

May 19, 2024  
Pentecost Sunday  
Pastor Matt Duerr

### **God's Narrative: Real Power!**

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. As we continue with God's narrative, we have looked at Joseph. Two weeks ago, sold into slavery by his brothers. Last week we saw him “under pressure,” and yet he did the right thing while under Potiphar and while also in prison. And like Joe, the challenge to us is to do the right thing. Even when under pressure, because it is when we are under greater pressure, that even more glory is given to God when we let Him work through us and do that which is right.

Today we are going to break away for a moment. A quick breakaway to our gospel, and to what today is; it's Pentecost. In our gospel, we read Jesus saying to His disciples, “and behold, I am sending the promise of my Father to you but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Power? Yeah, power. But also, what Jesus is saying here is a preview of what is to come. It's kind of that little thing dangling out there giving you what's next. You know, like the trailer for an upcoming movie or something? It's out there to draw us to the book of Acts.

The Book of Luke, the Book of Acts are a two-part letter or testimony, a legal brief written to a guy named Theophilus. Theophilus was within the Roman government. We don't know exactly his title, but he was rather high up, and Luke was sent by Theophilus to check out and report back to him about this Christian Movement. And so, Luke went to Jerusalem. He met with the apostles and in the long run, he became a Christian and accompanied Paul on some of his missionary trips. And so the book of Luke, the Gospel of Luke, and the book of Acts are his two-part legal brief that he sent to Theophilus. Had that first part the Gospel of Luke ends with Jesus telling his disciples stay in the city until what I have promised comes on you. And you're going to be clothed with power from on high.

That leads to Acts, and we read in Acts chapter one, verse 5 right after a little introduction to Theophilus. Luke records that John (John the Baptist) baptized with water, but that Jesus said you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. And then three verses later, Acts one verse 8, Luke puts the table of contents in, or we could say the organization of the legal brief. He writes, Jesus saying. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses first in Jerusalem, then second in all, Judea; and then third in Samaria; And finally, to the end of the earth. And that is the exact pattern that is followed in the Book of Acts. It starts in Jerusalem, moves out to Judea, the area around Jerusalem. Then north to the area called Samaria, also in the Old Testament, the Northern Kingdom. And then finally, the end of the earth, which was a phrase that was reserved for Rome. Because that's what the Jews saw Rome as, the end of the earth. They're going to destroy everything. And the book of Acts ends with Saint Paul in Rome.

But let's talk about this power. And how it all happened. The power of the Holy Spirit. It's what today is all about. It's about that first step for Acts Chapter 1, Pentecost. Peter gave a sermon, an extraordinary sermon, because as he spoke, everyone heard his sermon in their own native language. And in that sermon, he recounted the ministry of Jesus, with an emphasis on how all of it was prophesied. He ended that sermon with the following statement. "Let all the House of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Jesus, both Lord and Christ. This Jesus whom you crucified." And we read that the people were, I quote, "cut to the heart." And they asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter came back; "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And we continue on and read that after this sermon and after that challenge to repent and be baptized, about 3000 souls were added to the Christian Church, to God's family that day.

That begs the question. How did Peter, the uneducated fisherman who had denied Jesus three times; how did he give a sermon in every language at one time and make it a well tied together sermon that touched the people's hearts and led them to ask; 'What must we do to be saved?' He Jesus, had poured out His Holy Spirit. That's what Saint Peter himself says. He has poured out His Holy Spirit that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

Which takes us back to the gospel. How did it all start? Right before Jesus ascended into heaven, He's got his disciples there that he opened their mind to understand the scriptures. And I'm certain that Jesus covered in that discussion how He fulfilled all the Law and the prophets. Because that's what it says He did. But within that, then He would also be explaining atonement and how the Lamb of God came to make atonement once for all. And I would imagine that He also opened their minds to understand the scriptures, to know how to react even when under pressure.

