
Propelling the Church Outward

Acts 2

Dan Turner

Introduction A half-goat and half-man in a snowy forest holding an umbrella and carrying packages. A queen on a sleigh. A lamppost in the woods. And then a lion bounding into it all...the story of *the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis can seem so far away and so removed from our daily living.

After her first visit to Narnia, Lucy comes back to rejoin her brothers and sister telling them of the wonder of the world called Narnia. Their response can be likened to comebacks perhaps you have heard when you tell the gospel to others. The kids were mocking the little girl in her little world with chants paralleling “Lucy is a lunatic” / “Lucy is a lunatic”.

And yet something so small as a wardrobe on the outside contained such immense space on the inside. The four children finally entered the wardrobe and fitted with wardrobe clothes crossed the threshold into a world of beauty and yet loaded with danger, a world of wonder and yet weighty responsibilities, a world of joy and yet lured by deadly temptations, a world of heartbreak and yet the dawning of a new age, a world of great wind that bends the trees and transforms people from stone to flesh – a place of dead quiet into an outburst of joy and celebration.

You can almost hear little Lucy say, “welcome to Narnia”.

Now, I began tonight’s message by describing a bit of *the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*¹ to stimulate and steer your imagination. Tonight I will take you into the book of Acts.

For some here tonight or listening in you find Christianity as the child’s fantasy of escaping. The people, the places, the activities found in the Bible appear to be irrelevant and unreal to you. Well, I want you to know differently. I want this message to be a world of wonder for you. I want your hearts to break. I want your hearts to awake by the Holy Spirit to the promise of the gospel as seen in Jesus Christ.

For others, you believe the gospel but presently you find the distractions and cares of the world obstructing the flow of joy in Jesus and gaging your voice of witness about Jesus. You are not on mission. You find yourself at curbside. I want you to be revived by Acts 2. I want this message to be for you a breeze of refreshment bringing back for you a renewed participation in the mission of the Church.

To do this, see yourself as the recipient of the book of Acts. Luke the writer of Acts wrote to a man named Theophilus. Now, imagine Luke talking to you now about why he wrote this book for you.

¹ I’m indebted to Gene Veith and his book, *The Soul of the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, for the above descriptions of Narnia.

“I, Luke, have told you [Theophilus] the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the epic advancement of the church throughout the known world because...”

Christ is not finished applying His finished work on the cross. The way, Theophilus, He continues to expand His kingdom on earth is through His witnesses, the church, by His Spirit and His Word.

This expansion of His kingdom on earth includes you and your church. Now, it's been over 30 years since Jesus walked and talked among us before He was taken up in the cloud of glory. I, like you, never saw Jesus physically. Some days when days are not going well, I wish I had. But remember what I did for you in writing my first book. I gave you an orderly account of Jesus' life, His death and His resurrection. This history is accurate, based on eye witnesses and well documented. You can trust its historicity and authenticity when you are tempted to doubt. I gave you this gospel because this is the power of God for your salvation. You will have certainty over this gospel story as high-ranking people denounce your Christian life, as others you work with misunderstand your worldview, as people mock you and are surprised you don't plunge into the same flood of wild living, as they slander you for your gospel-shaped values, as false teachers attempt to sway you to another position, and even others threaten you and perhaps will eventually kill you.

This story I've written you is your story. Enter into it fully. Consciously make this story your own. It should shape who we are even more than our family origins.

Do not be deceived. Something so small as a book on the outside contains such immense space on the inside. As you read and reflect upon the book of Acts you will cross the threshold into a world of beauty and yet loaded with danger, a world of wonder and yet weighty responsibilities, a world of joy and yet lured by deadly temptations, a world of heartbreak and yet the dawning of a new age, a world of great wind that bends the trees and transforms people from being stone to being flesh – transforming places of dead quiet into an outburst of joy and celebration.

O Theophilus, be encouraged. Do not grow weary. Do not be deceived. Stay the course. Follow the Christ. Enjoy the fellowship. Read and reflect much on His Word. Pray often. Be filled with His Spirit. Keep the church missional.

My brothers and sisters – that is the message for tonight. This is our story. To live in this story is to live under the enthroned Christ by His Spirit and Word in community on mission. This story is made up of three parts. 1) The Spirit 2) The Word 3) The Community

The Spirit

v1-21

To experience the enthroned Christ so that we will live together in community on mission notice that the church came into existence by the promised Holy Spirit. Picking up the story in Acts 2:1 we read...

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

(Acts 2:1-13 ESV)

The past work of the Spirit

v1-13

Regarding the Spirit first notice His past work.

In these verses we come across the day of Pentecost. In the Jewish calendar it is 50 days after their Passover celebration where the Jews slaughtered the Passover lamb to cover their sins. 50 days after the slaughtering of Jesus Christ on the Cross (10 days after Jesus was taken up into heaven) we come across something striking; a supernatural, never to be repeated event. Jesus promised that when He went back to heaven he would send His Spirit to carry on his mission. Much can be said regarding the birth of the Christian church – the descending powerful wind, the unusual tongues of fire; the supernatural ability to proclaim the message to various nations in their various languages. The start of the age of the Spirit was spectacular for multiple reasons. But for our purposes tonight understand one basic thing.

Pentecost is an historic event. Like the historic events of Christ's birth or crucifixion, the promised outpour of His Spirit at Pentecost was a one-time gift from God never to be repeated. It happened when Jesus ascended into heaven and seated on His throne he poured out His Spirit on this date; a morning around AD 30.

