

The Power of Mission: The Spirit's Presence

The pouring out of the HS on all people signifies the last days have arrived and the Messiah has come to save his ppl who will be united to Christ by the Spirit as they hear the gospel and respond by repenting and baptism

1. Intro & Context

- Most modern people in western, secularized culture are typically respond with skepticism or mockery at the idea that there is a spirit world
- The reality and presence of spiritual beings is for many people the stuff of make believe and fantasy
- It might make for a scary para-normal movie ... but here in the real world where my senses guide reality ... that kind of stuff is just a fairytale

- And yet, step outside our secularized western context, and the spirit world is not only a very real thing for a myriad people and cultures ... in many contexts, the spirit world totally dominates their culture
- It's not just a third world thing that we can dismiss as naïve superstition
 - Time and again I've talked with / heard western missionaries return from time in Asia, Africa, Arnhem Land
 - They all affirm just how real the spirit world is in those cultures ... and how blind we are to it here in ours

- This is interesting because Christianity unashamedly affirms the reality of a spiritual dimension
- In fact, Christianity would go even further and say ... that you cannot have life in any meaningful way ... **without it!**
- And of course the reason is because the Holy Spirit is so critical to knowing God and having eternal life

- Acts 2 is one of the most important passages of scripture that gives us insight into the person and role of the Spirit in the life of both the believer and the unbeliever
- And in the context of the book of Acts ... we'll see also how critical the Spirit is for the spread of the gospel
- This morning as we look at the Acts 2
 - The presence of the Spirit
 - The purpose of the Spirit
 - The power of the Spirit

2. The Presence of the Spirit (v1-21)

- Recall last week > Ch 1 > disciples have been given a commission by Jesus
 - *Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*
- They've chosen Matthias to replace Jesus
- Now Luke skips forward a few weeks and tells us it's the day of Pentecost
 - Pentecost is an OT harvest festival which falls fifty days after Passover and the death of Jesus
 - It's the busiest Jewish feast because it falls in May when travel is easy
 - Jews travel to Jerusalem from all the countries around the Mediterranean, swelling the city's population by 130,000 people
 - They'd offer the first loaves of the barley harvest, and thank God for feeding them with his Law ... which was given to them on Mt Sinai, fifty days after the Israelites escaped from Egypt

- While the disciples were in Jerusalem ... Jesus sends the Holy Spirit on the them just as he promised he would
- And to make sure they knew this is what was happening ... it's accompanied by three signs
 - Sound of violent wind
 - Tongues of fire on their heads¹
 - Disciples praising God in languages other than their own
- Clearly something extraordinary and supernatural is happening

- Because it was the Festival of Pentecost ... there were thousands people there who'd travelled to Jerusalem for the festival
 - When they hear the disciples declaring the wonders of God in all these foreign languages ... they assume they've been drinking!
 - If you've ever been with someone who's drunk and they're trying to speak to you ... you'd know it sometimes seems like they're speaking another language!

- And in response to their question there in v12 "What does this mean?" Peter stands up and delivers the first ever Christian sermon ... and he smashes it out of the park!

¹ Signs that this was a visitation from God

- The first thing Peter does in v14-21 is explain that what they are witnessing is the presence of the Spirit just as God promised
- Before he goes into all that, he firstly refutes the idea they were drunk
 - "Come on are you serious ... it's only 9am!"
 - Now for us Aussies that might not be a surprise for some people
 - But for Jews this was an illogical conclusion because they normally didn't eat until about 10am let alone drink
- So Peter goes on say
 - "No ... what you're witnessing is not a bunch of babbling drunkards ... but God fulfilling what he said he would do through the OT prophet Joel
 - And then he quotes Joel 2
 - Have a look at v17
 - *Acts 2:17 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.*
- Now when we talk about the Spirit we are talking about the third person of the Trinity
 - God the Father, God the Son, God the HS
 - One God, three persons
 - They all share in the same divine attributes ...
 - They all share in the same 'godness' ... yet they're distinct from each other
- What this means is
 - the Spirit is God
 - the Spirit is personal
 - He's not a power or a force like in Star Wars
- So when the Father sent the HS just as Jesus promised in 1:8 ... God **himself** is coming to them and dwelling in them in a very intimate and personal way
- In the OT, the HS was normally only given to the kings, prophets and judges of Israel to help them lead and govern God's people

