

Message Date: 05-31-20

Sermon Series: To the Ends of the Earth- ACTS Part 1: What Happens Next

Message Title: Week 6, The Promise

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### **SCENE 1- OPENING**

- **LAST WEEK- finished Peter's sermon in Jerusalem, day of Pentecost**
- **Given the overwhelming evidence of Jesus' resurrection, and having demonstrated how his resurrection- and the arrival of the Holy Spirit- was a fulfillment of OT prophecy... Peter concluded his message with the emphatic statement (vs 36)**

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”
- **Luke tells us that when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”**
- **This is where we ended last week... Press into that just a bit...**
  - **BROTHERS... most likely referring to the Apostles. Where before the Apostles and believers were being mocked and accused of being drunk, now the response of the crowd is one of respect.**
  - **CUT TO THE HEART... This phrase in the Greek is unique in entire NT, found only here. Very strong imagery, referring to a sharp pain or stab, to the core of one's being.**
  - **Simply put, having heard Peter's message, the people were overwhelmed. THINK WHAT THEY JUST HEARD**
    - **For the history of our people, we have been yearning for God's promised messiah, his promised Holy Spirit, the coming of his salvation.**
    - **THIS SALVATION CAME, THE MESSIAH CAME, it is JESUS, and we rejected him! We killed him. THEN, God confirmed that Jesus is the Messiah by raising Him from the dead... IT HAPPENED, and we are witnesses of it!**
    - **NOW, these men are telling us that Jesus ascended to be at the right hand of God, AS GOD, and what we have witnessed today is God's Spirit- presence- being poured out into the lives of these followers of Jesus.**
    - **THE GREAT HOPE OF OUR PEOPLE HAPPENED, and WE REJECTED HIM. WE MISSED IT.**
- **Have you ever had an experience where something you had yearned for, looked forward to for years, actually happened, and for some reason, you missed it?**
- **The people were shattered. FF BRUCE describes that their question “what shall we do”, has the sense of ‘THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO!’ An image comes to mind of a person for whom everything has failed and fallen apart, and there is no way out of their situation... in desperation, they say to a friend... WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?**
- **Peter replied... LET ME TELL YOU.... “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. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”**
- **AND IN THAT MOMENT, what could have been the people of Jerusalem's greatest source of condemnation became their greatest hope, and it remains the hope of humanity...**
- **AND CHURCH, THIS WAS GOD'S PLAN ALL ALONG**
- **SO, lets head back, get our Bibles, and dive into Peter's proclamation- which is every bit as important for us today as it was for the people in the crowd that day.**

## SCENE 2

- *Like many of you, I grew up in the church, and have heard a LOT of sermons. In the southern Baptist tradition we had- and many churches still do- a virtually required element to every sermon, regardless of the setting, at the end of the sermon... THE ALTER CALL. This is where the pastor would maybe restate the big point from the message, and then lay out the essence of the gospel, and call for people to come forward and respond.*
  - *Part of this- alter call hymn... LOTS of verses... waiting for someone to respond so we could wrap this up and go to lunch!*
- *PETER didn't have this problem! He laid out the gospel, and the response was immediate and profound. THIS IS THE FIRST ALTER CALL, the first Gospel presentation, and in these verses we see the core components of the Christian message- the Good News of the Gospel.*
- *Peter replied, "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."*
  - *REPENT*
  - *Baptized, name of Jesus, for FORGIVENESS of sin*
  - *Gift of the spirit*
- *REPHRASE: The Gospel is an invitation to*
  - *Turn to God*
  - *Be set free by God*
  - *Receive the Life of God*
- *BOCK: "Salvation and the Gospel can be summarized as NEW LIFE that is lived in the ongoing context of- provision of- God's Forgiveness and the provision and presence of God's SPIRIT.*
- *We need to look at each of these, and we will start with the great command we see throughout the Gospels... the call to REPENT*

## SCENE 3

- *We see the concept of REPENTANCE over 50 times in NT (53-54), mostly in the gospels, acts, and revelation.*
  - *25 in Gospels*
  - *10 in Acts*
  - *10 in revelation*
  - *9 times in all of Paul, Peter, and Hebrews*
  - *ABOUT HALF of all instances in LUKE-ACTS... It is Luke, more than any other writer, who brings us the great emphasis of repentance in the life of a disciple.*
- *At the end of his Gospel, in chapter 24, Luke records that Jesus <sup>45</sup> opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."*
- *This is exactly what is happening now. First word of Peter's Gospel statement is to REPENT.*

