

Acts | The Incendiary Fellowship

The First Sermon

Acts 2.12-39

5.1.16

Acts 2.12-39 *And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"¹³ But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."*

¹⁴ *But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. ¹⁵ "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; ¹⁶ but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; ¹⁸ EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. ²⁰ 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. ²¹ 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.'*

²² *"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- ²³ this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. ²⁴ "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. ²⁵ "For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. ²⁶ 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; ²⁷ BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. ²⁸ 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.' ²⁹ "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ "And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, ³¹ he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. ³² "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ³³ "Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. ³⁴ "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, ³⁵ UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.'" ³⁶ "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ-- this Jesus whom you crucified."*

³⁷ *Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be*

baptized 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 your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."*

We're looking at The Book of Acts...it's written by the historian, a physician who also wrote The Gospel According to Luke...and that's why it's sometimes called, "the sequel to Luke" or "Luke Volume Two" - what Jesus Christ continued to do...by His Spirit ...through the Church.

Today is our second look at the pivotal event in this book and THAT is the Day of Pentecost. Last week, we looked at the miraculous occurrences on that day. Today is the aftermath when the Apostle Peter stands up to explain to the crowd what is happening.

Peter's speech has long been a standard study for sermon classes (i.e. what a sermon should be) BUT TODAY I'D LIKE to look at this whole scene as a kind of paradigm for worship... i.e. how is the Church supposed to worship?...Is anything here normative for us? Is there anything here that's supposed to be a pattern and what IS that pattern...how should it inform modern Christian worship?

In a 2009 book by a philosophy professor from Calvin College named James K.A. Smith called *Desiring the Kingdom*...Smith talks about human beings as lovers... i.e. we're NOT primarily THINKERS whose characters are formed by ideas or thoughts but by our loves/desires. He says we are "Homo-Liturgicus" that is "man the worshiper"; we're formed by what we desire or love or worship. And he goes on to discuss some of the liturgies in modern America...

These are cultural practices that somehow fulfill our desire for transcendence or otherworldliness and he zeroes in on three: 1) A spin on patriotism presented in the form of entertainment ("sacrificial violence") 2) The modern university ("cathedrals of learning") and 3) The Mall ("consuming transcendence").

He shows how the modern shopping mall is built like a temple...it has a majestic atrium (like a vestibule where you can see the sky). Often there are flags of the nations signifying that THIS is for everyone. There are commandments in the form of ideal people on posters (models of what we SHOULD look like but don't – we fall short of the glory of Giselle and Tom Brady)...And there are also practitioners (priests) salespeople who tell us how to atone (by buying the right clothing and products) and of course there are confessional booths (fitting rooms).

You'll have to read this very sophisticated analysis of modern American Worship: the liturgies/rituals/stories we are using to fill the vacuum... human beings are "homo liturgicus" – we have to worship because we are defined not so much by our beliefs but by our

loves/desires/worship...It's pretty important then to think about the liturgy the public form of worship that God seems to give us for the restructuring of OUR desires – let's look at:

1) the MODEL 2) the MESSAGE and 3) the MINDSET

This is the Church in the midst of a pluralistic world where people believe a variety of things...and Luke is writing not just to RECORD but to INSTRUCT (not only to Inform but to Reform the Church's life...

As we saw last week we can't apply everything in a wooden way...there is definitely something that's unique and ONLY ONCE in this situation – it IS a kind of cross-roads of history moment...BUT even though the pebble drops into the pond only ONCE, the ripples and effects of this unique event continue!

This took place on a Sunday... the day of the resurrection...the First Day in the dawn of a new creation... They were telling the mighty deeds of God...literally the "magnificent things of God." In other words, they were admiring or worshiping God.

The Psalms repeat the refrain "make known His deeds among the nations" (Ps 105) and here are Jewish people representing many nations hearing the deeds of God. They're celebrating God's entrance into history and they're inviting the Nations to worship with them.

The worship of the manna tells a story...it says that we are made to consume...and consuming the right things makes us better and whole and fulfilled AND THIS WORSHIP SERVICE IN JERUSALEM also tells a Story (a very different story)...in the language of the people. The people are asking a question: "What does this miracle mean – how is it that unlearned people can speak our languages miraculously? What does it mean? And at the end: what should we DO?"

And at least PART of the MODEL is that God wants people to understand what He has done...He wants His church to make Him known...make His glory known among all peoples.

And as we saw, last week to do so with some sense of awe... "they were all amazed...marveled ...amazement ...wonder (v.43) everyone kept feeling a sense of awe." And the source of this "feeling" was God...God was there...the Spirit was present.

"When you gather, I will be with You...when you rehearse My magnificent deeds, I will give you My very Heart, My Spirit will attend and will prompt non-believing people to ask, 'What's going on?'"

And IN this model, this FIRST worship gathering, we find a crucial pairing; the TWO main characters in The Book of Acts show up at the celebration: the Word and the Spirit. You'll see them together again and again in this Book. The Presence and the Word.

The Spirit, as we saw last week, is the Communicating Spirit and to hear Him, and to receive His Word is the highest act of worship. Christian spirituality is essentially a RECEPTIVE exercise...hear/receive/take.

And what IS the word that Peter spoke?

Well, to put it in one word: Gospel. Christian worship is focused on the mighty deeds of God in the Good News of what Jesus Christ accomplished in His life, death and resurrection – the Gospel/Good News.

