

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

God's Method in Saving—Preaching, Pt 1
Acts 2:14

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SermonAudio Blurb: The excitement of the coming of the Holy Spirit has come but not the gospel. Now, in this incredibly important passage we see the God-given means to saving sinners, the preaching of the Word of God. But this seems so weak and foolish, so why not try other methods of reason and emotion? Today we are introduced to the means of salvation, the preaching of the Word of God, specifically a full-orbed gospel. But what are the impediments to hearing and believing the Word of God? In this sermon we see the horrible backdrop to what faces us as we bring the gospel to an unbeliever.

I. Introduction.

- A. We will spend our time in Acts 2 over the next several weeks, for in it we see the initial ingathering of people into the newly birthed Church.
 - 1. We will see the core message given to these people.
 - 2. The methods used.
 - 3. How people entered into the Church both spiritually and physically.
 - 4. The spirit of the people.
 - 5. And along with this we will address points of confusion and debate that tend to distract and divide people in the church.
 - a. Baptism.
 - b. Giving.
 - c. Places of worship.
 - d. Non-negotiables in the gathering of the Church.
- B. So with this full agenda it is good and necessary that you make every effort to be with us each Sunday.
- C. Today's sermon will be introductory and it will set the stage for a more full examination of the very first sermon ever preached in the Church.
- D. Read 2:14-36.

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1. So much is said in these verses that require a bit of explanation to you as you are not first-century Jews who know these passages quoted and what is packed into them.
 2. But I want you to remember that the Church came into being right here in Acts 2. A completely new entity that is described as a mystery. Something that was previously not understood or known.
 3. And the key mark of being a part of the Church is the presence of the Holy Spirit. We saw that they were baptised with the Spirit and also filled with the Spirit.
 - a. The filling is simply a divine empowerment to do something unusual. In this case it was to speak in languages they did not know. To speak them to tell of God's mighty works.
 - b. The baptism is where Jesus Christ immerses us in or with the Holy Spirit. And in doing so He makes us now part of His Body—the Church.
- E. Today I want us to note a key point in this entire section that can be easily overlooked, the purpose and power of preaching.
1. So to begin I want you to think about how much you value preaching? Is it a central part of your spiritual life? And if you are saying “yes” then consider how you show it.
 2. The methods given by God to build the Church are such simple and even weak things in the minds of people. It is evident in how little emphasis is put on preaching today.
 3. Instead we have people giving TED talks with their little barstool benches and clever PowerPoint slides while sipping their Starbucks and using every prop conceivable to draw and keep a crowd.

When Matt M and I were undergoing training to be church planting trainers we were taken to a local Starbucks. We were asked to look and see and ask what we could learn from their model. How did they develop a brand that drew people to them? How they grew by being very intentional in their service, their product, their color choices and the overall ambiance. Then, how can we take those ideas and bring them into the church to create an atmosphere to draw people in?

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We challenged that idea that the building of a church is about branding and atmosphere. It is and always will be about the centrality of the Word of God preached to both believers and unbelievers. We were met with smiles and chuckles.

4. But when you look at the early church you don't see atmosphere and event planning. You have the power of the Spirit in the lives of ordinary people who preached.
5. In a couple of weeks it will be 24 years for Kim and I here in Kenosha. Our goal was to first survive the first few years and that the church would survive my inexperience. Then it was to outlive the ministry of the prior pastor of 12 years and finally to die here in one place and one pulpit if God allowed. And for 24 years this place has experienced many changes in almost every way possible. But one thing that is unchanged is that every, single Sunday we gather and you heard the Word preached. Why?
6. Today and next Sunday, I wish to convince you of that or simply remind you of the need for preaching, for it is foundational to any other work of Missio Dei Fellowship.

II. The power in preaching the Gospel.

- A. Note that not one person was saved because of the miraculous speaking in foreign languages by the people. Not one. It was exciting and unique. It was attention-grabbing; but it did not save.
- B. But what happened next?
 1. The people form opinions of what happened—amazement, concern and mocking. But not a broken spirit before God. Not a heart made alive to Jesus Christ.
 2. But then in vs 14 the real work begins and it begins with Peter preaching (14).
 - a. He stands along with the other 11 apostles. But it is not a group effort, the task falls upon Peter.
 - b. Peter, the man with the foot in the mouth. Peter, the man who thinks he should rebuke Jesus. Peter, the man who denies his Lord three times.

