

“Imagine the Follow Up”

Nearly a decade ago, I was leading a college ministry and thought it would be encouraging to open the student leaders meeting with a devotional reading from Acts 2:37-41. The Acts 2 passage tells the story of thousands coming to faith in Christ in response to Peter’s preaching and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. I was hoping to inspire confidence in the ability of God to move *en masse* in the hearts of people. After reading the Scripture, however, I looked up at the faces of the student leaders and saw fatigue rather than inspiration. After a few moments, one of them broke the silence by declaring, “Can you imagine the follow up program they would need to institute after an evangelistic event like that?” Another student responded, “What about the amount of time the apostles would have to spend disciplining all these new believers?” I start to feel tired just thinking about it.

In this week’s passage, we see a great movement of the spirit and the beginning of the church. It is truly an inspiring event. In the verses and chapters that follow, however, we will discover that the church was from the beginning, what St. Augustine called, “the great hospital.” This spiritual hospital becomes a place where legitimately broken people choose to do life together for the glory of God. Such a collection of self professed sinners (one of the few things all members have in common) often gets messy, but this miraculous day, we call Pentecost, demonstrates that this rag-tag collection of grace-receivers remains God’s sublimely ironic choice through which he displays his glory.

Monday – A Predicted Event

“The ‘last days’ began with Christ’s appearance on earth and will be consummated by his reappearance; they are the days during which the age to come overlaps with the present age.” F.F. Bruce, “The Book of Acts”

1. Please read the first half of Peter’s sermon in Acts 2:14-24. According to Peter, when are “the last days” that the prophet Joel referred to?
2. Check out 1 Peter 1:10-12 & 20-21. As you compare Peter’s sermon in Acts 2, and what he writes in 1 Peter, what similar themes do you see? Who is included in the new work of God according to Acts 2:17-18?

Making it Personal – How does this sermon relate to your life today?

Tuesday – The Fundamental Message

“It is in fact true that the Christian faith stands or falls with Christ’s resurrection... The cross of Christ is the cross of the Lord who was raised by God and exalted by God. It is only in this correlation that the cross acquires any special saving meaning.” Jürgen Moltmann, “The Way of Jesus Christ”

1. Please Read Acts 2:14-41. What would you say are the major themes of Peter’s sermon?
2. Why was it impossible for death to keep its hold on Christ (see verse 24)?
3. Can you find a verse that mentions all three persons of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)? What do we learn about the activities of each in this verse?

Wednesday – Dramatic Redirection

“Is the Kingdom of heaven to be entered by merely...a verbal confession? ...Jesus’ message was, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ The basic meaning of ‘repentance’ is to turn around, to reverse the course of life, to change the whole direction of action, to turn and embrace in decision the Kingdom of God.”

George Ladd, “The Gospel of the Kingdom”

1. Please Read Acts 2:36-41. How did the crowd respond to Peter’s message?
2. If you had to answer the question posed in Acts 2:37, what would you say?
3. How faithful is Peter’s response to the words and instructions of Christ (see Mark 1:14-15)?

Digging Deeper – How does repentance help us to understand the nature of saving belief? How might the call to repentance relate to the statement in verse 36 that God had made Jesus “both lord and Christ?”

Thursday – Two Gifts

1. Please Read Acts 2:36-41. Peter promises two free gifts in verse 38. What are they?
2. When you think of what Christ has done for you which of these gifts do you tend to think of? Why?

Making it Personal – Who does Peter say that these promises are for? Are you more likely to back programs that articulate promises to you, your children, or those who are far off? Why must a robust community of faith address each of these?

Friday – Saved for Community

“Peter was not asking for private and individual conversions only, but for a public identification with other believers. Commitment to the Messiah implied commitment to the Messianic community, that is, the church. Indeed they would have to change communities transferring their membership from one that was old and corrupt to the new one that was being saved.” John Stott, “The Message of Acts”

1. Please Read Acts 2:36-41. What does Peter warn them of in verse 40? Is he asking them to sacrifice “the good life” or leave behind a lifestyle that will eventually harm them (or both)? What do you think he would say about our generation?
2. It is sometimes said that “Revival only seems tidy from a distance of 100 years or 1000 miles.” What dynamics would 3000 new converts with all their “baggage” introduce into the early church?
3. Why does Peter stress the importance of baptism? What do you think the words, “added to their number” say about community? Does it seem like these early converts are making a personal decision and going on their way, or are they instead, forging a new community of belief?

Weekend: Read over some of the details of what this new community of faith looked like in Acts 2:42-47. We will spend the next several weeks unpacking the implications of these verses.