And that's where we go back to God's narrative and Joseph. You can almost hear Peter quoting him. Joseph, as we saw last week, we left off with him in Pharaoh's prison, which is later described as a pit. But he is doing what is right. The warden has elevated him to the point that he was running the prison, and the warden didn't have even a single care until Pharaoh sent his butler, or cupbearer, and his baker to prison, And we read that the warden appointed Joseph to be with them. And both of them, while there had dreams. And these dreams troubled them. And Joseph saw that they were troubled, and he asked them. "Why are you troubled?" And their response is, we have had dreams and there is no one to interpret them. Now listen to Joseph. Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell your dreams to me. The butler, the cupbearer was first he says, well, I have dream. There were three vines, and these vines sprouted. And there's clusters of grapes on these three vines. And I took those three vines, I took the clusters of grapes, I squished them into Pharaoh's cup, and I handed Pharaoh's cup to him. Joseph says, here's the meaning to your dream. In three days, you will be restored, and you will be putting the cup back in Pharaoh's hand. Please, remember me. Mention me to Pharaoh.

The baker hears, 'hey, that's a good interpretation. So what about my dream? I had a dream too. I had three baskets on my head, each one filled with bread. But the birds were landing in that basket and eating the bread out of that basket. What does this mean? And Joseph comes back and says, 'in three days, literally, your head's going to come off and the Pharaohs going to hang your body on the pole for everybody to see. You're going to die.' And we read, "And it came to pass." Yet, the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

And after two whole years Pharaoh has his own dreams. I might add, they're probably nightmares. His first dream? Seven good cows come up out of the Nile, which there was a Nile god, and the Nile god was the god of life. Seven good cows came up out of the Nile, followed by seven scrawny emaciated cows and those scrawny emaciated bad cows ate all the good cows. He woke up. What a nightmare! He falls back asleep, and he has another dream. Seven good ears of corn come up out of the Nile, followed by seven lousy scrawny weak ears and the weak ears eat the good ears and he wakes up and says, 'what a nightmare.'

And so, he sends for his magicians, he sends for his wise men. And we read that none could interpret them. And then his cup bearer, his butler says. 'Oh Pharaoh, I remember my offenses today.' What offenses? The ones that got him into prison. And then upon getting out of prison, he did not mention Joseph. And Pharaoh hears how Joseph interpreted his butler's dreams and he sends for Joseph who is pulled up out of the pit. He shaves, He bathes, he is clothed, he's brought before, Pharaoh and Pharaoh says, 'I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream, you can interpret it.' And like before, drumroll please. Listen to Joseph. "It is not in me. God will provide Pharaoh with a favorable answer." In the end, he interpreted the dream. But that's next week.

This week let's fast forward from Joseph. Let's Fast forward from Peter at Pentecost. And let's fast forward to today. And I want you to think about how many times, especially in the news today, you hear people saying things like, 'I did that!' We hear politicians taking credit for, you know, wonderful economic successes and all sorts of things. We hear individuals taking credit for everything from a home run, to winning a game of some kind, or some sort of new product. We even had a president who took on the 'I did that.' And he said, you didn't do that, the government did that.'

But for us as Christians, we understand who we really are. We understand what we profess each week and confess each week that we are poor, miserable sinners. We are incapable of any good without the Holy Spirit! Who transformed and empowered Joseph and Peter and James and John and Paul and Silas. We understand that without Him we can do no good. Now some will say 'oh Pastor, come on, there's a lot of good people out there who do a lot of

good things.' I have to ask you, who gets the credit for what they do? They do. And an act is only good in God's eyes if the glory is given to Him. Because He is the one through the Holy Spirit, who is prompting and empowering us to do the good.

I remember a number of years ago there was a saying, "Less of me, more of Jesus." It was almost right. In reality, it is "None of me, it's all Jesus." Because any good we've done is because He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit He's delivered, The Holy Spirit is in us and as a result, through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can do good, and God gets the glory for it. In reality' it's none of me. It's all Jesus.

So, as I bring this sermon to a close, I'd like you to remember Joseph and I'd like you to remember Peter who both did some amazing things and in both cases they said, it's not me, that's God. And by the way, I don't want to hear from anybody today, 'Pastor that was a good sermon, Pastor. Good job.' If you want to say anything, say Pastor, Holy Spirit is really moving today.

In His Name, Amen.