

6/19/22 - Acts 2:37-41 - "Behold, the Lord of the Harvest"

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[0 : 00] his word. We're in a series called Acts, and it's analyzing and seeing the movement of God's word beginning within the early church. And among last week's passage, we had quite a challenging set of verses that were expounded. And what we'll note them as were Luke's sermon notes from the Apostle Peter's sermon. We got insight to a couple of his notes in Acts 2. And with such an event in an orderly account of explaining the significance of the present event, what is occurring now, according to the Apostle Peter, is something that is being made known now of what was promised back then. He's saying what was said then is happening now for us right now in the church.

And through many citations, he had quite a few citations from the Old Testament and many words that weren't even accounted for in Luke's writing. Peter, the Apostle Peter, has essentially laid conviction upon his hearers. This is thick conviction. This is gut-wrenching conviction. There's no sugarcoating or trigger warnings from the Apostle Peter at this time period. From the pulpit to the pew, the word of God has gone forth. It has stirred up a great work within the Apostle Peter, and that work is transmitted by the power of the Holy Spirit to the pew, metaphorically speaking, to begin a new work within the lives of the hearers, all done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

God does this miraculous work within his people through the proclamation of the gospel. In this, as a preacher is bound to God's word and proclamation, we understand if there is any harshness or severity to be articulated from the pulpit, from the word, if there's anything that we're offended by, it's not to be mean. It's not to be, what's a better word, evictive about. It's to be cherished, that if we are convicted by God's word, it is truly a gift to us to be convicted by such. And today, we'll see the response of Peter's hearers. We'll hear from the pew in just a moment, and we'll continue to see the response of the hearers into next week. And my aim today for this passage is Luke's intended aim for his writing, that God's promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and the promises of God that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ uniquely have the power to duly weigh us down in conviction, but also to lift us up in encouragement by the mighty work of the Holy

Spirit through proclamation, simply as that. In other words, we want to dice it a little bit more, God's word is a destroyer and builder, equally a double-edged sword. Let me take a moment to pause and pray as we get into a couple sections of this passage. Let's pray. Father, I come to you today yielding to you today, Lord. And so, Father, let your word go forth here and to captivate all of our souls, whether we have a personal relationship with you or are coming to faith at this very moment.

Father, we are here to hear your word. And so, let it speak. And we praise in Jesus' name. Amen. So, I'm going to break it up into a couple sections in a sermon titled, Behold the Lord of the Harvest.

[4 : 22] Behold the Lord of the Harvest. And so, the first section, I want us to see what's happening in this text. The first section is our essential response to the gospel. Our essential response to the gospel.

And we see that in verse 37, where it says, Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the hearts and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? Fellow Jews, family of God, what shall we do? Descendants of Abraham, what shall we do, brothers?

Could you imagine? Look at what Peter just finished saying to them. Christ is Jesus whom you crucified. And they're concerned what they do. You mean as if the apostle Peter would say, You guys were the know-it-alls this whole time. What are you talking about? What shall we do? You were so confident just two months ago, right? To crush an innocent man, to conjure up lies and deceit against him. Now, what shall we do? This question is often meditated upon during the transference of the message from the pulpit to the pew. That as the proclamation goes out, it should often leave us hearing from his word in a way that says,

What are we to do with this? As Pastor Peter often says, So what? You know, get down to that. There's a so what, but there's also a so that we may do something. What shall we do? It's upon this question that even every preacher today should often meditate upon that, thinking about his audience in mind of what this text has my people do. What are we to do? Don't you see this unique relationship between a sermon and conviction? Changing course. After this, he says, Luke writes, after this, they were cut to the heart. After what? After this entire sermon outline of what God has been doing, coming from, stretching from Joel, the Old Testament promise of Joel, of the coming Holy Spirit, which is fulfilled at that time period, this time period with the Apostle Peter standing up in his sermon, or the promise of David of the coming Messiah, which is all fulfilled in Jesus Christ alone. The effect of Peter's proclamation was not only stuff for you to know, cool little connections in the Old Testament and all this stuff going on and just head knowledge. No, his aim, as the Holy Spirit intended, was to stab these hearers to the heart. It was intended to be beautiful pain for its hearers. Although he provided many biblical contexts and citations within his sermon, this literally cut the hearers to the heart. 3,000 of them, as the passage indicates.

This is the promise that Jesus made in John 16. If you can remember not long ago, we were in John. John 16, verse 8. As Jesus said, when he, the Holy Spirit, comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment. Who will? The cleverness of the Apostle Peter's word, the light, the fog showing up on the stage, the low atmospheric, cool meditative music that kind of layers on you, the heavy conviction. No, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin.

