

Devoted to the Apostle's Teaching

Acts 2:14-42

(07ReImaginingChurch)

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

¹⁷"In the last days,' God says,

*'I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.*

¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

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

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

²¹And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

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

"I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

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

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

*²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence.'*

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

*“The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand
35until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”*

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

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

*38Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ
for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39The
promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the
Lord our God will call.”*

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

*(And then Luke gives us the “rule of life” of the early church. We will spend the entire
Month of October studying these four items one a ta time)*

*42They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking
of bread and to prayer.*

Message:

We’re *Reimagining Church* by looking back to the first century church 2000 years ago.

One of the foundational (core) values of the early church, of the Protestant Reformation, of our Reformed faith and of Covenant Church is [Biblically] sound **teaching** and **preaching**. We often talk about the true preaching of the Word, doctrinal preaching, inspirational preaching, authentic preaching and Biblical preaching. I’d like to add two more: Gospel preaching and Spirit-anointed teaching.

Doctrinal preaching is focuses on documenting the tenets of our faith; Biblical preaching offers deeper **insights** and new **information**; inspirational preaching is obviously focused on getting us excited! And people respond: *“I liked...enjoyed...appreciated...was moved by the message. I learned something new! It was a wonderful message”*.

Gospel preaching and Spirit-anointed teaching are focused on **life transformation** (i.e., *“it changed my life”*). *“The teaching changed me!”*

ANOINTING (Let’s look at the text!)

Luke notes: 2:14 - *“Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say”*

Luke underscores that when Peter teaches he is speaking as a member of, i.e., on behalf of, this new community (the Church). Teaching is never a solo act. There is the teacher, the listener(s) and learners(s) and the Holy Spirit. (**Note:** Gospel teaching - transformation

teaching - is a central mark of this new **community**).

Luke continues: 2:15 - *“These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning.”* The disciples speaking in other languages brought the criticism they were drunk; if it were only that easy, *Babbel, Rosetta Stone* and *Duolingo* would all be out of business.

This is a group of hostile skeptics; this is not the type of crowd speakers look forward to addressing. But Peter addresses their issue head on. (**Note:** Gospel teaching begins where **people are**; and people don’t always welcome the truth).

Luke writes: 2:16-18 - *“This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘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, and your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.’”*

What Joel prophesied is happening here and now; that is, we are in these last days. That doesn't mean there are only a few days left (after all, it's been 2000 years! since Luke wrote this); it does mean we're witnessing the final act of salvation in the salvation story.

With this final act comes the opportunity for real community - people who couldn't understand each other and couldn't embrace unity can now come together. Everything that went wrong at Babel is righted at Pentecost; the barriers of ethnicity, linguistics, gender, and age that were built over the centuries are now destroyed by the Spirit. (**Note:** Gospel teaching reaches out to engage and **embrace everyone**).

In Acts 2:19-22a we read: *“I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the Earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord (wonders still to be fulfilled). And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. People of Israel, listen to this!”* (How often haven't you heard a teacher say that!)

Notice Peter is quoting the prophet Joel; in a moment, he'll quote the Psalmist; Peter knows the Scripture (The Old Testament; he'd likely memorized it!). Now Peter is teaching Scripture (**1 Tim. 3:16** - *“All Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching...”*). (**Note:** All Gospel teaching is based on the **inspired Word** of God).

Then Peter simply tells the Gospel story. He gives witness to Jesus. (Acts 2:22b-24): *“Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. 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.”*

Peter accuses them/us of complicity in Jesus' death. It's not a great speaking technique, but Peter is brutal about our fallen-ness. (So much for emulating Dale Carnegie!) (**Note:** Spirit-anointed teaching pulls **no punches** about sin; Peter says it like it is!)

And here is the Gospel: *“But God raised Him up from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”* (**Acts 2:24**).

Just like it's impossible to hold back a child when the moment of birth comes, it was impossible for death to hold Jesus back - He was too full of life. God raised Him up because death was not strong enough to hold him down.

Peter: *"God raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact" (2:32)* (Even Matthias, Judas' recent replacement, had witnessed the resurrection!).

(**Note:** Gospel teaching always offers hope, an eternal hope, a **hope** found only in the **crucifixion**, death and **resurrection** no hope, no future.

Peter continues: **2:33** - *"Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."*

2:36 - *"Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Messiah)"*

This is Peter - the same person who previously avoided confrontation and denied his Rabbi three times - who is now confronting a crowd of hostile, skeptical people and publicly proclaiming he knows, believes and follows Jesus of Nazareth.