- But here God says through Joel that in the last days ... he will pour out his HS on everyone
 - All people – sons, daughters, young men, old men, men, women, servants
 - The Spirit is given to all regardless of sex, age or rank
- This is fulfilled at Pentecost because if you took all the people who heard the disciples praising God in their own language ... and you plotted their nationalities on a map ... you'll see they literally come from all the nations north, south, east and west of Jerusalem
- What is clear is that the good news of Jesus is for all nations
 - That the commission Jesus gave his disciples to take the gospel to all nations ... wasn't just empty rhetoric
 - It's his divine plan and desire
- That ground breaking day in Jerusalem ... the pattern was set ...
 - The gospel would always be for all people ... regardless of ethnicity, culture, race and language ... the good news of Jesus is for everyone
- But notice what else is alluded to there in the words of Joel
- He says the coming of the Spirit will happen in the **last days** before the great and glorious coming of the Lord
 - Now for OT Jews, the 'last days' and the coming of the Lord referred to the time when God would send his Messiah (his rescuing king) to restore all things and save his people
- And so not only is Peter explaining
 - that this crazy phenomena you are witnessing is the outpouring of the HS
 - but also that this is the last days of the promised Messiah
- What this means is ... this is **a ground breaking moment** in God's salvation plan
 - This is a turning point ... a key moment!
 - This is the time where God is signaling to the world that he's serious about this mission
 - because he's just come good on his promise to equip the disciples with the power they need to go out on this mission
 - But more importantly ... that this is the time where God is saying

- I'm about to come good on my promise to bring salvation to the world ... because that time starts now
- This is a new era
- This is the time when salvation will go to all nations, not just the Jews
- This is the time when people will start calling on the name of my son Jesus and be saved for all eternity

Application

- It's mind blowing to think that the God of the universe is permanently with his people by his Spirit
- God is **not** distant and disinterested as some people think
- The giving of his Spirit shows you're never alone
 - God is with you and in you
 - And therefore, your relationship with him is more intimate or personal than you could ever imagine

3. The Purpose of the Spirit (v22-36)

- Now God has given the Spirit – what's purpose?
- It's interesting when you read Acts 2 and there is lots of crazy stuff about the HS – fire, wind, tongues, fulfillment of prophecy
- But when you read the chapter closely ... we see the real focus is not on the Spirit ... the real focus is Jesus
- Because what follows in v22-36 ... Peter is basically saying
 - "This Lord you are to call on to save you in the last days that Joel was pointing us to ... let me show you that's Jesus"
- The first bit of evidence that Peter points to in v22 is Jesus' life and ministry
 - Peter outlines that Jesus was a great teacher and a worker of miracles
 - The mighty works of Jesus were signs that the Messiah had come
- Then in v23 Peter points to Jesus' death
 - He doesn't say much about how his death accomplished salvation
 - Rather what he highlights that this was all according to God's set purpose and foreknowledge
- The third bit of evidence that Peter points to in v24-32 is Jesus' resurrection

- In v25-28 Peter cites Psalm 16 to show that the resurrection was predicted in the Old Testament²
- And in v32 he says Jesus resurrection has been personally witnessed by the apostles themselves
- The final bit of evidence that Peter points to in v33-36 is Jesus exaltation
 - He says that Christ is at the right hand of God, where he is now ruling as Lord of all > And here he cites Psalm 110 to back it up
 - But he also says there in v33 that it's **from Christ's exalted position in heaven** that he sends the HS
- Now what's the meaning and purpose of all this?
 - Why does Peter lay down this evidence of Jesus miracles, death, resurrection and ascension?
- To make the point he makes in v36
 - *"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*
- Here Peter reaches the climax of his sermon where he declares
 - that God's resurrection and exaltation of Jesus proves he's mankind's Lord and Israel's Messiah
 - And Peter calls on all those present to recognise this truth
 - And therefore the pouring out of the Spirit you are now witnessing is because
 - the last days are here
 - Jesus has come, died, risen and ascended just as promised
 - And now he's the Lord and Christ of all