[8 : 44] This is a question that they asked, what shall we do of contrition? That they have put the Son of God to death. This is a question of guilt, a question of remorse, a question of deep inner pain.

Conviction. It was conviction. Pride has been destroyed. It's pride-destroying lament over being an accomplice, an accomplice to the death of Jesus Christ. And church, have we forgotten our role in the death of Christ as well?

If you have ever been in such a situation, asking these types of questions, I think about younger years in the faith, we ask these questions, is there anything that I can do to right what I have made wrong?

Isn't that kind of loaded within such a question, brothers, what shall we do? In other words, is there anything that I can do to alleviate the pain of which the word of God has inflicted upon my heart? I want to stop hurting about this. Well, the gospel tells us something.

The gospel tells us that left to ourselves, there's absolutely nothing that we can do in our own power. Often we are victim of prescribing to sin, additional sin, to keep our minds off of the sin that we've committed. And so we're just layering upon layering upon layering sin with more sin, as if we're treating a fire with gasoline. But the fire has been quenched upon the cross of Jesus Christ. The wrath, the pain was bore. The gospel tells us that one man bore that pain and suffered our pain. And so we ought to take the lament the Bible stirs up within our hearts and turn to no other than the cross of Jesus Christ, where he was pierced for our transgressions. He suffered the shame and was despised and rejected by men. When Jesus Christ takes our lament of sin and exchanges it, what does he exchange it with? He takes our broken hearts, our stabbed, bleeding, gushing blood hearts because of the penetrating word of God, and he replaces it with joy, with peace, with praise, with hope. And guess what? Nothing in this world can ever take those things away from you then, because it's God who gives. Every Christian who has not lamented their sin would call into question the very assurance of their very conversion. Any Christian who does not lament their sin.

[12 : 08] It's the moment when the pleasure of sin, because sin has pleasure in it. It's enjoyable to sin.

Eve is a testimony that sin looks like a delight to the eyes. It looks beneficial for food. And the minute that we partake of sin is the moment where its pleasure is unmasked, and we experience the concealed pain within sin, which binds us in chains. May we never forget, church, to lament our sin. Only then will we remember to conquer sin's temptation and pleasures, because we know that the pain exceeds any pleasure that sin can ever offer to us.

A gospel full of grace without guilt is no gospel at all. We must remember this in a church age which repentance is almost frowned upon as false teaching when you're teaching repentance.

A gospel full of grace without guilt and repentance is no gospel at all. And the only power that has the effect to reach the depths of our souls is the guilt that the word of God stirs within us alone. No lights, no cool, low-key music.

The word of God alone. The proclamation of the word of God will cut through every excuse for our sin. It will cut through every self-justifiable action and excuse to sin. And it leaves us as its hearers shredded to the bone in remorse, having no hope apart from turning to the cross of Jesus Christ alone. Amen.

[14 : 11] Peter sheds the light of magnificent grace upon this hurting crowd that's hurting in their transgression.

He says, Well, since you asked, friends, now, truly brothers, I have something for you to do. He says to them in verse 38, and we'll see in the second section a declaration of repentance. He says in verse 38, 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. Now, let's pause on the first half of this because it says two exhortations that Luke documents for us from Apostle Peter's words at this time period.

He says, Repent and be baptized. So what's the first inclination of being cut to the heart? Having this lament of our sin, what do we do?

We go to Dr. Phil and ask him, you know, what's the newest book to make me feel better? No. We go to the book, where the book tells us to repent.

It is through the prerequisite of our guilt that the church is called to repent. Repentance, apart from guilt, is simply religious piety.

[15 : 47] It's approaching the throne of grace as if we deserve it, and we don't deserve any of it. Repentance that is preceded in guilt has the power to remind us constantly of our prior hopeless, thankless, guilty state.

If you want to be reminded of what God wants to do in your life, you have to remember your past of what he saved you from.

We have to remember our past. And he's saying, Repent. Change the course. Remember in 1 Thessalonians 1, 9. If you remember in that message, I remember very vividly, I told everyone as a church to circle this passage.

We'll see. We'll have everyone raise their Bibles to see who circled this passage, who was there that Sunday. 1 Thessalonians 1, 9. The perfect depiction and concise detail of what repentance is and what was going on in Thessalonica.

And Paul says that they received the word among them, and they turned, it says in verse 9, turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

[17 : 15] We see here a call to true repentance from the apostle Peter. Peter, repent those who are cut to the heart, that are guilty, that are remorse over their sin, in which this will change our minds.

