

The Sermon that Launched the Church

Acts 2:14-41

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I'll never forget what happened when it was my turn to preach in my first homiletics class at Moody. I stood up, nervously cleared my throat, and apologized for the corny illustration I was about to use for the introduction. Immediately my preaching prof stood up and stopped the sermon and turned my mistake into a teachable moment for the whole class. I don't remember exactly what he said but it was something like, *"If the illustration is lame either don't use it or act like it's really good. As soon as you apologize for it, you're telling the listeners they don't have to listen to it."* And with that, I began my preaching career.

A couple years later I preached my first sermon at Calvary Memorial Church about Lazarus being raised from the dead. Not wanting to take anything out of context, I summarized all of John 11. Then I proceeded to give an overview of the Gospel of John, pointing out the similarities and differences between John and the other Gospels. After losing at least half the congregation, I decided to describe in excruciating detail what the tomb would have smelled like, quoting medical experts. I remember panicking when I saw the clock because my time was up. I said a quick closing prayer and rushed back to my office. The good thing is most didn't realize how bad the message was because they had fallen asleep.

Several years after this message misfire, I was challenged by my ministry mentor to preach a sermon without using any notes or standing behind a podium. I was extremely nervous and floundered around, missing transitions and making up stuff as I went. I remember feeling embarrassed when I was finished but that was nothing like how I felt when Beth told me my fly was open during the whole message!

When I went to my doctor for a check-up on Monday, the nurse asked a question I had never been asked before. She wanted to know if I had any hobbies. My very first thought was that I love to listen to, watch and read sermons. In a given week I probably listen to three sermons and read at least 10 more. I've put sermons into various categories over the years.

- **The worst sermon ever** – was preached by me (several times).

- **The shortest sermon ever** – not preached by me (no surprise). The shortest sermon I heard was by Dr. Rascher during a chapel when I was a student at Moody. He walked up to the pulpit, looked to the left and then to the right and announced his topic: *“Today I’m preaching on evangelism.”* He looked to the left and to the right again and declared, *“Just do it!”* With that he walked off the platform and out the door. We were stunned and didn’t know what to do.
- **The greatest sermon ever** – definitely not preached by me. The winner would most certainly be the Sermon on the Mount preached by Jesus.
- **The most effective sermon ever** was preached by Peter in Acts 2. Verse 41 tells us what the people did in response to his preaching: *“So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”*

Last week we learned *the Holy Spirit gives us power to accomplish His plans.* We’ll see today that Peter’s preaching was persuasive and practical and we can learn from his example for our gospel conversations.

I love reading preaching books, attending preaching conferences and enjoy listening to podcasts about how to improve my preaching. While there are a number of suggestions, patterns and models to follow, I keep coming back to a simple outline I first learned some forty years ago. It goes like this – *Hook, Book, Look and Took.*

As I studied the sermon that launched the church I saw each of these elements. Let’s utilize them as a way to unpack our passage.

1. Hook. Turn to Acts 2:14-15: *“But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.’”*

Peter does at least four things to grab their attention.

- **Stand.** It was normal for teachers to sit when teaching so when Peter stood up the people would have wondered why. Peter is introducing a new preaching style that is simple and straightforward.

- **Shoulder.** Peter knew he was not alone because he was “*standing with the eleven.*” A couple months ago before I stood up to preach on a very difficult topic I looked across the aisle and saw one of our deacons bowed in prayer for me (or maybe he was getting ready to take a nap). That meant the world to me.
- **Speak.** Peter was not timid but rather “*lifted up his voice.*” This is important because this was a big crowd and there were no microphones. This phrase was used of hoisting a sail. I find it fascinating how Peter is so bold because 50 days earlier he had bailed on Christ by denying Him three times. Two things have happened since – Jesus restored him to ministry and the Holy Spirit had filled him.

Peter addresses them by name and challenges them to “*give ear*” to his words. The responsibility for a good sermon lies not only with the preacher, but also with the hearer. This reminds me of something Charles Stanley often says, “*Listen to me now!*” BTW, he has been preaching at First Baptist in Atlanta for 50 years!

