

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

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Sermon manuscript

Sermon Series: Disciples, On the GO!

(Studies of the book of Acts)

The Gospel's Healing Wounds

(Acts 2:16-41)

Study #3

Introduction: Wounding to hurt, wounding to heal...

One of my sons and daughters-in-law, along with two of my grandchildren have recently become enthusiastic practitioners of Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

Brazilian jiu-jitsu (BJJ) is a form of martial arts that doesn't involve punching, for which I'm a grateful grandfather. But, especially in the adult groups, it does involve choke-holds, arm bars, and things like driving knuckles into soft tissue, all for the purpose of winning a "submission."

Needless to say, sometimes in Brazilian jiu-jitsu matches, there are injuries. People suffer wounds that may be intentionally or unintentionally inflicted.

In boxing, injury and damage is inflicted intentionally. Even if the exact injury suffered was not intended, the aim is to knock out the opponent or to score a TKO. This is even more the case with MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) where the rules are few and the point is to wound an opponent to the point where he or she can't go on.

In these competitions, the wounds can do great damage, even permanent damage.

There is another arena of life where wounds are inflicted that are more serious than those suffered in any MMA cage fight.

In this arena, gear is used. There are implements like super sharp knives, drills, even saws and hammers are used to wound. But these wounds are inflicted for the purpose of healing.

When the surgeon enters the operating room and picks up a scalpel or some other instrument, his or her every move wounds. But every wound is to promote wellness. It is to remove the cancer, to replace the joint, to relieve pressure, to staunch the bleeding.

Hospitals are blessed to have great surgeons on staff to wound so as to heal. And there is a Great Surgeon who does the same thing with souls. He pierces hearts to bring wholeness.

This morning, we'll watch as this Great Surgeon heals by wounding a few thousand souls...and maybe yours.

Review...

A lot of water has passed under the bridge by the time we come to the second chapter of the book of Acts.

The resurrected Jesus had been with the disciples for forty days. Then, from the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem, He ascended into heaven while the disciples looked on.

The disciples gave themselves to prayer after His departure, then replaced Judas Iscariot with Matthias, and then waited.

They were waiting for the fulfillment of Jesus' promise. He had promised power with the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

The waiting ended on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit announced His arrival via the sound of a violent, rushing wind. He baptized and filled the one hundred and twenty Jesus-followers while tongues "*as of fire*" distributed themselves to the whole group.

Then, in front of a gathering crowd, these disciples were given the un-Babel gift of speaking languages they had never studied, learned, or perhaps (in some cases) even heard.

Peter corrected the impression of the onlookers that they were drunk with sweet wine - *“Come on - it’s only 9am!”*¹ And he then went on to explain that they were under the influence of a Force far more powerful than wine.² They were controlled by the Spirit of God.

And that was just Simon Peter’s opening shot. He’s about to preach what may be his very first sermon while the other eleven apostles and a hundred more disciples are standing behind him.³

Sermon prep...

There is no doubt that something marvelous was happening during the whole Passover-to-Pentecost season.

Seven weeks earlier, on the day of Jesus’ crucifixion, the sky had gone dark in the middle of the day. Now, on this day - the Day of Pentecost - the crowds all saw and heard the evidence of the Spirit’s arrival by wind, fire, and word.⁴

Many scholars believe that while the Spirit showed up at a Jerusalem home, the action moved from that home, which was probably near the temple, to the temple itself.

¹ Most Jews drank wine only with meat, and meat was only eaten later in the day.

² It is quite reasonable that the onlookers would consider the actual languages the disciples were speaking to be nonsense and the result of drunkenness. While most English speakers can recognize some languages we do not speak as genuine languages (e.g. - the other Romance languages), tongues from a whole different language branch (tribal African or Asian tongues) might sound to us as babbling.

³ I find myself in the somewhat odd position of giving a sermon about Peter’s sermon. (I toyed with calling this message, “Dave’s sermon about Peter’s sermon”). I hope that the net effect of explaining the sermon won’t be similar to having to explain a joke - robbing the joke/sermon of its humor/power. Of course, if we were all first-century Jews, the explanations would be unnecessary.

⁴ C. Peter Wagner, a respected missiologist, prefers to call this event a miracle of language rather than an incident of tongues-speaking.

The crowds were of tremendous size during the feasts of Passover and Pentecost and the only place large enough to house these crowds was the outer court of the temple, the Court of the Gentiles.⁵

It was there that I believe Peter delivered his message to the people on the central day of the Feast of Pentecost. (or, In-gathering, as the Old Testament refers to it)

Lots of those who were in Jerusalem on this day were Jews who had come from distant lands to worship. These were - at least for the most part - devout, serious Jews, who sought to honor the Lord and who were very familiar with the Old Testament.

