**Preaching Jesus**

**Acts 2:14-36 (ESV)**

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Today, we’re going to be looking at Acts 2. What a great message! Right after the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter preaches a sermon, and this is the message that Peter delivers.

***14*** *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.* ***15*** *For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.* ***16*** *But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:*

***17*** *“‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;* ***18*** *even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.* ***19*** *And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;* ***20*** *the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.* ***21*** *And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’*

***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—****23*** *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.* ***24*** *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* ***25*** *For David says concerning him, “‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;* ***26*** *therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.* ***27*** *For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.* ***28*** *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’*

***29*** *“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.* ***30*** *Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,* ***31*** *he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* ***32*** *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.* ***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.* ***34*** *For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,* ***35*** *until I make your enemies your footstool.”’* ***36*** *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

What a sermon! I’m not sure if we need another sermon, but you’re going to get one anyway. (Laughter!)

When I was a young, thirty-year old pastor, I decided it would be wise for me to befriend some older pastors who were seasoned and could impart some wisdom to me, necessary wisdom. One of those pastors was rather discouraged in ministry. One day he lamented, “I do not think preaching makes very much difference in people’s lives.” Though I deeply respected this pastor friend, I remember being at first, really, really sad for him. And I was also thinking that I could not disagree more. Today, after twenty-seven years of preaching ministry, I understand more the reason why this pastor said what he did. But I’m still saddened that he believed that.

It is true that preaching often does not make much difference in some people’s lives. Listening to the preaching of God’s Word does not guarantee that good things happen in our soul. Many who listened to Jesus preach were not blessed by His preaching. There was no change whatsoever. Jesus told us that this would be the case when He taught the parable of the soils. He told us that the Word of God is like seed. It has the power of God’s life sown in a soul. It holds the power to impart life to everyone who would receive it by faith.

But Jesus taught first that some hearts are simply hard. When they hear the Word of God, they resist God and His Word. They resent Him and Satan comes along and immediately snatches up what little Word they have been given, even before Sunday lunch is over. Jesus also taught that some hearts are shallow in their resolve. These folks hear the Word and immediately, they show some initial receptivity to it. They think, “Wow, this is a great message. I think this is for me.” But then persecution or painful trials enter their lives. They get really discouraged and despairing. They give themselves over to unbelief and they decide that breaking faith with God will actually lead to a better life, a happier circumstance. Spiritual life that began in their heart shrivels and dies. And still other hearts are distracted by the world. These folks receive the Word and for some time appear to be receiving it and benefiting from it. But then the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, the desire for things of this world begins to take their attention. Those desires for the things of this world and the love of this world just begins to choke out the life of God so that that life too that seemed to have promise, dies away.

My pastor friend may have been discouraged by the many whose hearts are either hard or shallow or thorny. And it is absolutely true that the preaching of the Word does not make much difference in the lives of people whose hearts are hard or shallow or distracted. But faithful servants of God persevere in sowing the Word regardless of the responsiveness, regardless of the percentages. Why? Because Jesus told us that there will be a fourth kind of soil. Jesus said that some hearts are prepared by God’s grace to receive the Word implanted, to receive the message that God brings through the preaching of the Word with humility and with faith. When these hear the Word and receive it by faith, a miracle happens. Life shoots up and life begins to produce fruit; ten, one hundred, a thousand fold. Their life produces a rich harvest of practical righteousness, of spiritual service, of joyful worship to the Lord.

Here’s the truth. The preaching of God’s Word invigorates and empowers any person who listens with a humble and receptive heart. Such is the power of God’s Word. Any person who listens with a humble, receptive heart will be invigorated and empowered by it. Let me ask you, how valuable is the preaching of God’s Word to you? Do you find your life changed by it? Do you expect something supernatural to flow into your life whenever you sit underneath the preaching of God’s Word? If you say to those questions, “Not really. I don’t really have that great expectation,” I urge you to consider the condition of the soil of your heart because the Word of God is that powerful to actually have that kind of effect every single time.

I realize that many today wonder if preaching is still a relevant form of communication. After all, we have Tik Tok and Instagram and Facebook and Youtube. “Who has time to listen to a long sermon? Shouldn’t the church find better ways to reach the world than preaching? Perhaps we need less preaching and more time in discussion groups or more time in service projects or more time in fellowship gatherings.” Now, I believe these are good tools as well, but friends, I pray that the Holy Spirit convinces us of the high value that He places upon the preaching of His Word. It’s fundamental. It’s foundational to the life of the church and the life of individual believers.