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- c. Now, with the filling of the Holy Spirit he takes his stand and he looks to a group of fellow Jews on a holy day in the Temple and begins to preach.
- d. What is preaching? It is simply what we see here. A raising of the voice and declaring the Word of God.
 - (1) It is teaching, but it is more than teaching. It is not a dialogue either nor a chat or conversation.
 - (2) It is a bold, unfettered declaration of truth. Biblical truth is the message. Note how overtly biblical Peter's message is. Quote after quote from the Old Testament all driving the message to a point of confrontation.
 - (3) It is the same here at Missio. We aim, in our preaching, to force you to make decisions. Reject, ignore, embrace, adjust or something else. But what we do not want is to preach in such a way that all of you walk out unsure what the bible says.
- 3. Let me give **three key reasons** for the centrality and necessity of preaching in and for the Church. We will see two today and then the final reason next week as the Lord wills.
- C. First, preaching is necessary because of the incredible personal impediments resident in the hearer.
 - 1. It is here that we will look at many passages that are key to understanding the serious situation every person finds themselves to be in.
 - 2. Humanity's innate brokenness.
 - a. The realities of the Fall
 - (1) The reminders from Genesis 2 and 3.
 - (2) We see three circles of context that need to be held onto:
 - (a) First is the larger content of the whole bible. The Fall affects and explains everything else that takes place. Without this event being explained we would have no understanding of the Flood or anything else.

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- (b) Second is the immediate context, especially 2:16-17, where the command and warning to not eat of the tree is given. It is clearly stated what will happen if they eat, they will die. It is helpful to understand that death in the bible is primarily separation. We are, in fact, immortal. In Genesis there is the immediate spiritual separation and ultimately there will be a physical separation. Of the two, the first is most important, though the second is what most of us consider most important.
- (c) Third, is the context of the Fall. 3:1-5 is the temptation.
 - i) Vs 6 is the Fall. They ate what was not their's to eat. Such a simple yet earth-shattering event.
 - ii) Vs 7 is the result. Everything changed. And the next thing you see is shame and hiding from God. Then blame-shifting and arguing.
 - iii) By chapter 4 murder comes into reality and it goes on from there.
- (3) Romans 5.12-19. **(Opening Slide)**
 - (a) Paul uses the Genesis 2-3 account 4 times in Romans to develop his theology of sin. This is one of those times. (Also in twice in 1:18ff and once in Romans 8:19ff).
 - (b) There is a backward look to this passage, picking up various threads of thoughts that Paul has already discussed and bringing them all to bear on that one, original sin of Adam.
 - (c) Paul starts out in verse 12 speaking of that one sin of Adam and he ends with the declaration that man is not merely guilty because of that sin, but more terrible is that therefore all mankind have sinned.

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- (d) **(Slide 1)** There are a series of “throughs” (*dia*) in this passage that help the flow of the argument develop. **They speak of the ‘channels’ (some will call it ‘agency’) through which death/condemnation or life/righteousness come.** (Vss 12, 16, 17, 18, 19).
- (e) **(Slide 2)** There is also the preposition (*ek*). It is usually translated as “out of” or “from.” It is usually emphasizing the source of something, in other words, from what/who/where did something come from, (vs. 16).
 - i) 16b speaks of how out of the midst of all the sin of man against Christ, culminating in the Cross came the free gift of salvation.
 - ii) Whereas the only gift that freely came upon all of mankind by the first Adam was the gift of condemnation (16a).
- (f) **(Slide 3)** There is a final preposition that is very helpful in understanding the flow and emphasis of this passage, (*eis*). This preposition is direction oriented and often helps define results of something (vss. 12, 16, 18).
 - i) So in vss 12 and 15 it speaks of movement, “into” though it is not always translated but still obvious in the context.
 - ii) But in vss 16 and 18 it speaks of result.
- (g) The structure of passage is a comparison between Christ and Adam. This starts in vs. 12, vs. 13 explains it, vs. 15ff shows limits and differences and finally vs. 18 brings the conclusion with great clarity.
- (h) And so here, we see that Adam became the representative of all of humanity. What was his becomes ours for we find our root in him.

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- (i) And this means that we cannot escape it. Sin is what dominates every person.
- (j) And ONLY when we find our new identity in Jesus Christ does this ever change.
- (4) Jesus confirms this reality for us as well.
 - (a) Note His simple but painful assumption in Matthew 12:13. This is what He sees when He looks at us.
 - (b) And so He gives us this diagnosis in Mark 7:20-23.
 - i) The Pharisees (and each of us) were externalists and saw the external as the source of defilement (18-19).
 - ii) Jesus then turns this around and shows where the true source of defilement is—the heart. Note it starts with evil thoughts and moves to deeds.
- b. This leads to a harsh reality for all of us.
 - (1) Genesis 6:5.
 - (a) The greatest, fullest description of the heart of man. Two assessments of man by God: first the breadth and second the depth.
 - (b) "Was evil" This is God's judgment upon the thoughts and hearts of man. Strip away everything we like to drape over our thoughts and hearts and evil lies at the center. God is speaking of the moral state of humanity.
 - (c) "intent" This word speaks of the very formation of our thoughts. The soil, the soup, that produces a thought.
 - (d) "Every." This shows that there is no thought that a man could produce that was not formed without the deadly stain of evil. The very soup that our plans, ideas, words, dreams, and goals are formed from is evil.