So, it was safe for Peter to assume that everybody listening to what he had to say would make the same Bible-based tie-in he was making to what was happening on this day.

In the writings of the Old Testament prophet, Joel, (wrongly referred to as a “minor prophets”) is a prediction of what would happen on *“the day of the Lord”*, a time associated with the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah.

Peter took it upon himself to, first, explain what was happening. He says that **THIS** (Pentecost) is **THAT** (what Joel predicted).

A Message to Heads and Hearts (vv. 14-36)

THIS (Pentecost) is (Joel’s) THAT (vv. 16-21)

[2:16] but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ⁶ [17] ‘And it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams;

⁵ Is it possible that so many could have “fit” into the outer court of the temple (the court of the Gentiles) because Jesus had so recently cleansed it of the buyers and sellers and money-changers?

⁶ See Joel 2:28-32.

**[18] Even on My bondslaves, both men and women,
I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit
And they shall prophesy.⁷**

**[19] 'And I will grant wonders in the sky above
And signs on the earth below,
Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke.**

**[20] 'The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood,
Before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come.**

**[21] 'And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved.'**

And not one of the thousands of Jews listening would have had a problem with anything Peter was saying.

He's quoting Scripture. He is giving a pretty reasonable explanation of what was happening.

You can almost hear them, "*Yep. It does look just like Joel's prophecy coming true.*" - and THAT is something that these Jews who had come to Jerusalem to worship God would have been thrilled to see.

But then, as happens in sermons, the preacher got to meddling. Peter stepped on toes and he turned his exposition of Joel's prophecy into a message about Jesus.

Peter Preached Jesus (vv. 22-36)

YOU saw Jesus' miracles (vv. 22)

[Acts 2:22] "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know..."

Again, Peter was speaking to a very large crowd of Jews. Some of them lived in Jerusalem, permanently, and some had come from distant lands.

Those who had traveled from Africa or Persia might not have known much about Jesus. But those from Judea and those who lived in Jerusalem certainly knew about Him.

There's no way Peter would have gotten away with his remark about Jesus performing miracles if Jesus had NOT performed miracles.

And there wasn't a word of protest. No one stepped forward to suggest that Peter was mistaken, that Jesus had not performed those works of power.

Peter's claim about Jesus were left unchallenged because the people who were in a position to know, knew that Jesus HAD performed miracles.

Tension is building as Peter continues. He now reminds his audience - people who had witnessed Jesus' power - "*You are responsible for His death.*"

YOU were complicit in Jesus' crucifixion (v. 23)

He said, [23] *this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

Peter was not, of course, saying that every member of his audience of thousands was literally guilty of nailing Jesus to a cross.

While some of them were complicit in Jesus' death, some of them knew nothing about Jesus before this moment.

But Peter lumped the Jews together with the Romans as being responsible for the death of Jesus. It was a national thing.

The Jewish nation had been offered a golden opportunity for restoration by receiving King Jesus. Instead, the nation rejected Him. This was a people-of-God-wide rejection.

⁷ This line is not in the Old Testament passage.

The whole rejection is recorded in the Bible. On Jesus' final Thursday night/Friday morning, the Jewish rulers delivered Him over to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for crucifixion.

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, so he offered a deal to let Jesus off the hook by giving the Jewish crowd a choice between Jesus and a notorious criminal named Barabbas.

The crowds yelled at Pilate to let Barabbas, not Jesus, go free. They screamed, "**Crucify [Jesus]!**"⁸ And when Pilate went on to ask the crowd, "**Shall I crucify your King?**" (meaning Jesus), the crowd replied, "**We have no king but Caesar.**"⁹

When Peter said that they were responsible, again, nobody contradicted him. There was no pushback. They owned responsibility for Jesus' death.

But Peter wasn't finished. He went on to speak of Jesus' resurrection.

YOU know He was raised from the dead (vv. 24-35)

Death couldn't hold Him (v. 24)

[2:24] "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Again, no one hollered, "*Not true!*" - and that's because everybody there who could have known, did know the overwhelming evidence for His resurrection.

Earlier, Peter had brought in the prophet Joel to explain the events of Pentecost. Now he brings King David in as a witness to explain Jesus' power over the grave.

David's occupied grave (vv. 25-29)

**[25] "For David says of Him,
'I saw the Lord always in my presence;
For He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken.
[26] 'Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted;
Moreover my flesh also will live in hope;
[27] Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades,
Nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.
[28] 'You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.'**

Peter is quoting Psalm 16, where David says that God won't allow His "**holy one**" to remain in the grave. The "**holy one**" will conquer death.