It'll change the way we think about things. Not only that, it'll change our actions in repentance, change how we conduct ourselves differently.

And notice, Peter doesn't adopt a nice, tender message wrapped with bows and everything, and all this delivery package that is often expected.

He confronts sin head on. You killed Jesus Christ. You did. You did. And if that cuts you to the heart, I'm not sorry.

Because that's the reality. And that's the reality for all of us within this church with ears to hear this morning, is that we have put Jesus Christ upon the cross as well.

[18 : 31] He confronts sin head on. And what a reminder for us that we ought to not try to adopt this less offensive gospel message and to go in our woodshed and try to sand the edges of the gospel for our friends and our family members that we just don't want to offend, right?

No. The gospel is sharp, and it pierces our souls. And it is offensive. It cuts the sinner to the heart.

It is not our job to make it more palatable and less offensive, to adopt our message to a very triggered and sensitive culture that we live in today.

We invade the safe spaces of the world and say, you need to be safe from your sin. You are not safe in your safe space apart from Jesus Christ.

Now, it was the unbelieving world that put Jesus Christ upon the cross and is the unbelieving world that is literally keeping him there in their unbelief, leaving him to rot.

[19 : 45] You see, this brings about a universal problem of sin. And a universal problem of sin needs a universal call to repentance.

And unfortunately, not everyone will get to that point because unfortunately, there's limited reception of forgiveness in this life. Why?

Because the unbelieving world will go to great lengths to ignore their need to repent, to change anything. Great lengths. They will spend money.

Pornography. They will buy new things, buy a new house to fix their problems. Try a new wife. Try a new husband. Maybe have another kid.

Maybe send the kids off. I know that's a temptation for some parents. That might be a confession. No, it's not.

[20 : 45] It's Father's Day. But the unbelieving world will go to great lengths to cover and ignore their sin. But those within this crowd that the Apostle Peter has just proclaimed to, the mighty works of God, they have ears to hear.

There's no more ignorance. You can't ignore the message of the gospel, the call of God any longer. And what do all of us need to have in our forgetful states of mind?

Come on, I'm the most forgetful of all. How many texts or calls have I forgotten to get back to you on? You could probably raise your hands. I fail constantly. I need reminders.

Did I forget to call you back? Yeah. Okay. Just want to clear that up. So, we need reminders.

reminders. I'm the most of needing reminders. And Peter instructs this church to repent, to turn and change their course, and to do something to symbolize that repentance.

[21 : 56] What does he say? He says, a call to immersion. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ. This water immersion here is a proclamation of a repented state and forgiven status.

This goes deeper than water and getting your hair wet. This is a bold public declaration that I am no longer down that path. I have turned and I've gone this way.

And Jesus Christ has separated my sin as far as the east is from the west. I am free. Just as this Juneteenth holiday represents.

We are free. Baptism is the groom's ring, the wedding band upon the bride. That's a reminder. That's a symbol of commitment, a symbol of allegiance, a symbol of loyalty.

And Peter calls for believers' immersion. Those who believe now to immerse themselves in a symbol of that allegiance.

[23 : 01] And now this is something new for the Jewish people. They're not, they're used to immersing themselves for Jewish purification, to go into temple worship and everything like that.

So for the Jewish people, even proselytes Gentiles, they're used to all this immersion stuff. But there's something about this immersion that's different. This is an immersion in the name of Jesus Christ.

That's the newness of this immersion. That's the newness of this proclamation. And this is an act done where an immerser would immerse someone else to symbolize their cleansed heart and forgiven souls.

And you see, baptism acknowledges Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord. It is connected to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a sign of repentance and a demonstration that Jesus Christ has the power to forgive their sins and empower their lives for worship.

And if it's a declaration for that person in the dunk tank, it's also a declaration and a promise to anyone who comes by faith to hear and to change and to repent of their sin.

[24 : 12] It's available. And so we see that exhortation to repent and be baptized and let baptism be a testimony of that repentance.

But not only that, this section goes on to our assurance of pardon. And this leads us all the way to the end of the verse, actually, the passage. So not only 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.

So there's an assurance of pardon here. There's something that we can trust in when we are baptized. And the doctrine of forgiveness is, I mean, it comes in many shapes and sizes these days, of how you can achieve forgiveness, forgiveness, what you need to do to be forgiven.

But notice, this is huge. Peter never says in this passage, you are forgiven. He never, yeah, God bless you.

He never says, go and sin no more, your sins are forgiven. The apostle Peter never said that. forgiveness. Because immersion is representative of forgiveness.