- *We need to discuss just what this means- because it's a word that we use a LOT in Christianity, but a word whose full meaning we often miss.*
- *For the people in Jerusalem that day, their scripture was the Hebrew Bible, what we call the OT. SO, when Peter said the word "REPENT", speaking in Greek, for these first hearers, their understanding of that word was rooted in a HEBREW CONCEPT.... And the HEBREW concept of repentance, fundamentally, was TO TURN.*

#### **SCENE 4**

- *You see, when we think of repentance, what likely comes to mind is to STOP SINNING. STOP DOING SINFUL THINGS, and START DOING Godly things. Through history of Christianity, there's been a lot of teaching that has made this focus: That Repentance is primarily a matter of BEHAVIOR. AND NOT UNCOMMON for the emphasis to be on STOPPING SINNING side of the equation.*
- *NOW- Don't get me wrong. Don't stop there and accuse me of being a moral relativist! SCRIPTURE – DOES connect REPENTANCE with changing our moral thoughts and behavior! Examples...*
  - *2 Corinthians 12:12- I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.*
  - *Multiple passages in Revelation (5) describe God's wrath against forces of evil and part of humanity that rejected God, because they failed to repent of their immorality, their 'ways', the 'work of their hands', 'things they had done'.*
  - *Hebrews 6:1-3 Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, <sup>2</sup> instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*
- *Here's the significant thing about this passage from Hebrews! The writer describes 'repentance from acts that lead to death' as one of the BASIC, ELEMENTARY teachings, that needs to be understood, incorporated, and from when we MOVE BEYOND in our relationship with Christ!*

#### **SCENE 5**

- *You see, the meaning of REPENTANCE in is a matter of FOCUS.. and the PRIMARY FOCUS is not a matter of STOPPING SINNING. In fact, if you search your English translation of the bible for the phrase "REPENT OF YOUR SIN"... YOU WILL NOT FIND IT. And yet, this is often the most uttered phrase regarding repentance.*
- *AGAIN... MAKE NO MISTAKE... An inevitable OUTCOME of true repentance WILL BE A CHANGE OF BEHAVIOR, OBEDIENCE TO GOD, AND INCREASING EXPERIENCED FREEDOM FROM SIN.*
- *But the FOCUS OF REPENTANCE, as intended by PETER and demonstrated throughout the GOSPELS and rest of NEW TESTAMENT, is a TURN, and it is a TURN TO GOD.*

- *In Acts 20:21...Paul says: I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*
- *The GREEK TENSE of the verb REPENT that Peter uses has the sense of DO IT COMPLETELY, AND DO IT NOW. THEN, in the larger context of the NT, the idea of repentance is NOT just a ‘one and done’ proposition... something that we do at the point of conversion and never consider again.*
- *Rather, to REPENT, to TURN TO GOD, is a POSTURE. It is an ongoing choice, a perspective of our mind... that I choose to orient ALL OF WHO I AM upon God, rather than upon myself. THIS IS IMAGERY we saw last week in Psalm 16... “I KEEP MY EYES ALWAYS ON THE LORD, with HIM at my right hand, I will not be shaken!”*
- *In Romans chapter 6, Paul describes this choice- this posture- as a matter of what- or WHO- we OFFER ourselves to...*

Romans 6:13-14 Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. <sup>14</sup>For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

#### SCENE 6

- *THE REALITY we see here is that when we think of REPENTANCE as a change of our behavior- of being free from sin- THIS IS ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN WE FIRST TURN TO GOD... LORD- I understand that you have brought me from death to life... today, in this moment, this situation, this time... I CHOOSE TO OFFER MYSELF TO YOU AS YOUR INSTRUMENT... I AM YOURS... MY LIFE IS FROM YOU...*
- *THE RESULT of this offering of ourselves to God, Paul goes on to say, is that SIN SHALL NO LONGER BE OUR MASTER.*
- *THAT is the power of repentance!*
- *NOW... Back to Peter...Not done with repentance yet. Another essential aspect of REPENTANCE is its inseparable connection to FORGIVENESS.*
  - *“REPENT, be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”*
  - *REPENTANCE is our step of faith. Turning to God.*
  - *In response is God’s Gift of FORGIVENESS.*
- *This is great emphasis of LUKE. Both in his Gospel and In Acts, Luke connects the call to repentance with God’s gift of forgiveness. IMPORTANT... I mentioned how Luke’s use of the verb REPENT here is a COMPLETE AND PRESENT act, AS IS the forgiveness that God provides. My point is that we do not have to continually repent in order to continually receive, incrementally, God’s forgiveness. God’s forgiveness of his disciple is total and complete, as the overwhelming evidence of the NT demonstrates.*

