

All Saints Talk for Sunday 07 July 2024

NEW Jul-December 2024 Sermon Series

'Spread the Word, Catch the fire'

The book of Acts tells the exciting story of the explosive growth of the early Church as the disciples were sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a timeless training manual for us today as we continue the work of sharing the life and message of Jesus with our community.

'The message that sparked a movement' by Tony Haines

Acts 2:14-41 Peter preaches at Pentecost

Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

²¹ And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.'^[a]

²² "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,^[b] put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.’^[c]

²⁹ “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

³⁵ until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”^[d]

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ 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. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Talk:

Congratulations to Sir Keir Starmer on his appointment as our new Prime Minister
He is named after Keir Hardie

Labour Party started 1900, first MP. Our new PM was named after this man because his parents were keen members of the Labour Party which had grown out of the Liberal Party.

The Labour Party in the United Kingdom was founded by a coalition of trade unions and socialist groups. Key figures involved in its establishment include:

Keir Hardie** : A leading figure in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the first Labour MP elected to Parliament.

Hardie's first job, when aged seven message boy at a steamship company.

Parents spent evenings teaching him to read and write, skills which proved essential for future self-education.

At the age of ten years old, Hardie went to work in the mines as a "trapper": opening and closing a door for a ten-hour shift

He also began to associate with the Evangelical Union becoming a member of the Evangelical Union Church, Park Street, Hamilton – now the United Reformed Church, where David Livingstone was a member.

We have benefited from the Labour Party's emphasis on a fair income for all, the Welfare State and the NHS.

The message that sparked a movement

A similar insignificant fisherman in Galilee, Peter was to become the person God used to launch this movement.

Started in a room in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, spread through the Roman Empire within 3 centuries and now affects our values in the western world. Within a few decades the message had reached Rome where there was a Christian community, which Paul wrote to in c AD52, Herculaneum and Pompeii after eruption of Vesuvius. 79 AD. Evidence of Christians living there by then.

And now billions of people know and love Christ in every country worldwide. 31% of the world's population.

How did this start?

Pentecost, Holy Spirit literally fired up those early followers, blew them out into the streets, loosened their tongues to share the Gospel.

Until that moment they were in hiding, secretly meeting, afraid that what happened to Jesus might happen to them....and of course, to many of them, it did.

Suddenly the message of Jesus couldn't be contained .

People around wondering what on earth is happening?

Those early disciples may well have been asking : What on earth has just happened to us? Or What has happened on earth?

Not every experience can be explained, but Peter uses his understanding of the Old Testament .

He quotes Joel, a prophet of 600BC, foretelling the arrival and power of the Holy Spirit. And he refers back to OT promises to David, links what David says in Psalms about one of his descendants. Resurrection of the Messiah..not abandoned to the dead, body rot in the earth.

Emphasises David mortal: his grave here in Jerusalem.

But Jesus' body no longer here.

Proving him to be the promised Messiah. Vv 24, 32, 36. Peter goes on to tell his hearers that he has witnessed Jesus risen from the dead, although Luke does not include his personal experience, although he may well have described them!

V 36 is critical:

This Jesus who you crucified is the one God has made both Lord and Christ.

Christ= Messiah of the Jewish nation

Lord= Dominum, there was only one at the time, Dominum Caesar Augustus, referred to as Son of God.

Mark 1 v1: The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is an anti -imperial political message

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."(Something we can overcomplicate in the modern church!)

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

Proclamation: 'Kerygma' a theological Greek word meaning 'proclamation'. Contains these key elements.

Old Testament prophecies,

Good news of J's teaching and miracles,

His death and resurrection.

Resurrection and the promise of eternal life

The call to repent and be baptised.

What is our response to this, as followers of Christ?

How can we effectively share this most important message in a very different culture where there is much apathy, anxiety, addiction and agnosticism? How effective are Street preaching like Peter?

The big evangelistic meeting like Billy Graham or Loui Palau?..

Door-knocking like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons?

Perhaps these days we need to think differently.

In certain contexts we have an entitlement, eg as Street Pastors, or visiting WASPS in Open the Book,

Helpfully, in his letter, written towards the end of his life, Peter urges his readers: Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

We can throw in a word to people we know, about thanking God. My friend Bob when told that Bert had recovered from a heart attack asked him if he had thanked God, and told him to continue to thank Him. The next day I ran into Bert who had obviously been affected by Bob's question. Who was that mate of yours? Is he in the church?

The message is that we are given small opportunities to say something that may get people thinking, and maybe asking questions.

Remember that Jesus told the parable of the sower, that people respond in different ways, and plants take time to grow, so don't expect immediate results.