Peter appeals to two witnesses: the Hebrew Bible and the witness of the Apostles...what they saw with their own eyes. He shows that the whole Bible was really a pointer TO JESUS CHRIST. He quotes the Prophet Joel and the Psalms and he's teaching the future Church HOW TO LOOK AT THE BIBLE.

It's the Gospel-Method of reading. It's NOT, "See David, the great hero...now YOU go and try to be a hero like David...and your life will be blessed like his."

No – what these disciples learned from Jesus Christ is that the whole Bible (what we call the Old Testament) is all about Him. They've been soaking in that method. It's NOT "Go imitate Isaiah...go and be like Ruth and Elijah and Esther and Abraham..."

Peter says, "David DIED...and is buried (see the tomb)...David's life pointed to a greater One to come and so with Joel and Ezekiel and Sarah and all the writings and all the characters in the Bible... they speak of Him...who came and championed our cause and defeated death (because DEATH couldn't hold a perfectly good/innocent Man) and He ascended into the very presence of His Holy, Holy, Holy Father...and won the Heart of God which He poured out on us!"

It wouldn't be good news if the Bible was about US and our obligation to follow Moses, follow Deborah, follow Sarah... The real Good News is that even though all these heroes failed, a Greater than Moses has come, a Greater than Jonah, a Greater than David...One whose tomb is empty! The HOPE of David was NOT David...but a Savior, said Peter who has finally come!

Peter's sermon moves back and forth between God's DOING and our FAILING... "Hear O Israel...i.e. Men of Israel listen: Jesus the Nazarene a Man attested by God with miracles..."

(Then our failings:) "This Man you nailed to a Cross..."

(Then God's DOING again:) "God raised Him UP..."

(And then the sermon concludes with a sharp charge:) "THIS Jesus, YOU crucified!"

Peter started by answering their question: "What does all this mean?" and NOW Peter ends with an implied question: "God HIMSELF has vindicated and totally approved of this Jesus...but YOU rejected Him and threw Him away... N O W...what are you gonna do?"

And there they stand...in the Presence of God... exposed...naked and ashamed and they are "pierced to the heart" and THEY PICK UP THE IMPLIED question and ask, "What SHALL we do?"

And, you know, this IS also a normative part of the liturgy or public worship of the Church of Jesus Christ... We're no better than these people...they were so selfish that they wanted Jesus Christ to leave them alone and go away and they DISCARDED THE PRICELESS TREASURE...and we do too.

And yet somehow in the plan of God...our selfishness and the world's darkest hour...was somehow in keeping with the eternal plan of God...was (v. 23) "the predetermined plan of God"... Are we responsible? YES. But was it also God's unstoppable determined plan...well then we're not responsible... right? NOPE...it's NOT either/or...it's both/and.

"What have we done?" they ask ...and we...like the great Rembrandt painting that includes HIM (the artist) participating in Christ's crucifixion...we too if we are cut to the heart cry out, "What shall I do?"

"Repent", says the Apostle... "and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit."

"Face your selfishness and merge into this New People, the forgiven, be baptized into the Body ...come identify with US... the selfish and the bad who are saved by God's eternal plan...those who are being renovated by the Spirit...God's new community."

And this TOO is the norm for our regular worship our liturgy. It's for us and our children and whomever will receive (41- those who received...). This is the MINDSET that has to permeate our worship:

1. We ought to invite people who don't believe because God wants His magnificent acts of grace to be admired and enjoyed among the nations.
2. We get to (and have to!) keep the gospel at the center of things in our singing and sermons. Believers and non-believers NEED the gospel! We don't have to choose between an evangelistic service and a worship service, it's always "good news worship."
3. We can and MUST expect the Presence of God in the worship service. God loves to attend and promises to be here. He wants to be with us...and wants us to receive.

4. We can hope to be pierced by the good news...and when we are ...and when we ask, “What should we do?” we can count on the answer... “Return...repent...receive the Spirit and know the forgiveness of sin...relief/new life.”

5. Last ...maybe YOU'RE asking the question right now... “What should I do?” What does repentance look like...how does baptism work? So come up after the Communion and ask...new life and forgiveness is yours...receive it.

The Communion

5.1.16

Fence the Table (please read 1st Corinthians 11)...

Our liturgy – i.e. our public form of worship is the telling and retelling of a story.

It's not the story that the mall tells...that we can fix ourselves and our lives will be like the sitcoms and the beer commercials if we just buy the right clothes and products...if we trust the sales people and emerge from the fitting rooms clothed in the splendor of the cool new look, THEN we'll be O.K.

Our story is that we are selfish...and we can't save ourselves...and we sort of want God to leave us alone...but that God loves us...and He came for us...and gave Himself for us in Jesus Christ.

Our Story is that God planned this from all eternity...and God is now somehow IN us...and the Spirit is renovating the temple...and changing our loves. He is freeing us from selfishness and death and giving us to see the beauty of LIFE.

This is becoming our desire...what we admire...what we celebrate...it's becoming our Story...the way we make sense of our past, present and future.

And as we keep receiving this...it's changing NOT just our behaviors but our desires...so LET US KEEP ON RECEIVING...let us receive Him who loved us and becomes our spiritual food and drink.

Let's PRAY