#### SCENE 7

- *The concept of that God’s forgiveness is incremental, based upon our incremental confession of and repentance from sin, and that when we sin we are outside of God’s forgiveness until recognize, confess, and repent from the sin, especially if the means of*

*confessing and repenting is controlled by an ordained clergy... this is a DAMAGING DISTORTION of NT scripture that has pervaded much of Christian history.*

- *YOU SEE, the miraculous alternative- which the NT DOES TEACH- is that IN CHRIST WE ARE FORGIVEN- as a matter of our very identity! THEN, KNOWING THIS HOPE, we are free to be HONEST about our struggles, our sin, our doubt, our guilt... and bring these confidently before God's throne of Grace, confessing and agreeing with him about the reality of what's going on in our lives... and instead of our posture being one of begging for forgiveness, it becomes one of gratitude of worship for the forgiveness that Christ forever secured, once for all.*
- *This is what Paul proclaims in Colossians 2:13-14 "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross." And friends, our debt of sin- the old person we used to be, died there on the cross with Jesus, and because Christ rose to a new life we also have been raised to a NEW LIFE.*
- *AMEN!*

#### **SCENE 8**

- *OK! Peter has said "REPENT and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.*
- *So... what about this idea of being 'baptized in the name of Jesus Christ'. Here's what I want to do... Baptism is a HUGE them in Acts, and so that we can do the topic full justice, I'm going to cover this in depth in a later sermon. BUT, for now, one thing.*
- *Peter is NOT SAYING that the gift of God's forgiveness is contingent on the physical act of being baptized. For sake of brevity now, I want to quote directly from FF BRUCE..*
  - *"It would be a mistake to link the words "for the forgiveness of sins" with the command "be baptized" to the exclusion of the prior command to repent. It is against the whole genius of biblical religion to suppose that the outward rite could have any value except insofar as it was accompanied by the work of grace within."*
  - *NOW, THAT SAID, we will see that baptism as presented in Acts is not trivial in the least, and the full Biblical picture of baptism stands often in contrast to many of the traditions surrounding the practice of baptism today.*
  - *BUT, as I said, this we will cover in greater detail soon, but not today.*

#### **SCENE 9**

- *SO, we have the faith step of repentance, connected by this act of Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, to God's gift of forgiveness. But that's not all. Equally linked to the faith of repentance is the gift for which forgiveness opens the door... the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT.*
- *This we DO need to say several things about.*
- *First, what does Peter mean by the 'gift of the holy spirit'. Some have argued that Peter is referring to the miraculous actions of the disciples speaking in multiple languages, then taking the leap that the gift of the spirit to all believers should be accompanied by the sign of speaking in tongues.*

- ***But this strains the clear meaning of the text, and doesn't honestly represent what the Holy Spirit did through the disciples that day. As we have discussed, the 'tongues' being spoken by the disciples at Pentecost was not the 'heavenly language' Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12. These were actual human languages that the Spirit enabled for the purpose of communicating the message of what God had done through Jesus – in a unique, one time event - to the people 'from every nation under heaven' present in Jerusalem at that time.***
- ***You see, Peter doesn't say "you will receive the GIFTS of the spirit", but "you will receive the 'gift' of the spirit"... The spirit isn't the one giving, the Spirit IS THE GIFT. SIMPLY PUT, THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT IS THE GIFT OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD. THE NEW, PERMANENT REALITY OF THE LIFE OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER.***

## **SCENE 10**

- ***Like God's gift of forgiveness, God's gift of His Spirit is not contingent on the physical act of Baptism. Rather, it is the coming of God's Spirit into the believer's life that constitutes our true baptism- spirit baptism- our immersion into the life of Christ.***
- ***Years later, Paul would write about this in terms that are familiar to us here at Trinity.***
  - ***2 Corinthians 5:17- New creation- old gone, new come... NEW IS CHRIST***
  - ***Colossians 1:27- Glorious riches of mystery of God- CHRIST IN YOU, hope of Glory***
  - ***Galatians 2:20- I no longer live, but Christ lives in me***
  - ***Romans 8:9- You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.***
  - ***AND CLEAREST STATEMENT OF WORK OF SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES... Galatians 5:22ff... FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT- nature of character of God at work in us, transforming us, as his presence dwells within us.***
- ***CAN'T MISS THIS... the promise of the Holy Spirit bringing the NEW LIFE OF GOD- the continued presence of God- into the life of every believer- THIS IS AT THE CORE OF THE GOSPEL.***

