

Scripture Reading:

Acts 2: [We begin in verse 36 with the conclusion of Peter's great sermon] 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

"The Reach of the Covenant"

In some ways this is the third sermon on a single verse where the conclusion of Peter's sermon cuts his listeners to the heart:

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Two weeks ago we looked at the judgment of the house of Israel:

- They had not received the promised Messiah, but rather crucified the Lord of Glory

However, Jesus had said that sins against the Son, even putting Him to death, would be forgiven, but not sins against the Holy Spirit. Now the Holy Spirit has come and we see the salvation of many who had in their flesh condemned the Son of God. Here at the day of Pentecost, under the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit the words of Peter have cut them to the heart and we see thousands saved in a single day. The number of those saved will continue to grow until the stoning of Stephen and the persecution of other Christians drives them from this city, in part so they will carry out the command of Jesus to go to Samaria and the ends of the earth.

In AD 70 comes the utter destruction of the City of Jerusalem, and those who sinned against the Spirit by rejecting His call to repentance.

- Last week we saw the impact of Jesus being made the Christ, the Savior and how this promise of salvation is to us and our children.
- I also reviewed two great errors that have overcome much of the American church...

Errors which have dimmed our view of this great promise of salvation and keep us from seeing Jesus as both Lord and Christ as we should today.

- We have come to believe that most of the great work of Jesus as Lord takes place in the future after a great rapture when Jesus will actually reign as Lord of Lords

We have also come to believe that much of the work that Jesus does as Savior is only in the Spiritual realm. As a result, we have a public realm where Christians meekly ask for our Jesus to have a seat at the table along with all the other powers of the age...

- Declaring victory when a city like Lodi allows someone to pray in the name of Jesus
- But having no outrage when that same city invites Buddhists, Muslims and many other idolaters to come and pray in the name of their gods as well!

Our spiritual health is NOT good when we see within our churches the practical problems of fornication, divorce and even abortion and homosexuality occurring at about the same rate as we see in the surrounding pagan culture.

- Neither problem bothers us much because we have made our decision for Jesus, we have been baptized with water & the Holy Ghost and now we have our ticket to heaven...

What else matters?

- And that is exactly what is reflected in our modern evangelism

The picture here in the Book of Acts is quite different:

- Peter has pronounced real judgment and it has cut his listeners deep in their hearts so they cry out, What must we do?

This is the Biblical pattern of being 'friendly' to seekers, preparing them for the Good News.

When John the Baptist came proclaiming the Kingdom we read in Mark's Gospel, "5 Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins."

- Trust me, they did not come for the Starbucks and a Danish ☺

When Jesus meets Saul of Tarsus on the road revealing Himself as the Lord he had been persecuting, Saul, "trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?'

- And so it is here where Peter has given his first Spirit-filled sermon bringing real conviction to his listeners
- Peter tells them to do two simple things: Repent and be baptized!

He tells them to turn away from this crooked generation and accept the sign and seal of being a member of God's covenant community, knowing that their sins have been forgiven!

- As we saw last week, this applies to us and our children:

-- Adults may come to the baptismal font if they have repented of their sins and turned from their old ways!

-- Children of believers are brought to the baptismal font based on the promise of God to their parents

Both adults and children are then expected to live by faith, hearing and doing what Jesus has commanded... NOT forsaking the gathering together of God's people in Worship where they confess their sins and know the forgiveness of Jesus each and every week!

- This is what we studied and learned last week as the Promise of the Covenant, a promise which we must fully embrace.

This week, we will see how these same errors have impacted the way we view the Reach of the Covenant: I want us to learn that the reach of God's gracious covenant of salvation is neither small nor shallow. We have a strong hint of how great and deep it is here at Pentecost:

- **3,000 are saved in a single day**
- **3,000 lives which are then greatly impacted and changed**

We will take the next two weeks to study these changes and to see how they are reflected in our Apostle's Creed where we confess the one Holy Catholic Church and the communion of the Saints.

- **What I want us to consider this week is the twice given truth that it is God who is in control of His Church and the growth of the Kingdom: The Lord has a plan that will NOT be thwarted!**

In verse 39, we have seen where Peter says the promise is to you and your children, but then he adds, "AND to all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Then at the end of chapter two, Luke tells us, "And the Lord added to their number day by day, those who were being saved."

- **Do you notice a pattern here?**
- **Those who are saved are those who are called!**

This is exactly what Jesus explained to Nicodemus when he first came to visit the Savior at night:

"7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

- **As many as the Lord our God calls are saved!**

Earlier in this Gospel, it was as if John were explaining what would happen here at Pentecost:

"11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Now just as we learned last week about how covenant baptism is not presumptuous...

- **So we must see from the Scriptures that believing that God sovereignty calls those who will be saved does not diminish man's responsibility nor our obligation to preach the Good News!**
- **Understanding that God calls those who are saved does not discourage evangelism, it should embolden and encourage us!**

We must believe and practice the wisdom of Paul given in Romans chapter ten: "13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

- **Peter has just preached the Gospel of Peace to those gathered**
- **We are to preach the good news of the covenant of salvation, trusting God for the results...**

Here we see 3,000 souls added on the first day of the Church...

But when the Apostle to the Gentiles preaches his great sermon in Athens we are told that only “some men joined him and believed.”

- This does not mean that the Gospel was more gladly received by the Jews than the Gentiles, nor does it mean that Peter was the better preacher!

