

The First Gospel Sermon (Part 3)

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon explores the first gospel message preached by Peter, emphasizing the resurrection of Jesus and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for believers.

Duration: 45:11

Scripture: Matthew 14:22, Acts 2:21-36

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the end of a church service and emphasizes the importance of the word of God penetrating people's hearts. He highlights the need for the message to have a lasting impact rather than just being entertaining or impressive. The sermon focuses on Peter's speech to the crowd, where he confronts them about their role in Jesus' crucifixion. Peter emphasizes that Jesus' death was part of God's plan and urges the crowd to repent and be baptized for a fresh start in their lives. The sermon emphasizes the power of God's forgiveness and the opportunity for a new beginning through Jesus.

Transcript

The message today is the first gospel sermon. The first gospel sermon. And really, isn't this something, I'm gonna preach a sermon on a sermon.

Because we're doing the book of Acts, and the part we're reading today is in Acts 2, the first sermon ever preached by any Christian minister. And the first presentation of the gospel. So I wonder if the musicians all know what the gospel is, with clarity.

I wonder if the choir, they sing gospel music, but more important than that genre of singing, what is the gospel? Not how do you preach it now, or how do we preach it at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, or in Alabama, or wherever you're from, but because we might have perverted it. How did it start? Because that's what the Bible gives us, the pure word of God, the way things ought to be done. And when we started this study, we said that one of the battles is that the book of Acts is about the birth of the church and the life of the church, but the problem is, is we've got such strong stereotypes in our mind, and such strong ideas of what church is like, because some of us have had experience, a Catholic church, Protestant church, Baptist church, Charismatic church, whatever kind of church, these names don't exist, of course, to God, and we thus then say, oh, I know what church is like, but you think I'm a novice? I know what church is like.

So when we hear the word preach, pray, church gatherings, evangelism, we don't go to the Bible, usually, and say, what does the Bible say that ought to look like? We go by our experience, which is not a good way to go, because in case our experience has been bad, we just reproduce the bad that we've learned, and this is how stuff goes on for generations. For example, I grew up in a little Pentecostal church, mostly Eastern Europeans, the only thing I knew. I didn't think there were any Christians outside of our church.

We were very isolated. I didn't know that the body of Christ was huge and all that. I was just a little boy, got baptized there, and in that church, they wouldn't want a black person within 100 yards.

Were they a Christian church? Yeah. Was that an example, a good example of a Christian church? No, they were full of prejudice. They had an enclave of Eastern European, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Slavic people, and they met together, and I was part of that, and it was family and relations of family, and that's what it was.

So that's all I knew about church. Should I go by that? Should I then spend the rest of my life reproducing what I grew up around? No. And a sister grew up in St. Louis, right? And she grew up with a certain church environment.

Should Alicia then go by that the rest of her life? Or her husband, Michael, he comes from Africa and lived in England, should he go by that? Well, only if it's in the Bible. Should we copy what goes on in the Baptist church there in Alabama? No, only if it's in the Bible. In other words, churches can be wrong, and that's why God gave us the Bible, so we would keep being changed from glory to glory and be the church he wants us to be.

All in favor say amen. So we don't come to the Bible and fit the verses into our experience. We come to the Bible and take our experiences and say, is this real? I mean, is Pastor Simba preaching the gospel? Not Pastor Simba, whatever he says goes.

No, everything has to be judged by the word of God. So we found out that the church, and Luke, who wrote the gospel of Luke, he now is writing the story of what Jesus continued to do after he died and rose again from the dead, and we found out that he spent about 40 days off and on with his disciples, appearing off and on to them and telling them about the kingdom of God, and then at the end of his time on Earth, Acts tells us, Luke records that he spoke to the disciples and said, now, you go to Jerusalem and you wait until you receive power, the power of the Holy Spirit. Even though you know that I'm alive, even though you have your doctrine straight, you don't go anywhere without this power, and this power's gonna come with the descent of the Holy Spirit.

The Father sent me, the Son, but now that I leave you, I'm gonna send the Holy Spirit. Don't do anything until you receive the Holy Spirit's power. So they went back and they waited and they had a basic prayer praise time for 10 days.