- **Smile.** Peter strongly refutes the charge of drunkenness by reminding them it’s only 9:00 a.m. I picture him smiling as he says something like, “*Are you kidding? It’s way to early for us to be drunk!*”

Brothers and sisters, we will need to stand up, shoulder together, speak out and smile as we continue to face a world in which biblical values are maligned and Christians are ostracized and persecuted.

2. Book. After grabbing their attention, Peter wants them to grasp the truth of the Bible. Preaching must always involve the exegesis (interpretative explanation) of Scripture. We don’t ever want to read *into* the Bible but rather let the Bible read *us* as we seek to *pull out* what it says. Jeremiah 23:29 reminds us the Bible is powerful, “*Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?*” Peter’s preaching is saturated with Scripture as he quotes from the prophet Joel and from two different psalms written by David. Not surprisingly, the *Book* section of the sermon is the longest, covering 19 verses.

Notice how quickly Peter interprets the three signs of Pentecost: the wind, fire and tongues as the direct fulfillment of “*what was uttered through the prophet Joel.*” I find the KJV is clearer here: “*This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.*”

Peter could have selected from hundreds of Scripture texts but he chose Joel because his prophecy most clearly speaks of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Joel is a distinctively Jewish book addressed to those in Jerusalem. He's basically saying, *"The coming of the Holy Spirit is what Joel wrote about!"*

Look at verse 17: ***"And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh."*** Allow me to point out that Peter has this passage memorized and is able to quote it without notes. Biblically speaking, ***"the last days"*** began when Jesus ascended into Heaven and they will continue until He comes again. I love how God will ***"pour"*** out His Spirit. This is not a trickle but carries the idea of ***"gushing out to overflowing"*** like what we read in ***Psalm 23:5: "my cup overflows."*** God is not stingy with His Spirit. I'm reminded of ***Romans 5:5: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."***

The gift of the Spirit will gush out ***"on all flesh."*** The idea is the Holy Spirit will not just come on some but on all who profess Christ. This is a fulfillment of ***Isaiah 40:5: "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."***

Let's keep reading in verses 17-18: ***"...And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."*** The word ***"prophecy"*** means, ***"to tell forth God's message."*** The pouring out of God's Spirit will result in the telling forth of God's truth. God doesn't just speak through priests and prophets but through people in all generations, genders and classes.

- **All generations.** The ***"young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."*** The younger tend to see possibilities for change and approach situations with hope while those of us who are older rely on God's faithfulness as we look into the future. *We need the fire of the young and the faith of the old!* The Holy Spirit is at work in all generations for His glory and the growth of His church.

This week I went back and read from a sermon I preached four years ago: *"Edgewood is fortunate to have a mix of younger and older. Some churches are filled with only senior saints and some newer churches have only 20-somethings in them. Personally, I think it's better to have a wide age range,*

though this comes with some natural tension. It's common for younger believers to diss the older generation as out of touch and I also hear older saints dismiss the younger generation because they seem immature. That's not acceptable on our team! Let's allow our young people to share their vision and let's also listen to the dreams of our older saints. That's how God designed His team to function."

BTW, I'm thrilled about our additional lobby space and hope you'll take advantage of this to connect with people from all generations.

- **All genders.** This includes sons and daughters, males and females. I'm reminded of Galatians 3:28: ***"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."***
- **All classes.** God's Spirit is for servants as much as for rulers. It doesn't matter what social or economic group you are in because God's Spirit is poured out on all. Last weekend we saw that the gospel is for all languages, races and ethnicities.

Because he went to the *Book*, Peter can confidently quote from Joel in verse 21: ***"And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*** Then Peter masterfully preaches six key doctrines related to Christ.

- **Incarnation.** Look at verse 22: ***"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know."*** Jesus was born in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth and traveled throughout the land teaching and performing miracles in their midst. The word "**wonders**" means, "*acts that aroused astonishment and awe.*" Jesus was a man but no ordinary man. He was fully God and fully man or as verse 36 says, He is ***"both Lord and Christ."***
- **Crucifixion.** We see how the mystery of God's predestined plan and human responsibility work together in verse 23: ***"This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."*** The crucifixion of Christ was not an accident but was according to God's plan to bring salvation to the world.