[25 : 41] It's not the means of forgiveness. And that's huge with the various doctrines that surround us in our day and age. Because we know that our forgiveness is based upon our faith.

and if they are cut to the heart and lamenting their sin, they are coming to faith in Jesus Christ.

They don't need this official declaration, but they will declare the declaration of faith through baptism. And what happens when you're baptized?

What happens when you come to faith? When do we receive the Holy Spirit? Well, I want us to rest upon Ephesians 1.13. Because the Bible says that when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him, Jesus Christ, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

When did that happen? When you heard the word of truth. And it's a powerful moment that releases the guilty of the legal consequences for their sin.

[26 : 55] Because all were born into sin, we come into this life in sin. But through regeneration, we are born again. Not as we once were, but new creatures.

Regeneration. And maybe you're not in Christ today and there's something that is going on in your heart and you know that something in your life is being changed as its course.

Because something is telling you right now that since the time of your birth, that means you have been accumulating debt.

We're all accumulating debt, right? You've gone to college, a bunch of us youngsters, and we've accumulated this debt.

and we've been accumulating it since they cut the umbilical cord from us. And until the good news of the gospel is received, if you are far from Jesus Christ now, there's hope standing at your door.

[28 : 10] Jesus Christ is calling you to release you from your debt because he took the penalty for that debt.

The Old Testament had Old Testament sacrifices to atone and Jesus Christ said, my blood is going to cover your debts and he absorbed and substituted that debt upon the cross.

And if that's you who are cut to the heart knowing that you cannot do anything to save yourself, we just make things worse, don't we? That debt, if you do not allow that transaction to take place upon the cross, that debt will be payable upon your deathbed.

The wrath of God will fall upon you. But there's hope right now for it to fall in Jesus Christ by your faith in him.

And through baptism, that public declaration, we are assured in our pardon state. Not only that, we're assured of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a reminder of the promised reception of the Holy Spirit.

[29 : 17] Ephesians 1.13 already signifies that at the moment we heard his word, we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. And so we have to be careful when we get to descriptive passages like we have right now of what is occurring and what is included within this promise verse.

At this time, not to read into chronology like a timeline. Okay, so Peter says step one, be baptized. Now step two, stage two is I receive the Holy Spirit, right?

No. He's describing every aspect of encouragement of being cut to the heart and every assurance that we have of being cut to the heart.

It's not a step-by-step chronological experience and to vainly prescribe a second baptism of the Holy Spirit or maybe find magical significance in regenerate baptism.

All of a sudden he says be baptized and be saved. Okay, I'm going to go get baptized so I can be saved. No, that's ridiculous. That's salvation by works and salvation is by faith alone lest anybody boast.

[30 : 30] So we can separate that whole argument and throw it out and we'll actually see it that it's not consistent within the book because in chapter 10 we'll see the gift of the Holy Spirit precedes baptism and then Acts 19 we'll also see the inconsistency with that because baptism is accompanied by laying on of hands here and the reception of the Holy Spirit.

Rather than getting hyper prescriptive with the details, can we get hyper excited about the promise? Right?

We get lost in all these forests with the trees and we go out and say well I'm going to go make a new church because the Bible says this and they're teaching falsely and it says this.

Can we get hyper excited about the promise? God is not just with you just as the Jewish people observe temple worship in a location that's bound by space and time and by your ability to get there.

Not only is God with you, God is in you in the church. This is an exciting spiritual reality and it's true regardless if you feel it or not.

[31 : 51] Regardless of how you feel. I listen to R.C. Sproul this week and he says it perfectly. Imagine that, R.C. He says, I don't always feel his presence but God's promises do not depend upon my feelings.

They rest upon his integrity. This is the promise. And guess what? The verse, this passage ends with a promise of this being expansive.

This is not just for this time period or for this people. It's not just for Jews or Gentiles. This is expansive. For this promise, verse 39, is for you and for your children and for all who are far off.

Anyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself. Calls through the proclamation of the word. The grace of God is a living well of water that never runs dry and the word of God is used to convict the world of their thirst.

If you're not in Christ today, starting to get a dry mouth, aren't you? I mean, you have to thirst in this reality of God's free gift of grace in Jesus Christ.

[33 : 11] Now, these words don't necessarily mean adults and children and everything like that to possibly support infant baptism, but the words used here indicate something significant regarding offspring, that not only this generation is this promise for, it's for the next generation and another generation and hundreds and hundreds of years expansive to our generation today and for every generation until Jesus Christ comes back from the way he ascended to bring us all home.