We open up our Bibles today to Acts chapter 2. After the coming of the Holy Spirit to fill the disciples’ lives, the first act of the apostles is the preaching of God’s Word. As you study the book of Acts, you’ll discover that about 20% of the material in the book of Acts is comprised of sermons; the text of the preaching of God’s Word by the apostles. Over and over God uses the preaching of the Word to start churches and then to strengthen the saints. God’s emphasis on preaching as His means to bring grace to us is not a new emphasis. In fact, if we open up our Bibles and read through the Old Testament, we see that preaching is the primary work of all the prophets. Most of the books written in the Old Testament are just simply books of preaching. When Jesus, the Messiah, begins His earthly ministry, listen to what He says about His own ministry.

**Luke 4:43-44** but he said to them, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.” And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

He was sent for the purpose of preaching the good news. That was the essential, fundamental commitment of His ministry. Then when He gives the ministry over to the twelve, listen to what Mark 3 says.

**Mark 3:14** And he appointed twelve (whom he also names apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach

You see, my point here is that God has ordained this medium, the medium of preaching His Word to be the means by which He brings life to individual souls and by which He strengthens His church. God brings life to souls through the preaching of the Word. Preaching is God’s necessary means to bring the lost to Christ and to build believers in Jesus.

We open up our Bibles again to Acts 2, where God uses a sermon to begin the church of Jesus. Peter is preaching this sermon. It is 28 verses long in our Bibles. And at the end, it has a tremendous effect. 3,000 people listen to this sermon and believe. We’re not told how many people listen to the sermon and turn away, and don’t believe, but 3,000 believe in Jesus at the end of it. This sermon becomes a model for us of what preaching Jesus is all about.

Let me ask you, what do you think makes a good sermon? Just float that question through your hearts. What makes for a good sermon? Well, from Peter’s sermon, we’re going to learn four fundamental qualities of Christ-exalting messages. There are four fundamentals of preaching Jesus.

**1. Preaching Jesus rests on the work of the Holy Spirit through prayer.**

Remember that chapter 1 tells us that the eleven are told by Jesus to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit and to pray as they wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. For ten days, they’re waiting and they’re praying in a room in Jerusalem. And on the tenth day, the Holy Spirit arrives.

**Acts 2:4** And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

So Peter, along with the other disciples, are energized by God’s Spirit. They’re filled with God’s Spirit. And as Peter begins to preach, the Holy Spirit is working through him. He’s not relying upon his own natural boldness or on his dynamic personality or his intense preparation to win the hearts of these folks to Christ. The Holy Spirit is filling this man. In Acts 4, we see the connection between prayer and the Holy Spirit to preaching, once again.

**Acts 4:31** And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

The filling of the Holy Spirit accompanied by prayer is attached to the proclamation of God’s Word, necessarily so. You see, preaching God’s Word is not merely about the labor to study the text and then to think of helpful illustrations that provide windows into the meaning of the text, and finding then the right applications that are relevant to life. Preaching is fundamentally a work of God’s Spirit. A human instrument is always involved, but that’s the weakest part. It is the Holy Spirit that empowers the preaching of Jesus, that brings life to souls, that brings strength and vitality to a church. The preparation to preach fundamentally rests upon persevering prayer, a zeal for the glory of God, a submission to the will of God, a humble reliance upon God’s Spirit.

This past week, while my second son is deployed in the Middle East, his wife Lizzie and our 13 month old grandson Asher, is with us. Asher walks around furniture, but mostly, he walks on his knees. It’s such a cute little thing. I’ve never seen a little kid like it. He sticks his chest out, his head is back, and then his arms just go crazy as he walks on his knees. (Pastor Ritch demonstrated by flailing his arms.) He becomes an illustration to me about what preparation for a message and preaching Jesus is all about. God calls me to be a person who walks on my knees; a humble, dependent spirit of just calling out to God and saying, “God, if you don’t work, then nothing is going to happen as a result of the labors that I’m making to prepare.” Our preparation for preaching should look much like Elijah’s preparation of the altar on Mount Carmel.

Do you remember that story as he battled the prophets of Baal? He laid out the wood. He laid out the animal on the altar. Then he poured one, two, three, twelve jars soaking the logs, pouring over and flowing over the altar. Then when it was time for the test, to see whether God is God, what did Elijah do? He’s God’s instrument, but Elijah has no ability to make fire burn in those logs. He had no access to do that. No matter how much he cried, no matter how much he intoned, there was no access to that. But what did he do?