And Peter points out that David definitely was not writing about himself.

[29] "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

But there was Someone who did conquer death and there was Someone who did not undergo decay in the grave.

Jesus' UNoccupied grace (vv. 30-35)

[30] And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, [31] he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. [32] This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. [33] Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

⁸ See Matthew 27:19-23. Mark 15:6-15. Luke 23:18-25.

⁹ See John 19:15. **[Luke 19:14] "We will not have this Man to reign over us."**

[34] For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says:

“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at My right hand,

[35] Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.””¹⁰

Peter’s audience knew that David was buried, and that his body had decayed in the tomb. But Jesus’ body had not stayed in the tomb long enough to decay.

Jesus was not only raised from the dead. He has been raised to the right hand of God.¹¹

Peter explained that the Pentecost happenings were God’s validation of every claim Jesus made for Himself during His life. And now Peter delivers the punch line that wounds his hearers.

YOU crucified Jesus, the LORD and the Messiah! (v. 36)

[Acts 2:36] “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

This is Peter, armed with his own understanding of Scripture, his three years of walking with Jesus, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, delivering a devastating blow that wounded the crowd. It cut straight to their hearts.

It’s hard for us to imagine the enormity of what Peter says his fellow Jews have done.

You might imagine that you’ve been pursuing a goal your whole life, climbing a ladder, step by step on your way to your dream.

You’ve given your life to this dream. And then, when you reach the top rung, you realize that you have leaned your ladder against the wrong wall.

Or you’ve been granted a golden opportunity - the interview of a lifetime for your dream job. You’ve always wanted to work for this company and they’ve told you the job is yours if you can just make it to the final interview - and your GPS sends you the wrong way and you miss the interview. The golden opportunity is lost.

(Or you have your best shot at defeating the Golden State Warriors in the first game of the series. You’re up by 25 points in the first half of the first game, and then... - no, let’s no go there.)

There is nothing that the Jews in Peter’s audience have dreamed of and longed for so much as the arrival of God’s Anointed. A Savior who will restore Israel, set up a Messianic kingdom, bring forgiveness, and make them whole.

And not only have they longed for this, but so did their parents and grandparents, and twenty generations before them. The whole nation has been waiting hundreds of years for Messiah to show up.

And Peter says, *“He was right here. It was Jesus - and you killed Him. You missed your golden opportunity. The moment arrived and you looked away. You put to death the Son of God, the LORD of Joel’s prophecy. You handed over to the Romans David’s greater Son.”*

The Surgeon is the Holy Spirit, using the instrument of a speaker - Simon Peter - who wields the scalpel of truth. And there is no anesthesia involved.

The knife goes straight to the heart, straight to the conscience, and you can hear the gasp of pain and remorse - and conviction.

¹⁰ To call Jesus “Lord” is to call Him “God.” Jesus - as God - has the right to dispense the Holy Spirit, is seated at the right hand of God, is David’s Psalm 110 “**Lord**” and can save all those who call on His name. (2:21)

¹¹ This was a claim that had shocked the Jewish Sanhedrin senseless less than two months earlier when Jesus said of Himself, [Luke 22:69] **“But from now on THE Son of Man will be SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND of the power of God.”**

Response: Faith + Hearts Hungry For “Next” (v. 37)

Convicted and Convinced (v. 37a)

[37a] Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart...

Everything Peter said rang true, excruciatingly true. They accepted his message. They were **“pierced to the heart”** because they “got it.” Jesus was who Peter said He was: LORD (God!). Christ. They believed.

And because the Bible teaches that faith alone in Christ alone saves forevermore, we know that at this point, the point of their pierced heart, they are saved. This is their conversion.

They were up on top of the ladder and in hearing Peter’s words, saw the wall they should have been leaning against: Jesus!

In an instant, God saw their faith in Jesus, justified them, and transferred them from the wrong wall to the Jesus wall. From death to life. From dark to light. From slavery to freedom. From law to grace.

Peter’s words were wounding words that brought healing.

Now, let me ask you. Today, against which wall is the ladder of your life leaning? Is it leaning against the wall of your own efforts to find significance, to get to God, to find satisfaction?

That wall will fail you. It has failed you. And LIFE - abundant and eternal - is found only in Jesus. He is Lord. He is Savior.

He is the One who offers what you’ve longed for all along. Jesus is the golden opportunity you may have been ignoring.

Today, will you open your heart to God’s scalpel? Will you own that you’ve been trusting a wall that won’t hold?

It hurts to have to admit that. But we all need to go through the pain of admitting we’ve been depending on all the wrong stuff.

That’s what submitting to a wound that heals is all about. That healing wound is what drives us to trust in a wall that will hold, to a Person - Jesus - who will hold.