This is a great promise. What a promise to this Jewish nation too. Consider an exiled Jewish nation who were once exiled and at here and now at this moment of the apostle Peter talking to these brothers, what shall we do?

These brothers, this family of God, this Jewish people, this pledges that God has not given up on Israel. God has not given up on Israel here and now.

This is a pledge that he has never given up on them and that actually God is for Israel in Jesus Christ. An immersion of water proclaims God's wrath immersing upon Jesus Christ and God's grace immersing within us.

This immersion declares new life and this is the assurance of pardon and our new life ought to testify to it. Church, I have the honor of reiterating the same promise to us today.

[34 : 54] that if the grace of God has become this distant enjoyment in your life, you've kind of been desensitized to that once exciting wonder of the cross and what God had done in your life in the past.

Well, a verse like today and a passage like today indicates that it's not God that needs to draw near to you. It's you that need to draw near to him, regardless if you feel it or not.

As motivated by the Holy Spirit and as proclaimed by Peter, there were many other words in verse 40. Don't we see that? With many other words, he continued to encourage them in verse 40, meaning that his sermon previously wasn't like, you know, the Apostle Peter's sermon last week wasn't a transcript, like word for word, like you might have a piece of paper up here and just give it to him.

Sermon notes. And so we all know that within all of our notes even today, if you're a note taker, you notate things that stand out among many words.

I have many words and very few of them probably get ingested. And I understand that. But I trust the Holy Spirit to do the work of taking those notes and putting them on your papers to take with us.

[36 : 26] And those are the things that stand out the most, right? And what stood out to Luke that was significant? Verse 40. Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

This is Peter's rescue call to all those around. A rescue call that was heard, that penetrated not just a couple people, not just 120 in a room, but 3,000.

Consider the harvest of souls at a time where the Jewish people were coming together to dedicate their harvest of grain.

And look what God is doing. He's got the tools and he is harvesting souls for the glory of the name of Jesus Christ. What a harvest.

3,000 souls. So what should we do? What on earth could surmise in our attitudes and our actions that would be worthy of a response to such a reality, profound reality of lament, of conviction, of repentance, of obedience, and of a new life in Christ?

[37 : 47] Or we could simply say, well, Luke mentions two exhortations and two promises. We could start there, to repent and to be baptized. That's a good start.

To also hold on to the promise, the promise of forgiveness and let our lives testify to it. However, I think we need to go a little bit deeper in what this passage is indicating. It's not just a bunch of blind imperatives here to apply to our lives today.

Notice how each and every exhortation, promise, source of lament, source of the message. Where does it originate from?

It is all God who initiates it. Every aspect of salvation, every aspect of our obedience has been ignited by God through the Holy Spirit.

And when we are convinced of this, this is why this is profound. our lives become an ongoing declaration that through the fire, through the storm, caused my heart to praise you as we just sang on the screen.

[39 : 03] Right? This becomes an ongoing declaration of the harvester who has harvested our own souls. A message like this should be embedded within our personal set of convictions.

Those beliefs that we hold true and true deeply within our hearts. Our convictions. And it should stir up a proper response to the gospel. Not only for the pew.

Like, I'm preaching to myself. This week I have had to grapple greatly with this. So this isn't just for you. This is for me.

And all who hear. And you want to know the best news about all of this? If God is the one who initiates all of this, there is no one that can take your joy away.

There's no threat that could ever threaten your salvation. Come hell or high water, you are secure. And you have a promise.

[40 : 03] Expansive promise. And maybe you feel a sense of wavering even at this moment in your faith. And you're just like, man, I don't know what he's doing up there, but he's speaking directly to me.

That often happens. And I speak to myself throughout the week as God speaks to me through his word. Maybe you sense yourself wavering in your faith. And worshiping seems, worshiping God seems more of a difficulty rather than a delight.

It's hard to get on your knees and pray. It's hard to give up various sins. It's hard to do these things. You just don't feel the motivation for you. You've grown apathetic in your faith.

You come on Sunday morning, you look like a Christian, but you really feel that sense of distance from your relationship with God. Well, I'm here to remind you through just a few quick verses in this passage that God has not forgotten you.

God is near, God is near, more near than you can ever imagine with whatever trial or storm you're going through. Immerse yourself in him, especially when you feel less likely to do it.

[41 : 16] Right? God's promises fulfilled in Jesus Christ have the unique power to duly weigh us down in laments over sin and lift us up in encouragement by the mighty work of the Holy Spirit through gospel proclamation.

You see that, don't you? May our baptism, may our new life in Christ testify to our unbelief, to declare to our unbelief that we are his.

And God's relentless love for us will never let go. Let's pray.