They devoted themselves, about 120 of them, men and women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and other women, and the apostles, and then we learned in our second week that the Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, which was a Jewish feast, 50 days after Passover, and the Spirit came and there was a sound of a mighty rushing wind and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other languages that they didn't know in some kind of ecstasy and enablement that the Spirit gave them, and the crowd gathered, because of all the noise, and because it was a Jewish feast and people were there from all over the world who were Jewish, coming from many different language groups, they

gathered and they said, what does this mean? What's going on here? These people are all talking about God and how great He is, but they're speaking in our language, but I know they don't know our language, but they're speaking our language. How does this happen, what does this mean? And we're all these tribes and we're hearing them speak about God's greatness and to them, they don't even understand what they're saying, but we understand because we speak that language. So then, some of them said, as we ended, some said, when they saw this, these people are drunk.

These people are drunk, they've had too much to drink and they're starting to carouse around. But now Peter, Peter, of all people, Peter, the one who had failed the most and denied the Lord, that's an interesting thought, that he becomes the speaker, the first preacher of the gospel. This is the birth of the church, this is the first gospel message.

And Peter's the speaker, the one who had denied the Lord three times. And now he speaks to the crowd and this sermon has a beginning and this sermon has an end and then there's a reaction to the sermon and that's what our message is about today. This is our study, we're studying a sermon.

We're preaching a sermon on a sermon. So we're gonna learn what happened. So let's look, Peter says to them, these men are not drunk, as you suppose, it's only nine in the morning.

No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel and now he quotes, in the last days, God says, so now the last days must be when Jesus came, that's the beginning of the last days. So when people say we're living in the last days, we've been living in the last days ever since Jesus came and left. Now we're in the last days.

So in the last days, God says, I will pour out my spirit on all people, not just some people, not just some prophets, all people, not just men, not just women, both of them. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions.

Your old men will dream dreams. In other words, I'm ushering in a new era of the spirit, God says, in the last days. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days and they will prophesy, which means speak in an inspired way.

Not just telling, predicting the future, but speaking God's heart in an anointed way that penetrates those who hear. Notice, men and women, I will show, oh, now this is interesting. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Now see this language, verse 19.

I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. So what does that mean? What does that mean? How's the moon gonna be turned to blood? How's the sun gonna be darkened? I thought God is pouring out his spirit.

I thought this is the last day. So it seems to be that God is gonna pour out his spirit which started on the day of Pentecost which is the beginning of the church era. And then that church era that we live now in is gonna lead right up until the return of Jesus Christ.

And that there will be signs, God says, before Christ returns. Now how those signs are taken is a matter of disagreement among Christians. Some people say in apocalyptic language, apocalyptic means language concerning the end of time, the return of the Lord.

If you look in the Old Testament, poetic, very strong, symbolic language they say is used, not to be taken literally, of moving and shaking and rocking and rolling on the earth, nations, wars, all kinds of things happening. And that this will happen and we'll get more and more before Christ returns. So they say the moon will not turn to blood.

The moon's not gonna turn to blood. And for example, there's some promises in Revelation that the stars will be thrown down to the earth. Well, we know that the stars, all the stars are way bigger than the sun, so they couldn't fall to the earth.

So some people see it symbolically. Some people say, no, that is gonna be a literal thing that's gonna happen. There's gonna be such a cosmic shaking that these things are literally gonna happen.

Other people say, no, there'll be signs, there'll be wars and rumors of wars. You link this with Luke 21, Matthew 24, where Jesus said, these are the things that are gonna happen. Whenever it speaks about the end, you have to decide, is this literally to be taken or is this symbolically to be taken? Because obviously, there's symbolic language in the Bible, especially when it speaks of the end times.

Be that as it may, in this sermon, Peter is saying, notice, God says, I'm gonna pour out my spirit upon all flesh. People are gonna be changed. Men and women are gonna do things they never dreamed of.

They're gonna be changed from the inside out. While that is happening, there's also gonna be a shaking in the earth and there's gonna be warning signs that God is gonna seal up time and bring everybody before him at the throne of judgment. Both are happening.

And while that is happening, everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Now, for the first time in the New Testament era, Peter is saying, and remember this, with all the rocking and rolling going on, with all the signs and warnings and things, diseases, and all the things that Jesus talked about, and now, Joel also mentions, he says, remember, everyone, anyone who calls on the name of the Lord and says, God, help me, God, save me, shall be saved. God is a God of mercy.

So amidst all of the preparation for judgment, God is still looking for people who will call upon him and say, Lord, save me. Okay, so Peter explains what this manifestation of the Spirit is. And he says, come on, you're Jewish people.

