

“PENTECOST PREACHED: THIS JESUS.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Acts 2:22-36

Prayer: Holy Father, humanly speaking the task before me is impossible. Rule and over rule now, like a stream of water direct all our hearts and minds to the truth of your Word and its application to our lives. Come, Holy Spirit, hear and help, for the sake of Jesus, in whose name we are bold to make all our requests. Amen.

Introduction.

Peter is preaching his first sermon, a three point sermon based on three OT texts. We looked at the first point last week built on Joel 2:28-32 when Peter explained to the Jews in Jerusalem that God has poured out His Spirit as He promised long ago.

After giving this explanation of Pentecost, Peter explains why God did it now. Something has happened they need to know.

Full of the Holy Spirit Peter says, “Men of Israel, listen to me, I have something very important to say” and His first word is Jesus. That’s it, the most important thing to say is Jesus. That is the name above all names. Jesus is the answer to their confusion about what’s going on. Jesus is the answer to all of life’s most pressing questions and the most daunting problems.

More than anything else this is what they must hear.

The best way to understand Pentecost is by Jesus. So Peter preaches Jesus, the birth, life, ministry, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, the whole Gospel concerning Jesus. Luke gives us just a summary.

This Jesus whom you crucified, Psalm 16:8-11.

He starts with the *incarnation* by saying “Jesus of Nazareth, a man.” No ordinary man, not even an extraordinary man, but a man who is also God. By the time Peter gets to the end of his sermon he is going to crescendo into the greatest conclusion ever. “You thought you crucified a man, but He is actually the Lord and Christ.”

Let’s follow his argument as he builds his case by walking us through the life of Jesus.

The *life and ministry* of Jesus is a life of mighty works, miracles, signs and wonders, all proof that God has broken into our world, that the kingdom of God has come and He is God.

Then, Peter moves to the *crucifixion* of Jesus.

Acts 2:23 *this Jesus*, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Now that's confusing, which is it, did God deliver Him up or did wicked men kill Him? Peter is a novice, he just made a rookie mistake and stepped in something. You can't have it both ways, was it God or was it man? How do you reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility? As one old saint put it, you don't have to reconcile friends.

We live in a universe where the wicked plans of evil men unwittingly carry out the set purposes of God's greater good plans. The death of Jesus was simultaneously caused by the wickedness of the Jews and Romans acting freely *and* by the set purpose and foreknowledge of God.

There were two plans at work. Man's plan and God's plan. The Jews' plan was to kill Jesus to get rid of Him, He was a serious trouble maker and He was seriously messing up their plans.

God's plan was to provide for the salvation of the world through the forgiveness of sins by the blood of Jesus on a cross.

Does Peter make another rookie mistake here, a bad witnessing technique by accusing them of crucifying Jesus? Kind of harsh don't you think? How would it have gone for me if in my first sermon here I openly accused you all of killing Jesus?

Peter is full of the Holy Spirit and next week we will see that his hearers were cut to the heart and three thousand of them were saved. To come to Christ we have to admit we killed Him, we sinned against Him. We have to humble ourselves in order to see how great is His grace and love toward us.

This Jesus whom God raised up, Psalm 110:1.

Peter turns to the main point of his sermon, the *resurrection* of Jesus.

Acts 2:24 God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Men thought they could kill Jesus. Death thought he could keep Jesus dead, after all no one else had ever come back from the dead. But no, it is *impossible* for Jesus to remain dead. Why? *Four reasons.*

First, a dead Jesus was never part of the plan. God had already planned for Jesus to live.

Death started having birth pangs. That's what that word means. Death was pregnant with Jesus, but death could no more hold Jesus back than a 40 week pregnant woman can hold back her child from being born.

Remember when the Pharisees came to Pilate and asked permission to seal the tomb and set a guard. Pilate told them to go ahead, "make it as secure as you can" (Matthew 27:65). Go ahead, shoot your best shot. They couldn't stop God's good plan.

There is an important remember here for us when we are in the midst of our own pain or heartache, in the midst of our own trials and troubles in this life. When we find ourselves asking how could God be sovereign over this much pain in my life remember the cross. God planned it all down to the whippings, nails and crown of thorns.

The worst you are experiencing in your life will be triumphed over by the sovereign love of Jesus. God has a plan for good and no amount of evil can keep it from happening.

Second, it was impossible for Jesus to stay dead, because they weren't the ones who put Jesus in the tomb, His life was not taken from Him. Jesus got out because Jesus was the one who let Himself die in the first place.

John 10:17-18 I lay down my life that I may take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.

What does the world think of Jesus today? Is he dead? Have they killed Him with their intellectual arguments and philosophical skepticism and cynical questioning? Have they buried Him in the dust of irrelevance and post-modern pluralism?

For twenty one centuries the world has tried to bury Jesus and lock Him in a tomb, but He keeps getting out. The most sinful efforts of the most wicked and evil men are no match for our sovereign, loving Savior. He died on purpose out of love for us to save us.

Third, it's impossible to keep Jesus dead because Scripture said He wouldn't stay dead.