The present effects of the Spirit

v14-21

Though this fulfilled promise occurred on a date let's pick up the story in v14 and notice the ongoing effects of the promised Spirit.

[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.'

(Acts 2:14-21 ESV)

With multitudes gathered from all over the known world observing this strange phenomenon Peter, one of the apostles and leader of the 120 or so stood up to explain what was happening. This initial outpouring of the Spirit was prophesied by a prophet named Joel sometime around 600 years before the event. Peter, both filled with the Spirit and the Word explains from the Word what was going on.

A basic point Luke makes with this promised fulfilled is how it applies to each member of the church. This can be seen in v [17] “*And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.* And in v18 the point is developed further. [18] ...in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and **they shall prophesy.**

The empowering of the Spirit does not fall on a particular group or class of people. In this passage, all heaven broke loose and changed a bunch of misfits – a crowd of cowards became the starting of the church against which the powers of hell will not prevail. All who call on the name of the Lord are saved and receive this Spirit. He is not given based on gender. He is not assigned to a certain age group or socio-economic status. Old, young, men, women, boys, girls, slaves...irrespective of backgrounds – everyone in the church who is saved has the Spirit's enablement to speak the truth for God. This is the present effects of the Spirit in the local church. This is who we have to carry out the mission given us by the enthroned King – Jesus.

The Word

v22-36

To live in this story is to live under the enthroned Christ by His Spirit as we see in v1-21. But this is not the whole of the story. There is a second part to this story. It known as The Word.

In v22-36 we have the first recorded New Covenant sermon. Peter sees the opportunity to preach. And he delivers the gospel message. We will not read this section due to time but I want to point out Peter's outline for his message and highlight the points.

Verse 23 we come across the words "this Jesus".

Verse 32 we come across the words "this Jesus".

Verse 36 we come across the words "this Jesus".

This 3-part structure forms the gospel message the Apostle Peter preached on the day of Pentecost.

In the first section v22-23 we hear Peter describing Jesus' life and death. He makes a point that Christ's death was no accident. It was not like he got ambushed and was defeated. It was a crucifixion predetermined and planned by God almighty. Christ's death was the design. (Quote Isaiah 53:5-6; 1Corinthians 5:7 & 1Peter 2:24 making the connection that Christ's death was a substitutionary death).

The plain point Peter makes is this: **Jesus died.**

Now in v24-32 we come to a larger section to demonstrate the resurrection of Christ.

By quoting the Psalms and explaining the passage to the hearers, Peter makes plain that Jesus died bodily and that this death by God's plan would not end in decomposition. At the perfect time (3 days later) Jesus was raised from the dead by God almighty.

The plain point Peter makes is this: **Jesus was raised from the dead.**

Now in v33-36 we come to the end of Peter's declaration. He declares with boldness that this Jesus who was killed on a cross; this Jesus who was raised from the dead; this Jesus now has ascended into heaven and has taken his throne of royalty and reigns as both Lord of all and the anointed king who saves (i.e. Jesus). This Jesus is the enthroned king.

The plain points Peter makes is this: **Jesus lives forever as king.**

Here is the outline of the gospel. This is the story the church lives in and lives on and lives out. We are empowered by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel to a world under God's judgment.

This is the reality of the local church. The called out ones receive the Spirit and speak the word. And this truth is not just applied to a bunch of individuals. We end our time tonight by noticing what Spirit and Word produce.

The Community

v37-47

What happens when God's people; His local church, empowered by His Spirit speak for Him (cf. 18) by speaking out the gospel? What do Spirit and Word create? Listen as I read the last 10 verses.

[37] 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?" [38] 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. [39] 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.” [40] And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” [41] So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

[42] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43] And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. [44] And all who believed were together and had all things in common. [45] And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. [46] And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47] praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

We see troubled consciences needing hope and relief. We see God's people counseling troubled people by telling them to repent and be baptized. We see people doing just that; namely turning from their sins and turning to Jesus for their only hope of salvation from God's just anger. We see them submitting to baptism. We see them receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. We see them added to the number. We see the local church growing. We see the local church generously sharing with each other. We see the local church growing some more. Day by day we see community and see conversion.

To sum up this section we may say that the Spirit and Word create community. And that this community has two basic characteristics: they are generous and they are growing.

I'll wrap up tonight by taking us back to where we began tonight. But instead of listening to Luke talk to Theophilus, let's think of enthroned Christ talking to us.

Conclusion

“I, Jesus, have told you the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the epic advancement of the church throughout the known world because...”

I'm not finished applying my finished work on the cross. I continue to expand my kingdom on earth through you as witnesses of me by my Spirit and my Word.

I know that some of you are going through days of trouble. So remember that my Word is fully sufficient and accurate. You can trust its historicity and authenticity when you are tempted to doubt. I gave you this gospel because this is the power of God for your salvation. You will have certainty over this gospel story as high-ranking people denounce your Christian life, as others you work with misunderstand your worldview, as people mock you and are surprised you don't plunge into the same flood of wild living, as they slander you for your gospel-shaped values, as false teachers attempt to sway you to another position, and even others threaten you and perhaps will eventually kill you.

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O Clearcreek Chapel, be encouraged. Do not grow weary. Do not be deceived. Stay the course. Follow Me. Enjoy the new covenant community of fellowship. Be generous. Read and reflect much on My Word. Pray often. Be filled with my Spirit. Keep the church missional.