You're here for the Jewish feast. You know what Joel wrote. This is it.

This is that which was spoken of the prophet Joel. God is doing what he said he would do. It's been fulfilled right now.

And then he gets into a sermon. Let's look. Men of Israel, listen to this.

That's a good thing to do when you're a speaker. Say, listen. Jesus of Nazareth, notice he uses the human, not Jesus, Son of God, but Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited, that means approved by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did among you through him as you yourselves know.

He says, this Jesus that I wanna preach to you about, this is what the Christian church is supposed to be preaching, not join the church, not be a Baptist, not join the Brooklyn Tabernacle, not Moses, not law, thou shalt not kill and steal. They all have their place, but the message of the church is Jesus. Do I get a witness here? It's Jesus.

We're supposed to talk about Jesus, not Old Testament, that they all have their places, but it's gotta lead to Jesus. If you don't end up on Jesus, you're not preaching a Christian message. We're called Christians because we're focused on Jesus Christ and all the people said amen.

So he says, now this Jesus, I'm not talking about some unknown person to you. You know how well known he got in Jerusalem. You know what he did.

You know the people that were healed. Go check it out. Notice this, historically how he refers to this.

You know, I'm not making up some story. Go and ask all the people that he changed. Go and ask the people who ate meal from five loaves and two fishes.

Jesus was accredited by God. God put his seal on him because he did things nobody has ever done. He walked on water.

He did all kinds of things. And you know about it. And if you don't know about it, your head's been in the sand.

Get your head out of the sand and check out with the people that are still alive who have been touched by Jesus. So that's how Peter starts the sermon. Verse, this man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

This is a different kind of message, so I'm gonna preach it as we go through it, okay? This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Notice what's happening here. He's saying, God set this whole thing up, but you did it.

You did it, but God set the whole thing up. And notice the kind of sermon technique he uses. Forget user-friendly, seeker-sensitive.

What speaker would say, hey, by the way, you crucified him. You used the Romans, but you killed him. What, is that a good way to make friends with the crowd? No, but he told the truth.

When you're anointed by the Holy Spirit and you're speaking truth and love, you can say a lot of very penetrating things. And he says, you, you're bad. You crucified him with the help of wicked men.

You turned him over to the Romans because you couldn't kill him yourself. But don't worry, God knew it, knew you were gonna do that, and it was all set up by God. That's the mystery of God's predestination and purpose and decree and sovereignty and men operating as free moral agents.

And we'll never understand how they fit together. But God's in charge of the whole thing. Yet people are responsible for what they do.

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death because it was impossible for death to keep its hold. So the message is not just Christ crucified, but Christ risen. Jesus is alive, he's saying.

Jesus is alive. Can we put our hands together? Jesus is alive. God has raised this Jesus to life.

And we are all witnesses. We're jumping ahead now after he proves that David prophesied about this in Psalm 16, that Jesus would not lay in the grave. He wasn't talking about himself.

Peter says David's still in the grave. He was prophesying. So now God has raised this Jesus to life, and we're all witnesses of the fact.

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. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, the Lord said to my Lord, how many Lords are there? The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. Therefore let all Israel be assured of this.

God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord, that means ruler, and Christ, the Messiah, the Savior of the world. That's too good to just pass up. God has raised this Jesus to life.

He's alive. And we're witnesses of this fact. Why would we make this up? You killed him.

Why would we come and say that he's alive? We know you're gonna come after us. Ladies and gentlemen, listen to me. One of the great proofs of the truth of this message is why would they make up something that would get them killed and persecuted? They said Jesus died and he rose again, and we're witnesses.

You wanna talk to us. We ate with him. We talked to him.

Why would we make this up in Jerusalem of all places? You just crucified him less than two months ago. Now we're gonna make up a story to get ourselves in trouble? Who would do that? You can tell by Peter's speech. He's an intelligent man.

He said no, we're witnesses that he's alive. He's alive. He's alive.

I denied him three times. I cursed and said I didn't know him, but he's alive. He's alive.

And he's restored me, and now of all people, I'm preaching. Can you imagine how the devil must have been attacking Peter when Peter was speaking? Whispering in his ear, how can you do this, you hypocrite? You're saying that the people denied the Holy One. You denied the Holy One.

