

Relentless: Peter's Case for Christ

Acts 2:14-41

Patrick Murphy

Pastoral Reading: **Acts 2:32-36** ³² “God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear. ³⁴ For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says: The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.’, ³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

Introduction

Good morning Church,

As the crowds heard "simpletons" from Galilee speak in their native tongue, they began to sneer and defame the work of God taking place in their midst. Layered within the events of Pentecost Luke records a precise list of languages and locations to link the Spirit's outpouring back to the Table of natation's Gen. 10. Luke's list in acts follows the same pattern set out that Abraham did when he wrote Gen. 10. Starting with Persia in the east, to Mesopotamia, to Assyria, Canaan, Anatolia, Egypt, and farther west. Luke's intent is no accident. **God is restoring his image barriers under the banner Christ's Lordship.**

What do the people see? They are shocked and perplexed but quickly dismissive. They say, "they must be drunk" to account for what is taking place before them. What about in our day and age? Is God at work in our midst? Are we blind, or can we see? Are we too quickly jeering and sneering at the handy work of God by attributing the events of our day to coincidences and mere guesses? Man plays a part but it is God who authors our days. The truth is this: **God's sovereign hand continues to guide people to hear the good news of Jesus' resurrection and profess him to be Lord and Messiah.** It has been my prayer this week that your head and heart are ready to hear God's message of salvation through Jesus. A 2,000-year-old message that has never grown dull. Continuing to glisten in the heart of God's children. Pray with me one more time before we read the word together.

Is this the Gospel you believe and is this the gospel you proclaim?

Peter Testifies about Christ.

Acts 2:14-16 “¹⁴ Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, “Fellow Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and pay attention to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it's only nine in the morning. ¹⁶ On the contrary, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:”

Peter, the same Peter who 50 days ago, out of fear, denied Christ to a servant girl, stands up on behalf of the 12 and captures the attention of thousands. How is a change like that possible? It is simple, yet profound, seeing the risen Lord and receiving the Spirit. Peter calls out to the crowd, "this is not drunkenness; it's only 9 in the morning." He's arguing Jews would not have had their first meal, let alone be drinking alcohol. Instead, what's happening all around is the fulfillment of prophecy. **Peter preaches an Old Testament exegetical sermon grounding the validity of Christ's message deep within God's own words and the witness of the church.**

Living in the Last Days - Acts 2:17-17 **And it will be in the last days, says God,** - Peter intends for his audience to know they are in the last days. We are still in God's end game and final act of salvation. The evidence for Peter's claim are the events of Pentecost and everything that follows as the Gospel goes into the world. Let's look to see the authenticity of Peter's claim.

- 1. The Spirit will reside in God's people - I will pour out my Spirit on all people; your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.** ¹⁸ **I will even pour out my Spirit on my servants in those days, both men and women, and they will prophesy.** Not just kings, prophets, and priests found in the Old Testament but all kinds of people. As it was mentioned last week, the Gospel is cross-cultural and trans-national able to unify and collect people from all over God's creation. How do we know the Spirit is poured out? Peter says's, "look around!" Speaking in tongues is a form of prophecy, and the people are blanketed by 120 followers of the Way speaking in native languages.
- 2. Cosmic signs of the apocalypse - ¹⁹ I will display wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below: blood and fire and a cloud of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood** – Because Pentecost was only 50 days after Passover, a portion of the pilgrims would have stayed in town to observe both festivals. If they were in the city the day Jesus died, they would have all witnessed the darkening of the sky, the shaking of the earth, and dead people coming out of

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their tombs. There are more signs to come, but what they have already witnessed points to Peter's assertion's validity. They are in the last days. The signs listed, blood, fire, darkness, red moon they were all ancient omens of war looming.

3. **The day of the Lord - before the great and glorious day of the Lord comes.** Joel's prophecy falls within a context of plagues and locusts consuming Israel, to which Joel recognizes it is a warning of God's impending judgment. The last days are here, but there will be a final day. The day when God's judgment falls upon the earth and the destruction of his enemies vindicate his people. This a prelude to the final point, how someone chooses the right side of the impending conflict.
4. **Salvation from the Lord - ²¹ Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.** Call upon God for salvation. Call upon his name. We do not shy away from what scripture advocates. Within this point is an intended double meaning. Salvation from the Lord is each advocating salvation comes only from him, and it's escaping his wrath for our sin. Salvation is from the Lord out of his wrath. But who's name do we call upon? Peter's audience would hear this verse and instinctively know he is speaking of Yahweh, but Peter intends for us to ask, "Who's name do we call upon." The name of his Messiah!