Ultimately, only a remnant of Israel is saved before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple

- However, in just a few hundred years the Roman Empire would be considered a Christian nation and all of the pagan wisdom of the Greeks would be nearly lost.

The Apostle to the Gentiles had an impact on the entire Roman Empire which is why I believe Luke closes his orderly account with these words,

“[Paul] welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”

- We see Peter’s boldness here at Pentecost confronting the leaders of Israel who had just crucified the Lord of Glory
- BOTH Peter and Paul should be examples for us with regard to our own boldness!

Do we think things are desperate today in America?

- Do we have sin abounding and wicked leaders?
- Is the power of government growing at all levels and threatening our liberty?
- Is anyone who believes in Jesus mocked & ridiculed on TV?

If Peter or Paul were with us here this morning: Do you think they would feel sorry for us?

No, I suspect they would be ashamed of our cowardice and lack of vision!

Paul was not afraid of the wisdom of his age, nor was he discouraged by a lack of response because he knew that he was called to proclaim the Kingdom of Jesus with boldness and to believe that it would advance without hindrance!

- He really believed that the gates of hell would not prevail under the assault of the Church!

To help us understand the reach of the Covenant, let me quickly review some of what the Bible says about the advance of the Kingdom...

- God first told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Sure sounds like a BIG mission and lest we think it was undone by the fall of man into sin, here is what God said to Noah AFTER the flood:

- “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.”

Same mission only now it is done under toil and groaning.

- God has a plan for dealing with sin and again we get a good picture of the impact of that plan in the Book of beginnings: Where in Chapter 3 God tells Satan:

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring, He shall bruise [or crush] your head and you shall bruise His heel.” [help kids get this picture]

I don't have time for a complete Old Testament survey, but I think just a few of the big pictures we are given can help us see where God plans to take the Kingdom of His Son.

We must remember that God is telling His story in all the Bible:

- **One man, Abraham becomes the patriarch of a family, then the 12 great grandchildren grow into a great nation which later becomes a great empire under King David.**

Even after their fall into sin & exile, Daniel is given the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream where we learn that the Kingdom of Jesus will crush the pagan empires and fill the whole earth.

- **The simple altars of Abel and Noah become the Tabernacle in a large tent in the wilderness, which then becomes a mighty Temple under King Solomon**

Even after its destruction, Ezekiel the Prophet is given a vision of an even greater Temple where waters flow out to the nations. John in the Book of Revelation closes the Canon of Scripture describing the Church, the New Jerusalem as a great city that comes down from heaven, with healing for the nations.

When we come to the New Testament Jesus describes His Kingdom with many abundant images:

- **The mustard seed that grows into the mighty tree**
- **He calls us the salt of the earth, not the salt of the cupboard or even the dinner table 😊**
- **He talks about a plentiful harvest that requires many workers**
- **Even the parable of the wheat and tares has a great harvest of wheat**
- **The parable of the sower has the seed in the good soil bearing thirty, sixty and a hundred fold**
- **A little leaven [like these 120 in the upper room] leavens the whole lump [like the Roman Empire].**
- **The Kingdom is like a net that gathers fish of every kind**
- **We are to be a light to the world, not a candle under a bed**
- **There is the great banquet where the master sends out his servants to bring in all the guests needed for his house to be full**
- **Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up on the earth [on the cross], will draw all people to Myself.”**

And of course, it was Jesus who gave us the Great Commission to disciple ALL the nations!

This was pictured at Elam, where the twelve springs, now the New Israel, were watering the seventy palm trees: The nations of the earth.

Despite all of this we have a mostly American myth of a small Kingdom for Jesus in a so-called Church age. Some instead focus solely on where Jesus teaches that many are called and few are chosen or the narrow gate to imply that things look pretty grim this side of the rapture.

We studied this in our journey through Luke's Gospel but let's go back and see what these images really represent and their context. The narrow gate is cited from Luke 13, where by the way, Jesus has just given the examples of the mustard seed and leaven to show the expanse of His kingdom!

"23 Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' [sadly, the view of many modern Christians] And [Jesus] said to them, 24 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' 26 then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' 27 But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'"

- The examples of the narrow gate and few being called are not meant to restrict the size of the Kingdom but rather the entrance to the Kingdom:
- There is only one name under heaven by which men must be saved!
- Not only is this example preceded by an expansive view of the Kingdom, with the examples of the mustard seed and leaven but look what follows as Jesus warns these proud hypocrites:

28 "There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out."

- The faithful Saints of the Old Testament are saved & they will be joined by multitudes of Gentiles, just as God promised Abraham...

29 [Jesus said] "They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God."

- This is what Peter proclaims when he says the promise is unto you and your children [the Jews], and those afar off [the Gentiles]
- The promise to Abraham that his descendents would be like the stars of heaven or sands of the sea will be fulfilled.

Our text this morning tells us that Peter continued to exhort them and bear witness with many words, which we are not given.

I am sure much of what Peter went on to say is included in the orderly account that Luke is presenting as we move through the Book of Acts.

We do know that the result was the conversion of 3,000 men in a single day: Their lives were now very different as we shall see over the next two weeks.

We will see the one Holy Catholic Church and communion of the Saints, not just the 120 who had gathered in the upper room before the Spirit came

- They are the mustard seed that Jesus has planted and watered with the Holy Spirit which will now grow to fill the whole earth!

This is the reach of the covenant and the story that we will see in the rest of the Book of Acts.

May we believe all that God has promised and be ready to serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords as His Kingdom continues to fill the earth today...

Believing that He adds to His Church daily those who are being saved!