Oh, God's grace is amazing. Come on, did we give a hand for God's grace, his forgiveness, his mercy? Exalted to the right hand of God, he's received from the Father, the promised Holy Spirit, that's very mysterious, and now has poured out what you now see and hear, the speaking in tongues, this manifestation of the Spirit. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand.

So now where is the Lord now? He's at the right hand, which speaks of power. Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, notice, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. So Jesus now is risen from the dead, he's ascended to heaven.

Where is he in heaven? He's at the right hand of the Father. What are we waiting for? Until every enemy is made a footstool for your feet. And that language is the language of the Roman soldiers and the Roman generals, who when they conquered the opposing army, they would take the general and the king, and they would put their foot on their neck and say, I've conquered you.

And now we're waiting for every enemy of Christ to be made the footstool of Jesus Christ. Right now, we see a lot of stuff going on, and you wonder, why has God permitted it? There'll become a day when God will permit it no more. And he will make every enemy, including death, and all the people who mock him, and everybody who raises their fist and defames Jesus Christ, and everybody who mocks morality, everyone who seems to have power now, every enemy will bow, everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That's what we're waiting for. So he's crowned already. That's an interesting phrase that a man by the name of Gordon Fee and others have brought up.

Our Christianity is already, but not now, not yet. It's already, but not yet. He's already at the right hand of the Father.

He's already risen from the dead, but has every enemy been conquered and put at his feet? Not yet, not yet, not yet. Christians still die. That's one of the enemies that will be brought under, no more dying.

We still get sick. We still die. That was never God's original plan.

That enemy will be conquered when Christ returns, and then we're gonna be with him for billions of years. Come on, how many are looking forward to that day? We're gonna be with him. From Alabama, from Brooklyn, from Puerto Rico, from Africa, we're gonna be with him.

Now, oh, praise God, this is good, right? This is a good sermon. No, I don't mean my sermon, I mean this sermon. I don't mean my sermon.

I meant Peter's. That's a very interesting thing. How'd this fisherman who just failed God less than two months ago, how'd he get to preach such a good sermon? And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

When you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you can do things you can't do. He shouldn't be preaching. He never went to seminary, never got a degree.

You see the danger of Bible schools and seminaries? You see the danger of them? They're a blessing, but do you see the danger of them? You can study and learn and not depend on the Holy Spirit. So when it began in the beginning, Jesus on purpose chose fishermen and failures and tax collectors, why? So that all the glory would go to him. So now God could use a preacher, and they'll say, where'd he go to school? I wanna go there too.

Remember when you heard Peter, all you'd say is, oh, God is awesome. God is awesome. Where did he get that? Got it from God.

So seminaries and Bible schools are blessings as long as they train and then end up telling the students, the men and women who graduate, it's all worth nothing unless God anoints you and blesses you. That's the danger of learning. Because knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.

So now it's the end of the sermon. He ends the sermon by saying, and I'm ending my sermon, he ends up by saying, now God has made Jesus Christ both Lord and Christ. Christ is the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew Messiah.

They were waiting for the Messiah, their anointed one, the one who would bring deliverance, but he brought a deliverance different than what they were planning. So now, how does it end? How does the church begin? That's just the sermon. What's the end? This should be the end of our services, not looked at every individual service because services have different reasons, but this first meeting of the church, how did it end? Well, notice here, he never made an appeal to the people.

He never said, I want you to do this, I want you to do that. He just proclaimed the word of God like you're gonna do in the Philippines, better than ever before, Pastor Ildefonso. So now what happens? Look, when the people heard this, this bullet of a message, they were cut to the heart, and they said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do? So that's the challenge before we go further.

That's the challenge when we talk to people about Christ. We wanna see the word of God anointed by the Holy Spirit penetrate their heart. Where were they pricked? In their heart.

When people leave the church and say, oh man, wasn't he funny? Or what an orator he is. Or man, that choir was so great. Then the meeting wasn't good.

The meeting wasn't good. When God's word is spoken and the Holy Spirit is working, people get moved in their hearts, in su corazon. How many say amen? How many have been in services or times alone with God where God has touched your heart, moved your heart? Yeah, then you know God is working.

Not on that frothy human level of cleverness and puppeteering and using techniques to get the people all worked up, but they were cut to their heart. And they said, what must we do? Now this is all important. Let's say you're witnessing to someone.

Let's say Karen Melendez is witnessing to someone and they go, man, you just gave me your testimony. See, Peter was able to say, we saw him risen from the dead. We haven't seen him, but what we can share is what he's done in our lives, in our heart, because he lives in our heart through the Holy Spirit.