(**Note:** Spirit-anointed teaching is focused on bringing **life change** (changed hearts, souls, and minds, and lives) that can only be attributed to the work of God and His Spirit.

2:37 - *"When the people heard this they were cut to the heart...what shall we do?"*

2:38 - *"Peter: 'Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you [too] will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"*

Then Luke provides us with a summary impact statement: *"...and about 3000 were added to their number that day."* (**2:41b**). When the teaching is spirit-anointed, the results are spirit-blessed. This is transformation teaching: 3000 lives and destinies are changed!

AFFIRMATION

God uses Gospel-focused and Spirit-anointed teaching as a catalyst for **spiritual transformation and kingdom building.**

A basic question we all face is *"What's going to form my heart, transform my **mind**?"* What/who is going to shape my patterns of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and valuing, because those patterns will affect everything in my life... I've said it before, what informs us, forms us. What we allow into our mind will take up residence in our heart and life.

So...will I allow conventional wisdom, political correctness, social values, hours of TV, Hollywood, cultural morays, and social media to shape my life? They suggest...

- 1) *"You only go around once in life, go for the gusto"*
- 2) *"Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you'll die!"*
- 3) *"Have it your way;" "You deserve a break, today."*

The reality is - Gospel-teaching doesn't mince words; the reality is - we need a renewed mind because our old one is a mess; it doesn't work right (if at all). The Gospel is the main

thing. And we need to keep the main thing the main thing!

The Bible warns us against pursuing wisdom in the **wrong** places because non-biblical values are superficial and shallow and can't lead to real Life.

The Bible suggests renewing our minds by thinking about what is **noble**, right, **pure**, lovely, **admirable**, and praiseworthy... (Paul, **Philippians 4:8**). That is, we're to develop the mind of Christ by thinking like Jesus' thinks until it affects how we feel, act, and live.

Gospel preaching and Spirit-anointed teaching were foundational in the early church. They were essential to their rule of life.

Remember the final **commissioning** of Jesus? "*Go into all the world and make disciples...teaching them to do everything I am commanding you*" (**Matthew 28:18f**). That commission is not just about baptizing people (it's not just about putting people in the seats), it's about making **disciples** - fully devoted disciples - something the Church is sadly missing in today's world.

Making disciples requires **teaching**. So Jesus became a **teacher** (Rabbi) so he could focus on renewing people's minds, forming their souls, occupying their heart, and transforming their relationship with his Father. And in his final words, Jesus calls **us** to teach and make disciples

When Luke describes the early Church - the first thing he says about it is "*They were [fully] devoted to the Apostles' teaching*" (**2:42**)

Acts 20:32 - [Paul] "*Now I commit you to God and to the Word of his grace - a message to build you up and give you an inheritance...*"

Acts 28:31 - [Even at the end] "*Boldly and without hindrance [Paul] preached the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Teachers know the purpose of teaching is not just to make people smart or to disseminate information but to train students, to form lives, to encourage growth and maturity... (We all know book-smart people who have no clue how to do life; people who are still unforgiving, contentious, and impatient even though they haven't missed worship service in over fifty years; people who have attended Bible studies all their life but still don't know how to love their neighbor.)

Gospel-telling Bible teachers long to have Christ formed in those they teach. And when the teaching is Spirit-anointed, it forms Christ in us and in others; that is the Spirit's role and "Gospel teaching" is a primary tool the Spirit uses.

So it's imperative for us to devote ourselves to the teaching of God's Word: to be present where God's Word is taught, to study God's Word together, to read the Word around our family tables, and to use the Word in our daily devotions.

Being Fully Devoted to the Apostle's Teaching means... (cf. the text again)

First, *being fully devoted* means having a **humble spirit** (**2:12** - "*What does this mean?*") A humble spirit acknowledges I still have a lot to learn; it assumes that every time the Word is taught, I can learn something; I'm teachable; I don't know it all. (I've been

preaching/teaching/studying Scripture for over 45 years and I'm reminded every day of how much I still need to learn).

Ask yourself: Am I humbly responsive? Do I receive teaching as a student (as a disciple) or as a consumer? Does it cut me to my heart? Do I constantly hunger and thirst for more? Do I allow what I've learned to change me? Am I willing to rearrange my life to be obedient to it?

