



The Promise is for All

Sermon: Sunday 10:15 am – September 4th, 2011 – At Living Hope Lutheran Church

Gospel Reading:

Acts 2:36-41 New International Version 1984 (NIV1984) –

Peter Addresses the Crowd

Acts 2:36-41

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter replied, “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. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” ⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.



Sermon: The Promise is for All

Pentecost-12 Sunday – 9:30 am - September 4th, 2011 – Pastor Todd Goldschmidt

The Apostle Peter had just finished preaching his powerful Pentecost day sermon, concluding: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” His delivery of God’s law was on point and accomplished God’s purpose, for “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” These devout Jews had come to Jerusalem from around the known world to celebrate the Festival of Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, as it was known. The *Feast of Weeks* was one of three festivals for which God mandated that all male Israelites gather at the place where He’d put “his Name” to worship Him and bring their thank offerings. The other two were the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* (kicked off by the Passover observance), and the *Feast of Tabernacles* (a fall harvest festival in which the people camped in makeshift booths made of palm branches or tents to commemorate their 40 years of wilderness wandering). About these three feasts, the LORD said: “No man should appear before [Me] empty-handed” (Deut. 16:16).

These well-meaning Jews had come from far and wide to fulfill God’s command. When they arrived at God’s temple, Peter confronted them with the awful truth that the very Messiah they’d awaited for generations had come and gone already. He’d been received by very few of His own people; rejected by the hypocritical, power-mad religious leaders of the land; and crucified like a common-criminal by the hated Romans. And although Peter’s listeners might not’ve personally contributed to those sinful deeds, collectively they were guilty by association. They belonged to a faith that had, for the most part, long before ceased to serve as God’s vessel of grace. While they may not have been worshipping the pagan idols of their past apostasies, they’d certainly slid down the slippery-slope of false teaching in one of the two directions that such lies always lead: the liberal Sadducees’ p.o.v., who rejected every miracle in Scripture; or the self-righteous approach of the Pharisees, who believed they had God’s favor by their outwardly upright lives.

Sunday Worship Service: 10:15 A.M. (Sunday School/Adult Bible Class 9am)

7305 208th Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98053

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“Cut to the heart”—convicted and condemned by God’s law—“they asked, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” To which Peter replied: “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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” What a gracious announcement of God’s forgiving love Peter responded with! The LORD had hand-picked these listeners from across the globe to be there that very moment so that His Spirit could call them to faith in Jesus as their “Lord and Christ”; their God and Savior! They’d completed the first part of repentance: they were sorry for their sins, and the sins of their people. They longed for God’s forgiveness. And following further pleadings by Peter, in which he urged them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation,” they completed their repentance: “Those who accepted his message [by the in-working of God’s Spirit] were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” What an amazing harvest of souls!!!

Peter spoke of a “the promise” meant “for all who are far off.” There’s actually a product at your local grocer that goes by the name *Promise*. It’s a margarine that’s supposed to combine great taste with a healthier nutritional composition. What marketing genius! The name invites trust. It makes potential purchasers believe that there’s really only one margarine out there for them to buy, one that’s guaranteed to deliver amazing flavor *and* still be good for their family: *Promise*!

That word, *promise*, is also central to our text. It speaks of reliability. Let’s focus our hearts of faith on that word of hope and expectation as we hear our God say thru Peter: “The *promise* is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

What is the foundation of the promise Peter speaks of? It’s the sacrificial death of Jesus, the Messiah. The words of the prophets repeatedly pointed ahead to the arrival of God’s *Anointed One*: to the *seed of the woman* pledged to Adam and Eve after the fall who would undo the damage done by them in that first, fatal sin; to *great David’s greater Son*, who would usher in the eternal kingdom promised to Israel’s second king—that man after God’s own heart; to *Isaiah’s suffering Servant*, about whom he was inspired to write in chapter 53 of the book that bears his name: “he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (vv. 5-6). Peter, the Pentecost preacher, would go on to write in his first letter: “you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1:18-19).

Purely by God’s grace—and not because of any inherent worthiness or effort on our parts—the Holy Spirit has built our internal houses of faith on the rock solid foundation of Jesus Christ just like He did for those 3,000 souls so long ago as they were both “cut to the heart” by God’s law, and brought to accept Peter’s message and be baptized into Christ by God’s gospel message.

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What a life-changing experience that was for them that day—even as it has been for you and me! I'll bet they couldn't wait to share the good news with their friends and relatives back home so that they, too, could realize the joy and peace, the comfort and hope that they had through Jesus!

What about us, friends? Do our hearts burn with the same sort of zeal for evangelism that theirs did? Or have we grown lukewarm in our appreciation of God's grace and forgiveness? Are we content so simply sit back and enjoy the blessings of the promise and not share it with others who so desperately need to hear it so that they, too, can be brought by God's Spirit to stake their eternal salvation on Jesus Christ? Have we become complacent in our efforts to announce God's love in Christ, to let our light shine, to be the salt of the earth, to "give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have" as Peter also encourages us to do in his first epistle (3:15)? Is it possible that there's no discernable distinction between the way we live our lives and the way that unbelievers do? Have we forgotten that our primary purpose as God's people is to "declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9)? Did we miss the commission that our resurrected Savior gave to His Church of all time just before ascending back up into heaven? Didn't He say, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore—with *that in mind*—go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:18-19)?

Our God is a God both of the incomprehensibly huge and of the infinitesimally small. If we sent our most powerful telescope to our most distant known planet and took a peek from there, we'd still barely begin to see all that He created by His Word. Yet every movement of each subatomic particle is also sustained by His Word. Nothing's too small to escape His attention. This is our omnipotent God who sends us out into the world with this same Word to accomplish His agenda!

His agenda is crystal clear: to make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them & teaching them His truths. The highest goal of the God of the infinite & infinitesimal is to be worshiped *everywhere*. And though all creation testifies to His glory, there are still places in this world where He isn't even known. The fact is, there are no doubt people in our very community who've either never heard of Him, or who live under tremendous misconceptions about His nature and His purpose. God has given us a sacred charge! If we ever wonder what God wants us to be busy with, this is it. Our ascended Savior's one remaining goal is this: restoring our rebellious race into the pure image of God. Do we want real meaning in our lives? *Here it is!* Do we want to know we're part of God's plan? *This is it!* Do we want to experience God's power in our lives? *This is the mission that has "all authority" behind it!* Go! "Go and make disciples of all nations!" Fill the world with Christ's grace and glory before He returns on the Last Day! Amen.