Amen? He's alive to us. So someone says to you, Michael Olatunji, so what do I do now? I was somewhere recently where I was shocked that a leader in a very, very, very large church started telling me that he was witnessing to someone and he told him, this is what you need to do. You need to go to church now.

Will you promise me you'll go to church? So I said to him, what church did you tell him to go to? He said, no, just go to church, because that's the right thing to do. And I didn't say anything, but I was going, whoa, where'd they get that? You'll never see that mentioned anywhere in the Bible, go to church, because the answer isn't in church. The answer is in Jesus.

You can come to church, you can come to this church every single week and be as lost as sin, because sitting in this building doesn't do anything for you. It's opening your heart and now doing what God wants you to do. So what would you do if you just had a few seconds to tell someone, Peter's already told them, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

You gotta believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, obviously. That's implied in this message. Notice what he tells the crowd to do.

First message, first Christian sermon, first preacher. He's the first preacher of the Christian era. What does he tell the people to do? Peter replied, here's what you do, repent and be baptized, every one of you.

Now, to be baptized to the Jew was a disgrace, because the Jewish religion had baptism, but only for Gentile converts. If you were a Gentile and you wanted to convert and we were both gonna go become Jews, they say, no, you gotta get baptized because you weren't born a Jew. We Jews, we don't have to get baptized.

Peter says, you wanna know what to do? Repent, and every one of you get in the water, no matter how humbling it is, and you be baptized in the name, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. In other words, not that when you go in the water, your sins are forgiven, but as a sign that you believe in Jesus and you know your sins are washed away, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter replied, repent, everybody say repent, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And notice, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. So here's what he's telling them. You think this is amazing, what God has done for us? You repent, and you be baptized.

Put your faith in Christ, and as a sign of your faith, get in the water and be baptized in his name. What does to be baptized in his name mean? It doesn't mean that when you put somebody down in the water, you go, in Jesus' name. And by the way, that's a conflict, it seems, in Scripture because I believe it's in Matthew, the Lord says, go into all the world, make disciples of the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And yet here it says, be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a lot of discussion about that. I just want you to know how we baptize people.

We baptize you the right way. We baptize you when we baptize you. I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name.

You are baptized now. Come on, how many say amen? I don't know myself which one the Lord meant, so I say both. That's the truth before God.

I'm not sure which is right, so I say both. So, repent. What does that mean? You don't become a Christian unless you repent.

It's repent and believe, be baptized. Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved. Whoever does not believe, Jesus said, will be condemned.

What does repent mean? Repent means change your whole attitude about sin. Change your attitude about sin. You know, the secret sins that you do, that you think nobody sees and no one knows.

Change your attitude about that and hate it because that's what Christ was nailed to the cross for. Jesus died for sin. Hate your prejudice.

Hate your black prejudice, your white prejudice. Hate it. Turn, turn around.

Make a 180 degree turn and say, I'm wrong. I don't want that. That's what the crowd had to do.

They had to say, I'm wrong. This is what stops people from becoming Christians. They won't humble themselves and say, I'm wrong.

I'm wrong and I give that thing up. I give up that immorality. I give up that pornography.

I give up that lying. I give up that thing I do on the job that's not right. I give it up.

It's wrong. I know it's wrong. God's convicted me.

I can't change my and overcome it myself, but I admit it's wrong and I turn and I say, Jesus, help me. That's repentance. I can't have my sin and have Jesus.

That's not a Christian. They were pricked in their heart because they were being told, you crucified the king of glory. The Messiah came.

He bumped into you five feet in front of you and all you could do is put him on a cross. You're wrong. And they said, we're wrong.

Nobody there in the crowd said, who are you to judge Peter? You denied the Lord, if I remember correctly. No, no, when God is dealing with you, you don't judge anyone else. You don't make any excuses.

You don't get into, oh, there's a bunch of hypocrites. You don't say, there's a bunch of hypocrites in the church. When God is dealing with you, it's just you and you get to get right with you.

You don't use other people. Come on. Can we say amen? So, repent.

Repent. I was at a church in Florida a few years ago. The minister ended the meeting and he left that thing out and that's what's the problem now in America and why the lifestyles of people in church are not different than the lifestyles of people for the most part outside of church.