Application

- We can do an entire series on the HS – who he is, what he does etc
- But the key thing we learn here is that role of the Spirit is to bring glory to Jesus³
 - That is, the HS is to point people to see and believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour

² Peter argues King David who is writing the Psalm can't be referring to himself when he writes 'his body will not see decay' because as Peter says ... the tomb of David could still be seen in Jerusalem and still contained the remains of David's body. Therefore the words of Ps 16 **didn't** fully apply to David ... but as he concludes in v31 ... points to the resurrection of the Christ who **wasn't** abandoned to the grave

³ John 14:26 The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you

- This is plainly seen when the Spirit comes upon the disciples and what do they do?
 - Declare the wonders of God ...
 - Presumably that would mean pointing to all the wonders God has done for us through Christ and the cross
- But it's also seen in the content of Peter's sermon
 - It's all about Jesus
 - The Spirit is not the focus, Christ is the focus
- You could say
 - Jesus is the content of Peter's preaching and
 - Spirit is the power behind Peter's preaching
- Jesus says as much in John 14:26
 - *The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*

Application

- It's important for us to realise the purpose of the Spirit is to point people to Christ
 - Therefore, the purpose of the Spirit is not to give you warm and fuzzies as a Christian
 - Means we're not to elevate the work the Spirit above that of Jesus
 - Or be fixated on particular manifestations the Spirit
- Because the Spirit's role is to help convict you and I that Jesus is both Lord and Christ

- Now friends ... that's true [Jesus is both Lord and Christ] then ...
- It means
 - You and I need to bow the knee before Jesus
 - Come to him for the forgiveness of sin and eternal life
 - As Joel 2 says - everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved
- Given we're in the 'last days' and we don't when Christ will return, there's an urgency around this if you haven't already done so!

4. The Power of the Spirit (v37-41)

- When Peter gets to the climax of his sermon ... the awful reality hit home!
 - This Jesus they crucified is both Lord and Christ!
 - The people are deep in anguish and 'cut to the heart'

- By which I take indicates they saw the deep personal relevance of the gospel message that Peter had just explained ... in terms of their
 - Belief in Jesus
 - Regret over their sin
 - Their need for forgiveness

- Back in v12 the people asked - "What does this mean?"
- The question here in v37 - "What shall we do?"
 - Peter's response to the question in v12 is to explain what the gospel is
 - Peter's response to the question in v37 is to explain how to receive Christ
 - And that's what he spells out in v38

- Peter replies in v38:
 - *"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."*

- Notice here there are two actions and two promises
- First action is Repent
 - Talked about this last week
 - Means to completely change your mind about Jesus
 - Means to stop living life your way and start living life Jesus way
- Implied in this is belief / faith / trust
 - If you're going to turn away from your old life ... you need to turn to something
 - Obviously that something / someone is Jesus
 - You won't do that unless you believe / trust he is Lord and Christ

- Second action is 'be baptized'
 - Baptism isn't a pre-requisite for forgiveness of sins
 - It's making a public declaration of your repentance (if adult) and to change in allegiance
 - But it's also an outward sign or reminder of what God does for us on the inside through faith in Christ > that is ... wipe away my sin and guilt

- This response was demanded individually from everyone

- And then Peter tells them there are two great gifts that come to those who repent of their sin and turn to Christ

- The first gift is forgiveness of sins
 - In the light of their clear rejection of Jesus ... forgiveness of sins is massive
- The second gift is the Holy Spirit
 - The gift of the Spirit is for all people
 - Not just the religious elite
 - Not just the leaders
 - Not just the clergy
 - Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus

Application

- Here we see the power of the Spirit in action
- The Spirit that Jesus sends is the Spirit who transforms
 - He transforms Peter > he transforms the crowd > he transforms culture

Peter

- As you read the gospels what you find is Peter is full of bravado but so often unable to follow through
 - At one point ... Peter even told Jesus he was willing to die with him
 - Yet when Jesus was arrested ... Peter didn't even have the courage to stand up to a little servant girl who accused Peter of knowing Jesus
 - And Peter denied Jesus
- And yet here he is in Acts 2 ...
 - Peter is standing up in front of a HUGE crowd
 - Preaching with courage and conviction and passion
 - Unpacking the scriptures and pointing people to Jesus
 - And calling on them to respond to the gospel
- Why is that? How does he do that?
 - The Spirit!
 - The Spirit who transforms people!
 - He transforms hearts to believe the truth about Christ
 - He strengthens the faith of believers to stand firm in hardship
 - He equips and empowers people for the task of mission ... just as Jesus promised
- When you turn to Christ and he sends you his Spirit ... he will transform from the inside out
- Not only will he equip you to be bold and share the gospel where you would otherwise with shy and timid
- But the HS will shape your life, day by day, to become more like Jesus