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- (e) "Heart." This shows the location where God was looking. This is so important, because we know that the heart is the very essence, the very nerve center of a person. It is our mission control center. Nothing occurs separate from the heart.
 - (f) "His" This shows that God is looking at each individual heart. Not just a blanket statement, but over all humanity, each heart is examined and the same conclusion is drawn.
 - (g) "Only" This shows the totality of the evil. There was never an exception in time that the thoughts or intents were not evil! Think of that!
 - (h) "Continually." This shows the constancy of the evil. This says that not only was every thought evil, that every embryo of a thought evil, but that the only thing the heart did was evil. Meaning there was not a time, such as when we weren't thinking, that we sort of went into neutral. Every day, every second what was exploding into God's eyes? Each person's constant, total evil.
- (2) Ephesians 4:17-19 only amplifies this because Paul describes our pre-Christian ancestry.
- (a) vs 17 allusion. Note that everything is predicated off of the mind/heart.
 - (b) Vs 18 inability
 - (c) vs 19 incorrigibility
3. So, to remind you of what I am doing here today. I am trying to establish that the problem is our sin and that this sin is far greater an issue than we tend to make it. And therefore, only through God's ordained means can any person be forgiven and saved out of that state. And that ordained means is preaching the Word of God.
- D. Second, not only does our own sinfulness prevent us from being reasoned unto Christ, there is the additional vile work of Satan.

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- a. 2 Corinthians 11:3 tells us that he leads our thoughts astray. *“I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”*
- b. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 tells us Satan blinds us to the glory and saving presence of Jesus. Though we are already blinded, he now doubly blinds us.
 - (1) *“. . . the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*
 - (2) So when you speak to a non-Christian about Jesus and he does not believe the gospel what you are seeing is his own sin and the work of Satan together resisting and rejecting. It is truly a spiritual battle.
- c. Ephesians 2:2 tells us that he is effectively working in the lives of mankind. We walked/lived/conducted ourselves in accordance to Satan. He is the energy that drives us.
- d. And so 1 John 5:19 (turn).
 - (1) Notice first, that he describes the Christian as “of God” but not the world, meaning unbelievers.
 - (2) Elsewhere in chapter 3 he does say that the non-Christian is “of the devil” but not here. Instead he says that the world lies “in the evil one.”
 - (3) This entire world, this fallen, broken, and rebellious age is in view. But most importantly he is thinking of unbelievers.
 - (4) They are in the grip and dominion of Satan. But they are not struggling to free themselves from that grip. No, they lie there in his grip.
 - (5) They are contentedly snuggled up in his arms content and feeling quite sure of themselves. But all the while they have hovering over them the eternal, inescapable wrath of God.

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2. What then, beloved, is the means to escape this horrible reality? How can anyone escape? How can anyone be saved? What is the method and means?
 - a. It is not and cannot be through emotional singing and urging.
 - b. It is not and cannot be through philosophical arguments.
 - c. It is not through heaping guilt and manipulating the person into some sort of profession of faith.
 - d. Nor shall it be through vague statements like “you just need to love Jesus.”
 - e. It is and always will be through the preaching of the Word of God and the message it presents.

III. Conclusion.

- A. We will end here for I want you to go home and consider my words today.
- B. We have covered a lot of material and it needs to sit in your minds.
- C. Let me now briefly speak to you as a pastor, a shepherd.
 1. Parents, take this message to heart. Your dear child is born under the dominion of sin. They are sinners by nature. They love their sin and they are under its unrelenting power every second of their lives. So what is it that you are using to bring them to faith?
 2. Husbands and wives, this is true for your spouse too if they do not know and love Jesus Christ as their Lord. Shall you convert them by just showing a changed life? Shall you convert them with mere silent kindness? What has God given you that alone can save a soul?
 3. To each and every believer here. Grasp the enormity of our task. Jesus sent us into this world to make disciples of Him. And Him alone. What shall you do? What shall you say?
 4. May I plead with you just a moment to see that you are not up to the task? Not one of you or all of you together *en masse*!
 5. We all must be busy doing God’s business God’s way, as my old theology professor said over and over and over to me.
 6. **Time is gone for us to sit and relax. It is time to rise up, gird our minds in sober thinking and go to work.**

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Benediction

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Small Group Questions

- What did you learn or re-learned in this message? If you say you knew this, then help the group understand how it affects you in how you conduct yourself in day-to-day life.
- What sort of attitude should you have toward those who you see and know who are not a believer if these things are true about them? Why? List these and discuss them. Are there exceptions? Why?
- Finally, what prevents you from speaking the gospel to those around you, if you believe these things? And how should you pray for one another if these things are true?