Because he said, oh, by the way, before I close, anyone becomes a Christian, just repeat after me. Dear Jesus, I believe in you, amen. Now you're a Christian.

No, it doesn't work that way. To turn to Jesus, you gotta turn from something. Now, you tell some people that, they get very upset.

By the way, I'd like to suggest to you that 90%, in my judgment, 90% of the people who deny the existence of God, there's a moral reason for it because if they admit that there's a God, they're gonna have to change their life and they're not gonna change their life for nothing. So, they're gonna talk about apes and Spiragyra and all kinds of things and where did this come from and that and how can you prove this and how can you prove that and all of that but you know what the real deal is? If the moment they say there's a God, they become morally responsible and they're not becoming morally responsible to anybody. I'm gonna do what I'm gonna do.

Don't tell me there's a God who's gonna judge me. They don't come out and say that, they make up this whole thing, how can you prove the existence of God and all of that? I'll be what you want me to be, God. That's what you have to come with.

You have to say to God, I repent, I'm wrong. Christians have to do that. When we backslide, we get trapped in stuff that we have to say we're wrong.

The moment you justify it, you're not treating your wife right, you're not treating your husband right but you're justifying it because of something wrong in them, you're never gonna get help. You have to get low because only when you get low will God lift you up. As long as you're high, making excuses, God will bring you low.

How many wanna go high with God? How many wanna be lifted up? Well, you gotta go low to get lifted up. The moment you're saying, yeah, but that girl and I'm not, you know. So they repented, that's what he told them.

You repent and you'll be baptized. You identify totally with Jesus Christ and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It's for everybody.

It's not for, back in the Old Testament, it was for Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joshua, Daniel. It was for David, it was for Moses, it was for Deborah the prophetess. It was for a bunch of special people but now God says, I'm doing a new thing.

Everybody in the choir will be full of the Holy Spirit. Everybody in the choir, every alto, every soprano, every tenor has a right to say, God, here I am. In fact, when you're born again, the Spirit comes and lives in you or you're not a Christian.

That's what happens when you put your faith in Christ. Some of you have never been baptized, never humbled yourself to say, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe what the Bible says about him.

I believe that he died for me. He is my savior, he is my Lord and I'm not ashamed to go in the water and be baptized. Some of you need to do that.

That's the first step of obedience. It doesn't save you. Faith in Christ saves you but that's an outward sign that you identify with Jesus' gang.

That's how I want to end this. See, the church is a gang. The church is a gang.

I'm using that because that's what a lot of people are lacking today. They have no identity. And they have the wrong identity, some of them.

The Bible 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. With many other words, the sermon didn't end there but mine's ending now. He warned them, he warned them.

Notice he encouraged them and he warned them. And he pleaded with them. That's a good thing for pastors.

He warned them and he pleaded with them. If you don't have warning, it gets too mushy. If it's all warning, there's no help for people.

He warned them and he pleaded with them. Save yourselves from this corrupt generation. If 2,000 years ago it was corrupt, what do you think New York in 2011 is? It's a corrupt generation.

You want to fit in with the world? You want to make it with the world? You want to be friends with everybody? You'll never follow Jesus Christ because Jesus wants to save you from this world. The way it thinks, the way it acts, its values. You got to come and be a Christian.

Be a Christian. Well, Pastor, I don't mind going to church on Sunday but I'm not into this that much, you know? Then you're not a Christian. To be a Christian, you're saved from this corrupt generation.

And those who accepted his message were baptized, about 3,000, and were added to their number that day. Everyone who heard him and was serious about it got baptized. It must have taken a whole day from nine o'clock in the morning onward.

They just kept baptizing people. And the church multiplied by a factor of 26. It went from 120 to 3,120, more or less.

Men and women baptized and identifying now with a new group. I am part of the church of Jesus Christ. I've been baptized in his name.

I put my faith in him. He is my savior. He's washed away every filthy wrong thing I've ever done.

Praise God for his mercy. Okay, his spirit now lives inside of me. And now I meet regularly and I identify.

I am not black anymore. I am a Christian first. I am a Christian, then I'm black.

I am not white. I am not Ukrainian and Polish. I am a Christian.

I'm not American first. I am not American first. I am Christian first.

Because when America is dissolved, the church of Christ will go on forever and ever and ever and ever. Come on, say amen with me. I'm not Southern.

I'm not Northern. I'm not Southern, Northern. I'm not African.

