and empowered by the Spirit of Jesus.

What of the "breaking of bread" and "the prayers"? When Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, as well as encouraging them, he was addressing a few problems. One of them was around how some were breaking bread. Contextually, breaking the bread, the Lord supper, was a common meal. At some point during the meal, remembrance would be given in regards the death and resurrection of Christ, and his body and blood given for us.

In Corinth though, some were gorging themselves on food and getting drunk, while other others went hungry. Paul needed to remind them what Christian community was about and how to rightly conduct themselves when remembering Christ's sacrifice and victory, as they celebrated round the Lords table.

Apostolic teaching is foundational to all we do.

On the list also did you notice that Luke talks about "the prayers." At this stage, prayers were probably liturgical. I dare say as the Spirit moved there would plenty of spontaneous and unscripted prayers, as the Spirit gave voice. But early in the life of the church there were also set prayers as these believers continued in the practices and prayers familiar to them.

Prayers now filled with a new focus and a new power.

We know don't we that power without appropriate boundaries and guidelines can become problematic.

Apostolic teaching was crucial as this new community exploded into being. 3000 in one day. As then so now.

- Apostolic faithfulness is crucial for any believer.
- Apostolic faithfulness is crucial if we expect God to work in our midst.

Why is it so often that in our day, in our place, the church seems to be in decline? More than anything else I believe it is because we have lost our way, and we have lost confidence in the Gospel. We have lost sight of the real Jesus.

As we finish ch 2 let's just focus on the importance of being well taught devoted to Jesus. The bible, the word of God is our roadmap and guidebook.

- From it's teaching we get an understanding of Christ centered fellowship.
- From it's teaching we get an understanding of sacramental practice. And there might be a few challenges to some of the churches practices, or peoples understanding coming up.
- From it's teaching we get an understanding that gives voice to our thanks, our praise, our prayer.

Lastly, remember Jesus promise in the context of his impending death. That we would continue his work and we would be his witnesses. That we would do even more than we have seen him do.

How? as we are shaped by the Word of God. And as we are empowered by the Spirit of God.

More in two weeks.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we praise and thank you that you are true to your word. May we be so led by your word, and so filled with your Spirit that we would present a credible witness to the gospel of grace here in Prebbleton, amen.