

ACN
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Acts 2:22-41
Resurrection Freedom - Peter's Pentecost Sermon
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Today we're starting in earnest our 6 week post Easter series looking at some of the speeches in Acts to see what these apostles thought of the resurrection and what that belief meant for them.

As you read Acts, you can't help but notice that there are a lot of speeches. In fact in these 28 chapters there are 19 speeches from Christians. Eight by Peter, one by Stephen, one from James and nine by Paul. John Stott tells us that approximately 20% of Luke's text is devoted to addresses by Peter and Paul, and if Stephen's speech is added it rises to about 25%.

In this series, out of the 19, we're looking at 6.

We heard the reading of the choosing of Matthias last week from Acts 1, although with Chris and I being sick, there wasn't a sermon on that. But I do want to briefly point out a couple of things from what Peter said that day, before we get into our passage today.

You may recall that the book of Acts is basically a continuation of the Gospel of Luke. It's Luke's Volume 2. And it's important to remember that throughout this series.

This book continues the history of Jesus followers after he ascended.

So when they chose a replacement for Judas, it was likely just a couple of days after Jesus had ascended. It may have been that very night, it may have been a week later, but it was very close to the time of the ascension.

And it's interesting that we see a very obvious but natural growth towards leadership from Peter.

The eleven along with the women, and Jesus' family, his mother and his brothers, all stayed together.

They were a tight knit group.

There's nothing like grief to bring people together, and there's nothing like joy to bring people together.

This crew had experienced all that in the previous few weeks.

But at this point I would think they would have been a bit shell shocked.

Grief, joy, but perhaps now bewilderment.

He was dead, he's alive, but nowgone.

They would have been bewildered, and most likely afraid.

And Jesus had told them to wait, to wait for a gift. And that gift will give them power to be witnesses.

He said that, and then he was gone.

But along with the close-knit group there were others who regularly came together as well, and they numbered about 120. And it was in this crowd of 120, that Peter begins to emerge as the natural leader.

They came together to pray, and Peter stood up among them and began to speak.

Firstly, he spoke about Scripture being fulfilled. He said this of course referring to Judas and his betrayal and he quoted Psalms 69 and 109. Psalm 69 he relayed in reference to Judas betrayal and subsequent suicide, and Ps 109 about the need to replace him.

Scripture had to be fulfilled. And wonderfully, Peter picks up exactly on Jesus' words just prior to his ascension.

We need someone who's been with us from the very beginning right up to now.

Someone who can be a witness to his resurrection.

Somebody who had literally witnessed all of Jesus' ministry and indeed his resurrection.

They needed to replace like for like.

Somebody who knew it all and who could fulfil what Jesus said they would all do, that they would be his witnesses.

So it came down to Justus or Matthias, they prayed, they cast a lot, and it was Matthias. And so he was added to the eleven, to make 12.

The reason I'm pointing this out as we get into the series proper, is that I want you to understand what it is to be a witness. Because as we delve into each of these speeches, they all talk about the resurrection, the truth of it, and what it means.

Jesus wanted the apostles to be witnesses to his resurrection. The Gk word is martus.

The word that has come down to us is martyr.

To be a witness effectively means to be a martyr.

It is about someone who knows the truth, and is prepared to speak the truth whatever the cost.

Just prior to his ascension Jesus said to the disciples that they would receive power to be witnesses.

Peter gets up in front of the 120 and says 'one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.'

Now our reading today, from Acts 2, is from the day of Pentecost.

We haven't read about that great event today.

We'll celebrate and read it in a few weeks time on June 5.

But following the enormity of the Pentecost event, our emerging leader, Peter, comes into his own. His address that day was remarkable.

In fact, I reckon we should have him as preaching pastor here at ACN. You know why?

Because he definitely subscribes to each of our Values. His address that day was Christ-centred, it was Bible-based, it was definitely Spirit-led and it was mission-shaped. Come on board Peter!

We'll have you.

So the first few verses of his address, which we didn't read, reply to the accusations of the crowd that they were drunk. No he says, not drunk, and directs them to scripture, Bible-based, specifically to the prophet Joel.

But then from v.22, where we started today, he focusses on history.

He tells this crowd their own story.

Fellow Israelites he says, and starts talking about Jesus.

He tells them the events of 6 weeks earlier, which they would all have been very well aware of, and takes them then to their greatest king, David, saying David told us about this guy, and you along with other wicked people, put him to death.