Second, *being fully devoted* means being (becoming) a **disciple**, "*What should we do?*" (2:37). This is not an invitation to start another "to do" list we need to work on. This means a lifestyle change, an attitude adjustment, a transformed mind, and a new allegiance.

Gospel preaching and Spirit anointed teaching always involve an invitation. Maybe God just wants to spend more time together; maybe he will just remind you of his love; maybe he'll invite you to rest. The invitation is always to a deeper relationship with the Father through His Son and by His Spirit. The invitation is always to obedience to the Father's will.

Trying to control our behavior by willpower only goes so far. We need a renewed mind, a humble and obedient spirit, to experience a transformed life.

Having the mind of Christ is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the teaching of God's Word to make it happen. If we're serious about being like Jesus, i.e., serious about being a disciple of Jesus, we need to be fully devoted to the teaching of the Apostles.

ACTION (How do we feed on God's Word for transformation?)

First: we reflect on God's Word (i.e., his teaching)

Reflecting is meditating; that is, it is carrying the thought/teaching with us throughout the day. Set aside a few moments in the morning to read/memorize a verse or two. Then pause to consciously think about it over and over. Because we're created in the image of God, we have the capacity to choose what we want to think about; and remember, what informs us, forms us!

The Spirit will enable the renewal process, but he doesn't do our thinking for us. That's why it's so vital, to devote ourselves to the Word, to devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching throughout the day, every day - so we can feed our minds with Biblical thinking

Second: personalize God's Word.

Not only has God poured out His Spirit, God has poured out His Spirit in you/me. Most of us here would affirm that theoretically.

But at the core of your being, do you really believe you carry the Spirit of God within you? Everywhere you go? No matter what anyone says, "*You carry the Spirit of God in you!*"

If God's Spirit is in us, what shouldn't we be doing that we are? What should we be doing that we're not? How should we be living our lives? Are we making a Kingdom difference?

Third: In reflecting and personalizing God's Word, one becomes aware of where they've resisted the Spirit. That leads to **confession (and forgiveness).**

Peter's audience is "*cut to the heart.*" Reflecting on the Word reminds us of times we messed up, failed to reach out in love, and/or refused to forgive. Reflecting on the Word brings to mind a thought, a word we spoke, or a deed we did- or didn't do - that needs to be confessed. Reflecting on the Word requires we focus on its impact on our heart and soul. Teaching is not about what someone else should do; this teaching is about what you and I need to do.

So we confess; embrace God's forgiveness, and allow God's Spirit to reassure us (Spirit-bearing people are not intended be crushed by the weight of guilt).

Fourth: After meditating, personalizing, and confessing, we begin to "hunger and thirst for righteousness.**"**

Following our confession and a clear pathway to God, the Holy Spirit becomes increasingly real and relevant; you begin to think and behave differently. It may be dramatic or small and faint, but you'll catch yourself thinking:

- 1) I like having the Spirit empower me like a sailboat whose sail has caught the wind.
- 2) I like, rather than hurting people with my thoughtless words, having the Spirit guide my speech.
- 3) I like looking back on my day and sensing it was clean and pure and right.

We've all been **praying**, "*God fill me with your Spirit*" and "*Holy Spirit, what do you want me to do?*" (Right?)

That's the prayer of longing for the Holy Spirit, for more of the Holy Spirit, for a life empowered by the Holy Spirit?

- 1) "*God, let me be completely open to Your Spirit today*"
- 2) "*God, I long to be energized by Your Spirit today*"
- 3) "*God, I would love to speak as Your Spirit guides me today*"

God loves to **answer** those prayers. Pray it throughout the day (like whenever your phone beeps - some of you will praying a lot), and, then listen for Him.

Fifth: The Word becomes a **part of you (Eugene Peterson: "*Eat the Word*")**

The Word must **consume** you as you **consume** the Word. It's not this wad of food just sitting there; you ingest it; it's become a part of you; it energizes you. You don't just know it or believe it; it becomes an essential part of your identity. It's not primarily about our getting into the Word; it's primarily about getting the Word into us.

And without consciously inviting your mind to be changed, you will gradually discover, that your mind has been **transformed**. And, you will be **living** like a disciple of Jesus...

You'll be looking a lot more like Jesus (because the Spirit has brought you the mind of Christ which impacts everything in your life). And this place will fill with people who are devoted to the teaching of the Word and are not only **informed** and Reformed, but our being **transformed** to be more like Jesus (And that will be good. Really good!).