God's plan for the Messiah - Acts 2:22-24 ²² **“Fellow Israelites, listen to these words:**

Peter's case is lining up nicely. First Tongues prove the Spirit of prophecy has come, which proves we live in the messianic era, which further proves the Messiah has come, and Peter argues, his name is Jesus! The man was rejected by his people even though they were the ones to receive and proclaim him. **This is why Peter explicitly calls the nation of Israel to listen up, so he can tune them up. They preferred their blindness, but Peter is about to restore their sight. Revealing the plan of God, they denied.** He does so by clearly revealing God's good plan for salvation. He starts with

1. **Signs, miracles, and wonders** – **This Jesus of Nazareth was a man attested to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did among you through him, just as you yourselves know.** Like the sermon last week, the sign is not the gift but a testament to the gift. Jesus was always intended to be a gift to the Jews. The signs authenticated Him, but rather than receiving the actual gift of Jesus they only received the signs and rejected the gift. EX.. **After Feeding the 5000 – Show us the mana... You must eat my flesh and drink my blood... John 6:66 then many left never to follow him. It was his message they hated, a message of repentance and faith in him. So, they killed him.**
2. **Death** - ²³ **Though he was delivered up according to God's determined plan and foreknowledge, you used lawless people to nail him to a cross and kill him.** - The death of Jesus would have been, for many, a confirmation that he could not have been the messiah. To a Jew, and even for us today, the death of Christ is not an admirable sign of strength but weakness. It would be like us hearing someone order “Deep Fried Ice” for dinner. Yet the Apostles celebrate and commemorate his death. Paul in 1 Cor. 1:23 says, "but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles."
 - a. **God's plan and Mankind's Guilt** – This is the paradox of our faith, between God's divine providence and human responsibility. One does not negate the other, but we have difficulty holding the two in tension because they seem at odds. Yet this is what God's revelation affirms and communicates to us. Their compatibility comes from knowing why it works rather than knowing how it works. **The Messiah's death is only weakness if God had not planned it, and if our sin is not the reason for his death, then why did he die?** All of humanity is guilty for the death of Christ as the scriptures tell us, “all have sinned through Adam.” Although the people in Peter's audience were directly responsible for his death when chanting “Crucify him, Crucify him,” the

primary message from Peter is God's sovereignty overshadows the complexity of "how" because he accomplishes his will. The will to save.

- b. Our sins required the just punishment of death, so God, out of His mercy and love, planned for Christ to be our substitutionary atonement.** He traded places with us. This is why Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified" without it, the good news is not good. Without it he offers us salvation from nothing. His death was always part of the plan, but it was not the end of the plan.
- 3. Resurrection – ²⁴ God raised him up, ending the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by death.** - Peter's description leads us to imagine death being in childbirth unable to keep Jesus in the grave. As a mother cannot keep a child in her body forever, neither could death restrain Jesus. The resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith and the hook upon which all our promises and expectations hang. Paul iterates to the Corinthians, **1 Cor. 15:14 "and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith."** We must ask ourselves; do we preach the resurrection? Do we think about the resurrection enough? Do I talk about the resurrection? Out of the 22 verses Luke devotes to Peter's sermon, nine focus on the resurrection. It's central to Peter's evangelism here. Is it central to ours?
4. TS: Why we have to speak of the resurrection again and again with certainty. Read the points...

I'm concerned we think sharing the Gospel is connecting people to Jesus so he can meet their felt needs. That is not Peter's intent at all. What Luke records and what Peter presents is a belief in Jesus based upon who he is, way before it's what he can do for us. So, we have to ask ourselves, are we convinced the resurrection accounts are true? Are we convinced enough to testify about them to the world around us?