**1 Kings 18:36-37** …Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.”

“God, work!” is what he cried out. “Take this feeble effort of mine and bring fire from heaven. Do a miracle through me. I’m simply acting in obedience.”

You see, the instrument of the person preaching is so weak as to not be enabled to bring fire from heaven at all, not even a spark. If it’s not the Holy Spirit working through that instrument, then nothing good happens. So preaching is always empowered by God’s Holy Spirit, and that takes place through prayer.

What difference does the Holy Spirit make in the instrument? Well, there are two huge differences that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of a person when He fills that person. The first is passion and the second is courage. Passion; we see Peter’s passion even as he speaks.

***14*** *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice*

I don’t think it was just for practical purposes; that he didn’t have a microphone. I think he is super-zealous. He’s filled with God’s Spirit. He wants people to hear.

*and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.*

You can hear his tone. You can hear him with energy call out, “Listen to what I have to say. I’m going to tell you about Jesus.”

***22*** *“Men of Israel, hear these words:*

Again, he has a passion behind the desire for people to listen not because what he has to say is so important, but because what God has already said is so important. He talks about

*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—*

***36*** *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

Again, as you read this story, you can read the passion. Skip down to verse 40.

**Acts 2:40** And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them,saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

God-given passion for Jesus is necessary to preaching Jesus! There is no preaching Jesus apart from this passion that the Holy Spirit produces. The Holy Spirit places in us a yearning desire to see that Jesus is honored in the way He deserves to be honored. So our first focus is not the question, “I wonder if they all liked the message, or not?” That’s not the heart of a Holy Spirit-filled preacher or teacher. The first thought is, “God, did I offer an acceptable sacrifice? Did I say something that was worthy of Christ, that would help our hearts lift up and just see that He is a glorious Son, that He is a glorious God, that He is a glorious Savior?” Remember what Jesus said the Holy Spirit would do?

**John 16:14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Preaching Jesus begins with being filled with the Spirit. The Spirit’s entire purpose and His ministry on the earth is to make the glory of Jesus known!

The second help that the Holy Spirit brings is not just passion, but also courage. Do you remember what happened to Peter 50 days earlier? He was sitting at a fire in a courtyard of the high priest and a little girl came up to him and said, “You’re one of Jesus’ disciples, aren’t you?” And what did Peter do in the face of this little girl’s question? He wilted in fear because he knew that this Jesus had been taken prisoner and that Jesus had told them that He was going to be crucified. He knew that being aligned with Jesus would lead to his imprisonment and perhaps his crucifixion. He wanted no part of that and he just wilted. Not just once, not just twice, but three times, he wilted before this small little audience. And now he has thousands in front of him and he’s preaching with boldness and he actually says, “Whom you crucified.” He’s letting them know, you’re the ones whom God is going to hold accountable for the rejection of His Son. Where did he get such boldness? There’s only one way to explain it. It’s nothing that happened inside of Peter. It’s everything that happened from the Spirit of God upon Peter.

You see, Peter understood the threat of persecution and martyrdom that would flow from such preaching, but he preached with a holy boldness because he was granted that holy boldness by the Spirit. Preaching Jesus is dangerous!Preaching Jesus is not about entertaining to gain an audience. It is not about giving some great practical advice that people are going to appreciate and pat you on the back saying, “Boy, that was really helpful.” Preaching Jesus is about offending every heart that does not bow the knee to Jesus. God’s Word is the message. God’s messenger is simple, weak instruments.

Some of you are hunters. I’ve talked to some of you who harvested some deer this year. When you harvest a deer, you have to dress it. What do you use to dress a deer? Do you use a butter knife? Have you ever tried to dress a deer with a butter knife? It’s not going to work. This is why the first essential to preaching Jesus is a sharp instrument. It’s an instrument sharpened by God’s Spirit, empowered by God’s Spirit with a kind of boldness that says, “I can be fearless. Though the world turns away from me, though everyone who hears may rise up against me, if God is pleased, I can be fearless because that is why I’m here. I’m simply His messenger. I’m an instrument and it’s the Holy Spirit that sharpens us to such.”

**2. Preaching Jesus roots itself in the Word of God.**

Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 is only 24 verses long, but 10 of these verses are direct quotations from the Old Testament. Undoubtedly, Luke doesn’t print the entire manuscript of Peter’s message, but nearly one half of what Luke does print or write for us here in Acts is just simply a quotation of Peter, by memory, of God’s Word. The other verses are exposition of the Scriptures.