- How?
 - Not through some magical power that just zaps you and makes you more godly
 - But by apply the truth of God's word as you read it
 - Convict you of your sin
 - Strengthens your convictions
 - Teaches you the right way to life
- The power of the Spirit is he will transform your life

Crowd

- Notice how the Spirit also transforms the crowd
- Peter is speaking to Jews
 - They knew the scriptures
 - For years they've been taught about the sacrificial system and the 10 Commandments and the coming of God's rescuing king
 - Their worldview meant they struggled to
 - Understand that the OT was fulfilled in Jesus
 - Conceive that God would come in the flesh
 - Believe that Jesus could rise from the dead
- Yet, when Peter preaches the gospel that points to Jesus ... they were cut to the heart
 - And they responded to the gospel call in repentance and faith
- Why is that? How does that happen?
 - The Spirit!
 - The Spirit who softens people's hearts and minds to believe the gospel
- It wasn't Peter's amazing preaching that turned their hearts around and convicted them to respond in that way
 - It was the Spirit applying the truth of Peter's **preaching of the gospel** to the hearts and minds of the crowd
- If you're here this morning and you think that you can be a Christian by being religious ... well you haven't understood Christianity
 - All those people in the crowd were very religious ...
 - The fact they'd travelled from afar to be in Jerusalem showed just how religious they were
 - But none of them had a saving faith and a personal relationship with God

- Your religiosity ... nor your morality ... will do nothing to put in you in right relationship with God
- The only way the crowds would be saved ... and the only way you will be saved ... is
 - to hear the gospel,
 - be convicted of its truth by the power of the Spirit and
 - call on the name of the Lord in repentance and faith
- If you're a Christian person here this morning, you need to know and believe this truth about the power of the Spirit
 - Because if you don't ... and you think people responding to Jesus depends on you
 - Even if you if you think it depends on you just a little bit
 - Will lead you either to despair when you fail ... or to be puffed up when you succeed
- But knowing that ... as you go out fulfilling the mission Jesus gives you to share the gospel ... that it's the HS that convicts ppl and brings them to Christ
 - Will guard you against despair when people reject Jesus
 - Will guard you against pride when people accept him
 - Because it's his work ... not yours
 - And that it will rightfully drive you to prayer and asking God the Spirit to do **his** work ... as you share the gospel with those around you
- You know the way to know whether you believe this or not?
 - You'll see it in your prayers
- When you
 - Go to work
 - Go into a scripture class
 - Prepare for youth group
 - Coffee with a friend
- Do you pray?
 - Do you pray for people to know Jesus?
 - Do you pray for help in sharing the gospel?
 - Do you pray for God be merciful and open eyes?
 - Do you pray for the Spirit to soften hearts to the good news of Jesus?
- Because if you don't ... then you're setting yourself up for despair or pride when it comes to fulfilling the mission Jesus has given you ... to be my witness to the ends of the earth.

5. Conclusion

- The day of Pentecost was ground breaking day in salvation history
- The sending of the Spirit to be with followers of Jesus
 - not only fulfilled what had been promised ...
 - but would ensure that the mission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth ... would not be mission impossible ... but mission possible because
 - The presence of the Spirit is to proclaim Christ
 - The purpose of the Spirit is to point us to Christ
 - The power of the Spirit is to win us to Christ

- We give we are still in the last days (like the disciples) then we must respond
- If you are like one of those in the crowd who the HS is making you feel cut the heart ... then I urge you as Peter did that day ...
 - Save yourself and call on the name of the Lord

- If you are like one of the disciples who have **has** received the Spirit
 - Then be encouraged
 - God is with you
 - He will never leave your or forsake you
 - He has equipped you and empowered you to BE and MAKE disciples of Jesus

PRAY