## **SCENE 11**

- ***Then, in VERSE 39m, Peter says... The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."***
  - ***THE PROMISE: The gospel message. Gift of forgiveness, life and presence of God through His Spirit***
  - ***IT'S FOR YOU! Not only that, it is for your children- not just this coming generation, but all generations to come....***
  - ***IT's for those who are far off.... Interesting note here...***
    - ***For Peter, and the disciples that day, the term "FAR OFF" almost certainly was understood as "JEWS WHO WERE FAR OFF". We've discussed how the diaspora- or the scattering of Jews away from their homeland, had already been happening for generations- indeed was reflected by how many nations and peoples were represented in Jerusalem that day.***
    - ***BUT, as LUKE KNEW, and as WE KNOW... the gospel would indeed move also to the gentile world, and 'all those far off' would become ALL PEOPLE, TRULY to the ends of the earth, even including you and I, today.***

- Finally, Peter ends with the powerful statement “For all whom the Lord our God will call.” Here we see once again the reality of God’s sovereignty... the truth that when we turn to Him in repentance, it is GOD WHO CALLS US TO HIMSELF. This is a mystery, and one that we will also pursue in-depth in a later message, as this is a theme we will see again.

## SCENE 12

- FRIENDS, PETER’S MESSAGE WAS EFFECTIVE! Luke tells us in verse 40 that what we have here is a summary of Peter’s speech, and that with many other words we warned them, pleaded with them to respond.
- “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation”
  - The word “corrupt” or “twisted generation” appears only here in the entire NT. Particular phrase indicating a people who are both ethically (meaning moral behavior) and spiritually contrary to God.
  - If you remember from last week, we talked how the version of the OT quoted by Peter, and commonly used in that day, was the SEPTUAGINT, the greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. In the Septuagint, we find the word for “CORRUPT” twice, in Deuteronomy 32:5 and Psalm 78:8. Both of these verses refer to the Hebrew generation that wandered in the wilderness, but never entered the promised land because of their unbelief and rebellion against God.
  - In Palm 78, we see the phrase “a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.”
  - Because of its rebellion, this generation Peter describes is subject God’s judgment. AND, importantly for us, the generation Peter describes isn’t just the Nation of Israel that as a whole rejected Jesus the messiah. It is also a much broader idea, including all people, of any generation, whose hearts are set against the Lord. This isn’t just about the 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews who rejected Jesus, it is about the human condition, including our generation today.
- TO THESE PEOPLE, Peter’s words...and the invitation of the gospel, is to TURN TO GOD! EXPERIENCE FORGIVENESS, and receive his Spirit- his very life- as your own.
- We are told that 3000 people that day accepted the message- they believed, and were baptized.
- Not bad for Peter’s first sermon. But it wasn’t just Peter. It was Jesus, in union with the Father, by the Holy Spirit, who spoke through Peter. The miracle of the day of Pentecost- and the response- was a miracle of God.

## SCENE 13

- END WITH THIS. In John 14, Jesus is describing his union with His father, and how all the works he had been doing, as Jesus the MAN, was actually the work of the father, working through him, as Jesus lived in complete obedience and dependence upon the Father. In verse 12, Jesus went on to say...
  - “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”
- Think of that. “Whoever believes in me will do what I have been doing”... or, put another way”... In the life of whoever believes in my, I WILL CONTINUE to do the work I have been doing, THROUGH THEM. Even GREATER THINGS than what you’ve seen so far.

- *This day of Pentecost is the first example of these ‘greater things’. AND CHURCH, Jesus’ words that HE WILL CONTINUE HIS WORK THROUGH BELIEVERS still stand today. Jesus is continuing the work of the Father, today, through the church... through us.*
- *CHURCH! One part of this ongoing greater work of God is that YOU... as a follower of Christ... that at some point in your life, you heard the gospel... AND YOU*
  - *Turned to God.*
  - *You may have been baptized... more about that later...*
  - *You DID receive the gift of forgiveness... once for all...*
  - *And you DID receive the Holy Spirit... Christ in you, the hope of Glory.*
- *Friends... THAT is a source of HOPE! In this day, that is a source OF JOY.*
- *AND, my friend.. if this message- God’s message- is piercing your heart for the first time TODAY... God is calling to you with that same invitation.*
  - *To turn to Him. To believe.*
  - *To receive the freedom of complete forgiveness, now and forevermore, as a new creation*
  - *To express your believe through baptism, as soon as it is possible. This isn’t what saves you, but it is a joyful testimony of the new life God has given you*
  - *And to know that the Spirit of Christ has come to dwell within you, God’s life as your life.*
- *ITS FOR YOU...*