The point of Peter’s model is that the Bible itself accomplishes far greater spiritual impact than anything the preacher could dream up on his own. You see, the preacher, the teacher of God’s Word is not a philosopher. He’s not a sociologist. He’s not a psychologist. He’s not a politician. Can I say that again? He’s not a politician. He’s not a moralist. He’s certainly not an entertainer. The preacher is to be God’s echo.

What’s an echo? If you go to the Grand Canyon and you yell, “Hey!” what are you going to hear back? You’re going to hear the exact word that you shouted. Why is that? Because that’s what an echo does. It simply takes that sound and bounces it back. God’s Word is the origin of the message for the messenger. The messenger receives God’s Word for the revelation of Scripture and then the messenger is simply to bounce that back to others. God uses the personality to shape that message, but the message originates in God alone. The sermon is not the opportunity for a person to share their best thoughts about life. The sermon is not the opportunity to share their opinions about society. The sermon is the opportunity for God to pour His truth through the personality of the preacher, to reach hearts.

Imagine your dearest friend on earth passes away suddenly, but a nurse is there. Your friend thinks of you in his or her last closing moments and your friend tells the nurse, “Tell my friend this,” and he gives them a message. The nurse comes to you and says that your friend, before he passed away, he gave a really important message to you. It was his last words before he breathed his last. Then the nurse proceeds to tell all kinds of stories about his or her life. They tell all kinds of ideas about medicine and how it could have been avoided. Wouldn’t you get a little frustrated? You’d say, “Well all those stories are interesting and there may be a joke here and there that is kind of entertaining, but I’m not here for that. I’m here to discover what my best friend said to me before they left this earth. That’s why I’m here.” When we gather as a church, what we’re here to do is not to hear the interesting stories, although stories can be windows to the truth. Don’t get me wrong. But that’s not why we’re here. We’re not here to hear any person’s opinions. We’re here to hear what God has said to us. We’re here to hear the word that God has left us that is necessary, that’s vital to our lives today.

Peter preached the Word of God! He did it so artfully, here. He takes three passages in these 24 verses and sort of unwinds them for this group, to great effect. Listen to what Peter says about preaching in 1 Peter 4, in his letter.

**1 Peter 4:10-11 NLT-SE** God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another. Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you.

Peter knows that’s what’s happening when we proclaim God’s Word. The only way we can have the confidence to do that is if we actually speak His Word. If a sermon does not ask us to open up our Bibles and discover what God has said, we’re not bringing glory to God. God has delivered His Word to us at great cost, with great attention through His Holy Spirit, great cost to the prophets, great cost to the apostles. His Word alone is seed that can bring life to our soul.

My son, Jackson is likely being moved to Virginia with his job. He called me this week from there and he said, “Dad, could you help me find a good church out here?” What a wonderful question! So I began looking at some websites of churches out near Richmond, Virginia. What am I looking for? The first thing most fundamentally is, is this a church that exposits the Word? Because if it’s not, it doesn’t matter to me what else is good about it. It’s not on the list. Now, that’s not the only thing that should be on the list, but for me, it’s the most fundamental. I believe it’s because it’s the model of Acts. It’s the model of the Bible.

So the people, remember in verse 12, were confused about what was happening when they saw all these disciples speaking in different languages.

**Acts 2:12** And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”

Peter’s sermon is an answer to that question. He knows what it means. It means that the Holy Spirit has arrived. Rather than answering that question by saying, “Well, let me tell you about when I was in the upper room with Jesus, what He said to me.” He could have done that. But rather than doing that, what he immediately thinks about when they ask, “what does this mean?” and he’s going to tell them the ministry of the Holy Spirit, he immediately begins to toss through his mind Old Testament Scriptures that relate to the Holy Spirit. He lands on Joel chapter 2 because he wants his answer to be rooted in God’s Word and not in his experience. So he says

***14*** *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.* ***15*** *For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.* ***16*** *But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:*

He quotes then Joel chapter 2. He says

***17*** *“‘And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;* ***18*** *even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.*

He said, “You asked, ‘what does this mean?’ I’m telling you what it means. It means this is the day when God is beginning this work that He promised to do centuries ago, of sending His Spirit and pouring out His Spirit on all mankind.” What he’s saying by that is to get ready because the day of the Lord is really near. God told us that when the Spirit comes, then sometime after that,

***19*** *And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;* ***20*** *the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.*

He’s saying, “Get ready to meet God! Turn from your sin. Believe in God’s Messiah because the Spirit is now poured out. The next thing that is going to happen is the great and terrible day of the Lord, when God brings an end to all sin. And here’s the hope,

***21*** *And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’*

Peter was convinced that the people needed to hear God’s Word and to apply what God’s Word had to say about the goings on of the Day of Pentecost.