I'm not into my West Indian thing. I am a Christian. And everyone who's a Christian, I love them.

I praise God for them. Where are you from, brother? Columbia, look at this. Haiti, Poland, Columbia.

Here we are, the church of Jesus Christ. Here we are, church of Jesus Christ. This is the gang.

Better than the crypts, better than the bloods, better than anything. And we got our own hand signal. One way, Jesus Christ.

Everybody put one finger up there like that. Jesus Christ. Are you in the gang? Are you in the gang? Viva Columbia, viva.

Come on, let's put our hands together for the church of Jesus Christ. That's how the early church was. No more nations, no more this, no more ethnic identity, no more getting sensitive about they're putting blacks down, they're putting whites down, they're putting Southerners, Northerners.

Get out of here, come on. I belong to Jesus. He's King of kings and Lord of lords.

Oh God, save us. Save us from all the auxiliary stuff that holds us back. I'm baptized in his name, I belong to Jesus Christ.

I'm gonna live forever with him. And we're gonna be all together. And by the way, if you don't wanna be with some of his people now, maybe God will then just say, oh, you don't wanna be with him on earth, then I won't let you be with him in heaven either.

Wait a minute. If you make it a big point that you don't wanna be with certain people here on earth because of color, ethnicity, or whatever, if that's your thing, be careful how you speak because maybe God will say, all right, well then that disqualifies you because in heaven, every nation, every tribe, every tongue. No, I only wanna be around assemblies of God.

I only wanna be around Lutherans, Presbyterians. Well, there are no Lutherans in heaven. No Baptists, no Presbyterians.

There's only one body, one savior, one gang. Come on, the gang of Jesus Christ. Yeah, let's really praise him.

Close your eyes. This is the Fourth of July weekend. We think of the Declaration of Independence, but I wanna tell you whom Jesus sets free is really free.

Free from all the stuff that'll hold you back from what he wants you to be. Before we walk out of here and hug each other, is there anyone here would say, Pastor Cimbala, I wanna join that gang, that gang that you're in? I wanna repent. I've never really repented.

I never had that dramatic thing in my life. I don't care if there's just two of you. I wanna sign up to be baptized.

I wanna make a clean cut with my old life. You see, because Jesus promises a new beginning, what Peter was saying is you can have a fresh start. I'm preaching, he says, because God is a God of a second chance.

Of all the people in the world you'd pick to preach, Peter would be the last. Failure, weak, lame, no character, three and a half years with a guy and then you can't stand with him when he gets arrested. No, but Peter's saying, if you turn to Jesus, he'll give you a new chance in life, a second beginning, a 2000th beginning.

If you're here today and you'd like me to just pray over you and you want me to get you signed up to be baptized or maybe you've been baptized, but you've drifted away from that life of repentance, faith in Jesus Christ and the gang is my number one identity group. I'm in the gang, I'm in the body of Christ. That's how you, the only way you could tell Christians in the early days was they were added to the number of believers.

Only, no hidden Christians. Every Christian was meeting together regularly for prayer, communion, learning the word, calling on God, worshiping. That's the only Christians that existed.

There were no closet Christians, nobody, no, I don't have time to do that, but God knows I love them. None of that, no, no, it's clear cut, clean cut. Repent, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, be baptized in his name and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Anybody here I can help? Anyone just struggling? Anybody just pass a symbol of my life is not what God planned it to be. But I want that new beginning. Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for us.

Thank you for bearing in your body all the filthy wrong things we've said and done and thought. And we thank you that your mercy is unlimited. You are abundant in mercy.

And we thank you that we can have a fresh start in life. Not only do you forgive the past, but you said that you would hold our hand and walk with us every day of the rest of our life. Because Lord, I don't know anyone else, but I need you.

I can't be what you want me to be unless you hold my hand, unless you strengthen me every moment by your spirit. I'll fall by the wayside, I'll mess up. So I not only bring the people in front of me here to you, Lord, I pray that they will repent and believe and be baptized.

But for all of us in this building, we just want to tell you we love you, Lord. We are so happy to be in your gang, to be part of the church of Jesus Christ, to know that all our sins are gone, to know that the Holy Spirit resides in us. That's the best thing in the whole world happening in our lives, Lord.

So we love you today. And Lord, we're gonna take the names of these people and minister to them, and whoever needs to get baptized, we will baptize. We thank you, though, for that sermon that reminds us whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

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