How could you not see who he was, how did you miss it.

And now God has raised him, and exalted him, and we are witnesses of it.

He talked about Jesus life and ministry, he talked about his death, his resurrection, his exaltation, his salvation, and finished with the great achievement of a new community.

So let's look at these things briefly.

Jesus' life and ministry (v.22) - Peter says that Jesus was a man, and yet he was a man with power. And this power was expressed through miracles (which was a demonstration of the power of God), it was also expressed through wonders which bring about a sense of astonishment, and

through signs - which are all about spiritual truth. God did these things through him, and it was public.

Secondly, Peter talked about Jesus' death. (v.23) And interestingly he attributed it to both the purpose of God as well as the wickedness of humanity. So this is a way of saying that through Jesus' death, God's saving purpose was being worked out. That's a very important point to remember.

Next he talked about the resurrection. in v.24 he says it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

And he quotes Psalm 16 as a foretelling of it. And he affirms it by saying, 'and we are all witnesses of it.'

So the testimony of Scripture lines up with their experience and subsequent testimony.

But in addition to the resurrection he goes on to tell them about the exaltation of Jesus (in vv. 33-36), and how from that place of supreme power and honour, he has poured out his Spirit.

He clinches his argument with Psalm 110 and applies that to the ascension.

And he wraps all this up with an incredible declaration. He says boldly - let all Israel be assured of this!!

Wow!

God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

Just six weeks prior, Peter had run away.

Who is this unrecognisable leader??

Boldly making a claim before thousands, and before those who were in authority.

God was doing a new thing, Peter had seen and experienced this resurrection power and wanted to make sure that as many people as possible could hear about it and respond.

And respond they did.

People heard it. People were convicted, in fact Luke says they were cut to the heart. They were so impacted that they asked what they had to do. They knew this could not be ignored.

And what does Peter do? He talks about salvation. The people were convicted of sin, and Peter immediately replied, repent. Change your mind. Change your attitude. Change your heart. and be baptised.

This was a huge thing for him to say to Jews. Baptism was only something that Gentiles needed to do, to become a Jew.

So what a humiliation for a Jew.

Yes, some Gentiles would have heard the message that day, but it is clear that he was speaking to Jews.

They asked him, 'brothers' what shall we do?

He was showing them how the OT was being fulfilled. That's talking to Jews. They were there for the festival of Pentecost, but they got more than they bargained for, more than they were expecting.

Peter kept preaching, pleading with people it says in v.40.

And a new community began, with about 3000 people responding that day.

Can you see how Peter took the challenge of this opportunity and beautifully and obediently witnessed to the resurrection Jesus. Exactly as he was supposed to do.

This is a model sermon - Christ-centred; Bible-based, Spirit-led and mission- shaped. This was an evangelistic sermon with a great altar call.

So what is our struggle today? How can we be faithful to this amazing apostolic gospel?

How can we better understand our crowd, and share this story in a way that resonates with people of our world. People who are so caught up with themselves and their lifestyle, people who are hurting so much they damage themselves further, people who have no idea who Jesus is, let alone come to a point of being convicted by the truth of who he is.

How can we be an appropriate Peter for our world?

Well, I think one of the clearest things is that we mustn't take our focus off Jesus. I think that there are so many in the church today, who think that to reach our post-modern world, we need to leave Jesus behind and present a different gospel.

Peter didn't do that.

Peter says, fellow Jews, listen Jesus.

We need to say to our fellow travellers in a world that has forgotten Jesus, in a world that has even left behind substance and follows instead superficiality, I think we need to firstly **BE** people of substance, to get to a point where we can **SHARE** something substantial.

The gospel is good news not only of what Jesus did, that he died for our sins and was raised, but also of what he offered as a result. He promises to those who respond, forgiveness of sin, and the gift of the Spirit.

Forgiveness deals with our past; the gift of the Spirit, makes us new people.

together these two things mean Freedom.

John Stott describes it like this.

"Together these constitute the freedom for which many are searching, freedom from guilt, defilement, judgement and self-centredness, and freedom to be the persons God made and meant us to be. Forgiveness and the Spirit comprise 'salvation'.

Are there any here today who yearn for that, but don't know where to find it?

My message to you is this Jesus.

Repent and be baptised, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And amazingly, this promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.

Will you join the baptised, those who have believe this great thing that Jesus died, and rose again.
Amen