Applications for us:

1. Pray for your church to be faithful in preaching the Word. Won’t you do that? It’s one of the greatest ways you can strengthen the ministry of your church, strengthen the health and life of your church. Pray for your church to be faithful in preaching the Word. That’s true for the pulpit, here. That’s true for every Sunday School class, Bible Study, Small Group. Pray that we would be a Word-saturated church.

2. If you’re searching for a church, make the preaching of the Word an excluding consideration. If you’re not opening your Bibles during the sermons, find another church where you will.

3. Strengthen the preaching of the Word by being a joyful listener, a believing listener. Churches largely stop preaching the Word because the people of the church want something else. I get quite often the question, “Where are all the Bible-teaching churches?” Well, Bible-teaching churches are in places where there are Bible-teaching listeners. Where there are no Bible-teaching listeners, those churches don’t exist. Paul talks about this in 2 Timothy 4.

**2 Timothy 4:1-2** I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word;

These are simple instructions for a young pastor. This is the most fundamental thing of church life. Preach the Word!

**2 Timothy 4:2** be ready in season and out of season;

When the Word is in vogue and the Word suddenly becomes super offensive,

**2 Timothy 4:2-3** reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,

Do you think we’re in that time? I do. Some people say, “I’m going to find a place that when I go, I feel affirmed. I feel like my own agenda is energized. I can understand now what my life is supposed to be in reference to my priorities.” Paul goes on to say

**2 Timothy 4:4-5** and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The third reference point to preaching Jesus is that

**3. Preaching Jesus makes Jesus the main focus.**

That may seem obvious, but Peter really leans heavy into this. Preaching Jesus makes Jesus the main focus. It is said in the ancient world, all roads lead to Rome. So too in the Bible, all passages lead to Jesus. A biblical sermon will always make Jesus the main focus. There are many subjects that the Bible presents related to how we follow Jesus and honor Jesus in our lives. But Jesus is the center of every topic.

Interestingly, the Day of Pentecost is a day when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell believers. You’d think that maybe Peter was going to preach then a sermon on the Holy Spirit. He does talk about the Holy Spirit, but he leads from the Holy Spirit to talking primarily with a focus on Jesus. That’s the way it should be, because Jesus told us what the ministry of the Holy Spirit is going to be. He said the Holy Spirit is going to come and put like a big spotlight on Jesus.

**John 15:26** “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

Peter is a Spirit-filled man and as he is preaching, the Spirit is driving the topic toward Jesus. In John 16, Jesus says the Holy Spirit

**John 16:14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

If we are to ask the question, “What is the evidence of the Holy Spirit filling my life? Or corporately, what is the evidence of the Holy Spirit filling this church?” What’s the answer? How do we know the key evidence of whether the Holy Spirit is filling my life or filling this church? Here’s the answer. We know that the Holy Spirit fills our life when our conversation focuses on Jesus. When the conversations and the relationships we have with each other, Jesus just is popping up; who Jesus is, what Jesus has done, that He’s coming back, what His ministry is to us now, seated at the right hand of God, all of this and more. When Jesus becomes the focus, there is one reason for that, and that is that the Holy Spirit is giving life and shining the light upon Jesus so that He would never be left in the corner, never left at the outer edges, but always at the center.

There are seasons in my life where I believe I’m filled with the Spirit. There are seasons in my life when I’m not. When I’m not filled with the Spirit, sometimes I want to talk to some of y’all and talk about football or talk about politics or talk about what’s happening in our community. And some of y’all, I find kind of irritating because it’s difficult to actually do that because you keep talking about Jesus. (Laughter!) Have you ever had that happen? Where someone is so filled with the Spirit that regardless of what topic you start down, at the end of the conversation you end up talking about Jesus. I know some of you are like that and I thank God for you. I need that. I hope to be that for you. Preaching Jesus makes Jesus the main focus. Notice what Peter says about Jesus.

***22*** *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God*

He’s speaking of Jesus’ humanity.

*with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst,*

He’s speaking of Jesus’ deity.

*as you yourselves know—* ***23*** *this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God,*

He’s speaking of Jesus’ eternality.

*you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*

He’s speaking of Jesus’ substitutionary atoning death.