Having said that, Peter says both the Jews (“*you crucified*”) and Gentiles (“*hands of lawless men*”) are culpable. This is stated again in Acts 4:10: “*whom you crucified.*”

- **Resurrection.** After spending one verse each on Jesus’ life and death, Peter preaches nine verses on the resurrection! The crucifixion was part of God’s plan and verse 24 tells us the resurrection was also His work: “*God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.*” Drop down to verse 32: “*This Jesus God raised up.*” The resurrection of Christ is boldly proclaimed throughout the Book of Acts. Here’s just one example from Acts 4:33: “*And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.*”

Peter goes back to the Book in verses 25-28 by declaring what David said about the resurrection in Psalm 16. Listen to verse 27: “*For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.*”

Everyone knew David’s remains were in a tomb so he was obviously writing about one of his descendants. We see this in verse 31: “*He foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.*”

- **Ascension.** Continuing to contrast David with Jesus, Peter declares in verse 34: “*For David did not ascend into the heavens...*” The apostles had just witnessed Jesus ascend into the glory cloud 10 days earlier.
- **Exaltation.** Jesus is now in a place of honor and authority according to verse 33: “*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 yourselves are seeing and hearing.*” We see the glorious work of the Trinity in this verse. The “*seeing*” refers to the tongues of fire and the “*hearing*” reminds us of the sound of the mighty rushing wind and the foreign languages that were spoken.

Peter goes back to the Book again, this time quoting David’s words in Psalm 110:1: “*The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’*” Jesus predicted His exaltation in Luke 22:69: “*But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.*”

- **Consummation.** In verses 19-20 David quotes from Joel to describe the signs that will appear before Jesus returns: “...*blood and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.*” The Book of Joel is all about judgment, beginning with a plague of locusts followed by a series of cataclysmic events. The wrath of God is coming for those who reject Him.

After starting with a *Hook*, Peter quickly goes to the *Book*. This causes the listeners to take a *Look* at their own lives. He grabbed their attention so they could grasp the truth and now we’ll see how they grapple with it.

3. Look. In verse 36, we see a summary of the sermon, delivered with conviction: “*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*” This sermon, from start to finish, is all about Christ. Notice this is addressed to “*all*” of them and is something they can be “*certain*” about. This refers to “*not slipping or tripping*” and speaks of indisputable evidence. He is “*both Lord and Christ,*” because His is sovereign *and* sacrifice. In the Greek it reads, “*Kurios and Christos.*”

Preaching must become personal as seen when Peter delivers a stinging indictment: “*whom you crucified.*” It’s not enough to just gather information but to experience transformation. We’re called to personalize the message so we see our sin and what God is calling us to do.

Look at the first part of verse 37: “*Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart...*” This means, “*to be pierced through, to be stunned and stung sharply so as to be deeply moved.*” One of the roles of the Holy Spirit is to bring conviction of sin according to John 16:8: “*And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*”

This is actually the fulfillment of another prophecy from Zechariah 12:10: “*And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*”

We have to be careful about just presenting Jesus as an app to add to our lives. Jesus didn't come to make us happy, healthy and wealthy. We are sinners in need of saving. Until we are convicted by our depravity we won't be in a position to see our need to be delivered.

The *Hook* helped the listeners get into the *Book* and this caused them to take a *Look* at their own lives. That leads to the fourth key element of a good sermon.

4. Took. After being cut to the heart the listeners cried out in verse 37: ***“Brothers, what shall we do?”*** Preaching must always be persuasive, practical and personal. Now that the people are convicted they're compelled to make a commitment. I'm reminded of what the Philippian jailer asks after falling down in fear and trembling before Paul and Silas in Acts 16:30: ***“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”***

Peter gives us four urgent imperatives.