It is not for lack of evidence. We have extensive evidence for the resurrection of Christ. Jeff gave a great sermon on this very topic over a year ago. If your confidence in the resurrection is wavering, I implore you to listen to his sermon "[Why We Believe in Jesus' Resurrection.](#)" To sum up his message, he states 5 reasons we have full assurance in Jesus' resurrection:

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- a. Reluctance for Jews to believe in a crucified messiah
- b. Initial Eyewitnesses of the Empty Tomb
- c. Success of the Early Church
- d. Early Creeds in the church
- e. No Good competing Explanations

As for Peter's sermon, he directs his audience back to a Psalm of David, Psalm 16 reading, **"²⁵ For David says of him: 'I saw the Lord ever before me; because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. Moreover, my flesh will rest in hope, ²⁷ because you will not abandon me in Hades or allow your holy one to see decay. ²⁸ You have revealed the paths of life to me; you will fill me with gladness in your presence.'"** - Peter's evidence for David speaking of Jesus is quite comical, It can't be David because he's dead. **"²⁹ 'Brothers and sisters, I can confidently speak to you about the patriarch David: He is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day...he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah: He was not abandoned in Hades, and his flesh did not experience decay.'"**

Peter testifies to Christ's authenticity and places before them a decision; to believe in Jesus for exactly who he is, not who they want him to be.

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Jesus Christ is Lord and Messiah - ³² “God has raised this Jesus; we are all witnesses of this. ³³ Therefore, since he has been exalted to the right hand of God and has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, he has poured out what you both see and hear. ³⁴ For it was not David who ascended into the heavens, but he himself says: The Lord declared to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.’

Peter and the early church didn't need evidence for Christ's resurrection and ascension; they were the evidence. And by the crowd's mere presence watching, questioning, and wondering what was taking place around them, they are witnesses to the outpouring of the Spirit, which is the proof that Jesus, the messiah, has ascended to be with God. Bringing the world into the last days, the final act in God's plan of salvation. Awaiting the High King of heavens return to rule over the nations.

We have a responsibility to this message. Like Peter's audience, we too must respond to his conclusion, **“³⁶ “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”** Peter didn't skirt the issue of personal responsibility to his audience. Like them, we are guilty of falling short of God's will and character. We have all sinned and crucified Jesus. We must also remember what Joel prophesied and what Peter reinforced; if we call upon the name of Jesus, we will be saved.

Brothers and Sisters, this is our message to repeat. We cannot shy away from stating these truths to our world. Jesus was not worried and did not fear losing his audience. Instead, he was concerned with loving them and leading them to himself.

The people were cut to the heart and ask Peter what they should do.

Summoned to Repent and Receive – Acts 2:38 “³⁸ Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” -

Repentance means to turn and walk in another direction. It's not a warming of feelings or shedding a tear. It is a complete acknowledgement that we cannot save ourselves, and day by day we consume Jesus' grace and guidance. As the LORD, Jesus demands repentance and baptism, which is an outward expression of allegiance to him. As Messiah, Jesus offers them the unmerited gift of forgiveness. In turning from sin and to Jesus, there can be no separation in His

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Lordship and his role as Savior. By believing in him as he is, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our guarantee of life in the Kingdom.

Application

1. **Today is the day of Salvation** (To non-believers)- What further evidence do you need to believe beyond what you ready have heard.
2. **There is no other Gospel** (To Believers)- What Peter proclaimed we repeat. The elements of his sermon; fulfillment of prophecy, the plan of God (Signs, Death, and Resurrection), the Person of Christ (Lord and Messiah) is the message we communicate and share with our world.
3. **We are not perfect, but we are worthy.** We are entrusted with this gospel and worth to preach it. I believe the most complete form of worship you or I could engage in is sharing the joy of God and his salvation to someone else. We share what we know and why we know it. In essence we relive again and again the goodness of God that captivated our soul and freed us from sin.

Communion

Today is the last Sunday of the month and therefore in a moment we will begin taking communion. One of the most beautiful things about Communion is that it gives us a picture of being the Family of God.

- So if you are not a professing believer in Jesus Christ, then we ask that you refrain from taking communion today. There is no shame in doing that, no judgment whatsoever. But if your heart is being convicted of sin and your need for a Savior then please come and find one of the pastors or elders or really anyone who is taking communion and they would love to pray and share with you the good news of Jesus Christ.

- And for us as believers, this is a time when we examine ourselves and see where we are in sin. If you have unconfessed sin in your life then confess it now and then rejoice at the grace and mercy of God in our lives. If you need to go ask forgiveness from a brother or sister here then do so now. Ushers you can go ahead and start passing out the elements. I'll come back up in a few minutes to lead us in the taking of communion.