***24*** *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.*

He’s speaking of Jesus’ resurrection power, Jesus being the life. Notice further

***25*** *For David says concerning him, “‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;* ***26*** *therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.* ***27*** *For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.* ***28*** *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’*

Again, he’s speaking of the Scriptures pointing to Jesus’ resurrection.

***29*** *“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.*

In other words, when he wrote Psalm 16, he wasn’t writing about himself.

***30*** *Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne,* ***31*** *he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ,*

All of Scripture points to Jesus.

*that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* ***32*** *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.* ***33*** *Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God,*

He’s speaking of Jesus’ ascension and His present ministry as our high priest 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.*

All of this Peter focuses and drives the attention of his hearers to Jesus; His Person, His work, His greatness, His glory, His goodness.

Do you see what Peter does? He preaches from Joel 2 and Psalm 16 and Psalm 110. It’s Bible, Bible, Bible. But then, as he preaches Bible, Bible, Bible, it’s Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, because all the Bible points to Jesus. Preaching Jesus should bring us to the feet of Jesus, that we would think upon Him, that we would bow before Him, that we would listen to Him. The best thing that can happen in any sermon is that we are given a picture of Jesus to gaze upon and rejoice.

The application is don’t crave man-centered sermons that attempt to feed your soul with good advice or with inspiring ideas or with wonderful how to’s. Crave sermons that lead you to Jesus as the source of life.

**4. Preaching Jesus calls the hearers to faith.**

Look at what happened. The people heard Peter talk about Jesus from the Scripture as He is filled with the Holy Spirit,

**Acts 2:37-40** Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

Do you see how he is calling them to a response? A sermon must not merely inform. It must also invite, invite to Christ. A sermon must not merely communicate. A sermon must also convict and command. It stirs a response.

John Wesley trained up many young men for preaching and he would send them off as interns out to preach in small towns and villages and rural farmlands. They would come back to report and he would ask them two questions. First, were there any converts? And second, were any people mad at you? If the answer was no and no, he would say, “I’m not going to send you out again.” It’s okay if there weren’t any converts as long as people were mad at you, then. Because the issue is that there is a call to response. If a person is resistant to that call to response, it’s so forceful, it’s so strong, the person doesn’t like it if they’re not yielding to it. They get upset at the person demanding a response because this person is speaking for God to repent. It’s not the pastor that is calling everyone to repent. We need to repent. We need to respond the same way. But it’s God calling us all through the Holy Spirit and through the preaching of His Word to have this kind of humble response.

Well, have you ever wondered how you might hear better sermons? I’m going to close with this. How can you hear better sermons? Right away when you think of the question, you think, “Here’s what the pastor can do.” Let’s imagine the pastor isn’t changing. I pray and I labor and I desire to be the best and sharpest instrument God would have me to be. But let’s imagine that that’s not how you can hear better sermons. How can you hear better sermons?

1. Long for a heart that draws near to God who speaks to us through Christ. Your heart will hear differently. Your heart will hear better sermons if your heart desires to glorify God and know Him.

2. Long for a mind engaged with what God has written for us. I understand that some truths that Scripture has are on the lower shelves. They’re kind of easy to pick up and take up and grab. But some truths that God has for us are on the middle shelf and even some way up high if we’re willing to do the work with our mind to reach up there and say, “I want to know, because God has given this for my benefit. I want to know. I’m going to kind of track. It’s hard work, but I’m going to do that. I’m going to engage my mind.”

3. Long for an ear that expects to hear God speak. This is not an individual word we’re listening to. It’s God Himself speaking through His Word to us.

4. Find a spiritual family to share what God has said to us. There is a reason why all of this is in community. There is no sense in the Bible that believers listened to the preaching of the Word alone at home. I know some of you out there are alone at home by necessity. But I would still say to you to find people who could watch with you and then call them and say, “Let’s talk about what the Word of God is saying to us.” It’s in community that the Word of God comes to life. If you want to hear better sermons, begin to share with one another what God is speaking to you through those sermons and you’ll find better sermons.

5. Commit to a life that applies what God has said.

I close by asking you if you know Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah. It’s the most essential question. Peter drives it home. Three thousand people listened to his message about who Jesus is; that He died on the cross for their sins, that they need a Savior, they need to be forgiven. They’re going to be held accountable one day to Christ as the righteous one. They need a refuge and God has provided that refuge in Christ. I would ask you, have you run to Christ by faith and said, “Jesus, I need you to be my refuge. I need you to be my Savior. I bow my knee to you as King.” I urge you to repent! Repent of the self-will life and turn to Christ and believe in Him.