- **Repent.** We see this in verse 38. To repent literally means, *“to turn right about and do it now.”* It's the idea of doing a spiritual about-face that leads to a change in direction. We're called to turn *from* self-centered sinfulness and turn *to* the Savior. Don't minimize the importance of repentance. John the Baptist preached it according to Mark 1:4 as did Jesus in Mark 1:15: ***“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”***
- **Receive.** Look at verse 41: ***“Those who received His word...”*** To *“receive”* means, *“to embrace heartily.”* John 1:12 says, ***“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”***

There are two results that take place when we repent and receive. We see both of these in verse 38:

- You will have your sins forgiven.**
- You will receive the Holy Spirit.**
- **Be baptized.** Verse 38 says, ***“...be baptized everyone one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...”*** The second part of verse 41 reads: ***“Those who received His word were baptized...”*** Baptism by immersion is an outward picture of what Jesus has done within you. It's an external demonstration of

an inner decision. If you're saved, your next step is baptism. Our next opportunity for baptism will be in the Worship Center on December 14-15.

- **Be separate.** We see this in verse 40: ***“And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’”*** The word **“crooked”** means, *“perverse, warped and bent.”* Philippians 2:15-16 calls us to live on mission in the midst of all the messes in our culture: ***“That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life...”***

We've seen how Peter uses *Hook, Book, Look* and *Took* to great affect according to verse 41: ***“...and there were added that day about three thousand souls.”*** We read something similar in Acts 2:47: ***“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”***

I can't think of anything more exciting than to see the Lord save people! I pray we see the Lord add to our number day by day those who are being saved! We've been highlighting some On Mission moments the past several weekends so I want to share another one with you now. On Saturday, Pastor Dan and six other Celebrate Recovery leaders spent the day in Normal, Illinois to receive training for bringing Celebrate Recovery into the East Moline Correctional Center.

This past Sunday Diana Sauser became an Edgewood member at the end of the 10:45 service. Her husband Frank attended in order to support her. I've had multiple gospel conversations with Frank over the past year but for some reason the Lord had not saved him. On Sunday, I had the opportunity to talk with him again about the necessity of the new birth. I asked him if he was ready to repent and receive Christ.

The three of us were standing under the portico and I'll never forget what happened next. He responded by saying, *“Yes, I am.”* It's difficult for him to breathe because of some health issues so he took a deep breath and publicly confessed Christ, admitting he was a sinner and asking Jesus to save him from his sins. Diana was crying tears of joy and I smiled because the day Diana became a member of the Edgewood family was the day Frank became a member of God's family through the new birth!

What about you? Are you ready to repent and receive so you can have your sins forgiven and receive the Holy Spirit? Listen to Acts 2:21 again: ***“And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*** If you’re ready to do that, you could pray this prayer:

Lord, I admit I am a sinner and deserve Your just judgment. I repent from trying to follow my own way and now turn to You as the only way. I believe Jesus died in my place on the cross and rose again on the third day and now I receive Him into my life. Please save me from my sins and from Your righteous wrath. I want to be born again so I place all my trust in You and You alone. If there’s anything in my life You don’t like, please get rid of it. I pray this in the name of Jesus, the One who is both Lord and Christ. Amen.

We’re going to end our services by celebrating communion. This is an opportunity for us to remember the main points of Peter’s preaching - the incarnation, crucifixion, ascension, exaltation and the coming consummation of Jesus Christ.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: ***“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”***

The phrase, “Heads Up” is used a lot today. Like when a ball is coming toward your face (I don’t know why you would look up if it’s a line drive)

It can mean to “be alert” or to literally look up. It also means to have “an advance warning of something.” God wants us to have a “heads-up” about communion.

Listen to some communion correctives from 1 Corinthians 11.

1. Look up. Verse 27 – ***“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”***

2. Look within. Verse 28 – *“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”*

3. Look around. Verse 33 – *“Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.”*

To help us focus on the finished work of Christ, the worship team will be singing “Jesus Messiah.” If it helps you to close your eyes and meditate, please do that. If you’d like to sing along, that would be great as well.