Peter quotes Psalm 16, a Psalm of David. David was not just a great king, but a man after God's own heart and full of the Holy Spirit. He started out the Psalm talking about himself, but before he knew it, he was writing about someone else in the future.

Peter points out the obvious to the Jews who should have seen it. This can't be about David, David is dead, his body is still in the tomb that's right there in Jerusalem, not more than a mile or two from where Peter is preaching. Every Jewish elementary school kids has taken field trips to see his tomb.

David was prophesying and foresaw the resurrection of Jesus. The Word of God tells us it is impossible for Jesus to stay dead.

But there is a *fourth* reason it is impossible for Jesus to stay dead. Peter says, "We are all witnesses, the twelve of us standing here, the 120 of us on whom the Spirit has fallen today."

Peter just added to the NT to the OT. The NT is the testimony of witnesses who saw Jesus alive, and who full of the Holy Spirit, like David, wrote it down.

God planned it, Jesus controlled it, Scripture said it, witnesses saw it. Jesus is alive.

Remember that sermon I gave years ago by the black pastor, S.M. Lockridge.

The Pharisees couldn't stand Him.
The Sadducees couldn't stop Him.
Pilate couldn't find any fault in Him.
Herod couldn't kill Him.
Death couldn't handle Him and
the grave couldn't hold Him. THAT'S MY KING!

Here is the good news for us. If we belong to Jesus then death has no claim on us and we can't stay dead. Death can't hold Jesus or those who belong to Him. Call on His name and you will live.

Buddha is dead, Confucius is dead, Krishna is dead, Mohammed is dead. Jesus is alive. We following a living Savior, the Son of the living God.

When God raised Jesus up, He raised us up as well,

Ephesians 2:5-6 when we were dead in our trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Now Peter brings his sermon to its glorious conclusion, now he gives his closing argument about who this Jesus is.

Therefore. Actually two therefore. He hasn't been to seminary and already he knows preachers are allowed two finallys and two in conclusions.

Therefore, God has *exalted* Jesus to the right hand of the Father in heaven. Peter gives two proofs.

First, Jesus is exalted in heaven because He has sent His Holy Spirit to earth. "That's what you are all witnesses of this day."

Second, because Scripture says so. Again, another Psalm of David by David but not about David. If David is still dead, then David can't be the one who ascended to heaven.

Then comes Peter's last conclusion, Peter's great *therefore*.

He started out saying, "Men of Israel, hear these words concerning the man Jesus of Nazareth. Now therefore, let the house of Israel know *for certain* that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ."

This is not a guess, not a speculation, this is a certainty, Jesus is Lord and Christ. Everything before was the argument to lead us to this conclusion.

Jesus is Lord and Christ. Peter could not have lifted Jesus higher.

Jesus is reigning on the throne and He is bringing under His control every enemy, every rebellious power and nation. There is none that can stand, none that can resist.

Implications and application.

Remember two weeks ago when I asked my son and daughter-in-law if they were willing to accept God's will for the life of my granddaughter, whatever that will may be?

They both answered yes. This week a light bulb went on in my head, wait a minute, that's my granddaughter. Am I ready and willing to accept God's will for her life?

That's a Lordship question. Am I willing for Jesus to be Lord over my life and everyone in my life and over everything in my life? What about when something happens I don't want or don't like?

Are we confident and convinced for certain there is no Lord who is better than Jesus? No one more gracious, good, kind, forgiving, loving, worthy, with a better will and plan?

Do you have confidence in Jesus? Do you have conviction about Jesus, that He really is who He says He is and did what He did? Do you live in the light of that conviction as you go through your daily lives? Do we know for certain that Jesus is Lord and Christ? Is He your Lord?

Is Jesus on the throne in your life? Is He giving you victory over the sin He died to defeat? Is He giving you courage in the face of your fears and hope in the midst of discouraging news?

There is a real sense in which the first sermon of the NT Christian Church set the tone for all preaching. Full of the Holy Spirit, what did Peter do? He preached Christ. A person full of the Holy Spirit is going to be all about Jesus. He will love Jesus, talk about Jesus, live for Jesus, think about Jesus, pray to Jesus.

Christianity is Christ. The cross is central. His death on the cross was the most important thing He did on earth, there He gained our salvation.

“Every single good thing that comes into our life was purchased by the cross. Every painful thing that comes into our life that God turns for good was purchased by the cross” (John Piper).

The cross is the center of our hope, our life, our future, everything that matters most depends on the cross. Our receiving the Holy Spirit depends on the cross and resurrection and exaltation of Jesus.

Jesus is the center on which everything else depends and from which everything else gets meaning.

His exaltation to heaven made it possible for Him to send His Holy Spirit through whom Jesus' salvation is given to us. He is the only one who can bring us to where He is, at the right hand of God.

Peter tried to show the Jews who rejected Jesus that Jesus is who they were looking for and hoping for and praying for and expecting to come. He is the promised Messiah. Jesus is both Lord and Christ. That is cause for hope and that is cause for worship.

May all who have ears to hear, hear what the Spirit is saying today.