And you have seen who Jesus is. Lord. Savior. Trust Him and receive the free gift of eternal life. Take the Lord Jesus as your Savior and become the son, the daughter of God Jesus died and rose again to make you. (And if this is what is stirring in your heart - trusting Jesus! - please let me know. I want to rejoice with you!)

Thousands of Peter’s listeners on the Day of Pentecost came to faith in Jesus. And having come to faith, they now turn to Peter and to Peter’s friends and ask a frantic question.

Now That We Believe in Jesus...What? (v. 37b)

[37b]...[They] said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

That is a fascinating question - and Peter gave a wonderful answer.

Now, please note that Luke is not a sloppy writer. He actually a very careful very precise writer. And later on in the book of Acts, in chapter 16, a jailer in the city of Philippi, asks a very similar question. But it’s not the same question.

The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, ***[Acts 16:30] “What must I do to be saved?”***

And to that question, the Apostle Paul gave this answer, ***[31] “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”***

It was a perfect answer because faith alone in Christ alone saves.¹²

¹² This is consistent throughout Acts. When speaking to the Roman centurion, Cornelius, Peter said, ***[Acts 10:43] “Everyone who believes in [Jesus] receives forgiveness of sins.”***

But that's not the question Peter's crowd was asking. These men and women believe. They're not asking how to avoid God's condemnation. They want to know what they are to do now that they believe in Jesus. More particularly, their question is, *"What should we do since we have rejected the Messiah?"*

Peter gave them one way out: REPENT.

Next Steps (vv. 38-40)

[Acts 2:38] Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."

Repent

Among the first things that happen after we receive eternal life and are born again is that the Holy Spirit will start opening our eyes to behaviors and to attitudes that need to change and that need to be brought under Jesus' Lordship.

When we become aware of those areas that need changing, the thing to do is repent. About face.

God will start dealing with you about how you talk and about how you relate to people and to ethical blind spots. Where you fall short, you are to repent. Repentance is the painful, life-giving path to growth and transformation.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter's listeners faced a unique situation and a glaring need for repentance. They had rejected God's Messiah. By their question, *"What shall we do?"* they were really asking, *"Is it too late? Is there now no chance of seeing the kingdom?"*

Peter says that there is hope. His call to repentance said that if there was a wholesale turning to Jesus among the nation of Israel, Jesus would return to establish an earthly kingdom.

But the clock was ticking. And if there was no nation-wide repentance, destruction would soon come. The nation would be dispersed from Israel to the far corners of the earth.

Jesus had warned about this possibility (Matthew 24) and so had John the Baptist. When people came out to John to be baptized, he told them, ***[Matthew 3:10] "The axe is already laid at the base of the [national] tree."***¹³

John called the Jewish people to repentance and to baptism to prepare for the coming of Messiah. And this, here in Acts 2, I believe, is exactly what Peter was urging His Jewish audience.¹⁴

Be baptized

By identifying with Jesus - giving feet to their repentance by baptism, the nation would be saved from destruction.¹⁵

And he kept after them to turn, turn, turn!

[2:40] And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

And how did they respond to the first Gospel invitation ever given?

Well, Jesus once said that the angels of God rejoiced when one sinner repented and came home to God. The angels were throwing quite a party on the Day of Pentecost.

¹³ The crowd's reaction *"What shall we do?"* is similar to a scene of the Jews responding to John the Baptist recorded only by Luke (Luke 3:10-14).

¹⁴ The *"forgiveness of your sins"* Peter mentions is the specific sin of having rejected Jesus.

¹⁵ Sadly, as we know, the nation did not repent and there was not a wholesale turning of the Jews to faith in Christ. So, as Jesus had predicted, Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, leading to the great Diaspora (dispersion) of the Jews from Israel, which continues to this day.

At Day's End - Glory! (v. 41)

[Acts 2:41] So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

We don't know how many people were present to hear Peter, but it's likely that three thousand was a fraction of the total number.

But, out of the total crowd, three thousand Jews came to believe that Jesus was who He claimed to be: LORD and Christ.

Three thousand placed their trust in Jesus. Three thousand submitted to baptism to publicly identify with Jesus.¹⁶

It all happened on this day. The Holy Spirit arrived with wind, fire, and word and thousands were converted, providing the spark that got quite a fire going.

And Luke tells us that all of these who believed in Jesus ***"were added."*** Added to what? They were added to the living, breathing Body of Christ - the church!

Conclusion:

So, this morning you and I have walked through a very challenging passage of Scripture.

On the one hand, it's a challenge to understand.

I've presented to you today what I believe Peter was saying to the Jews of his day. I'm led to this way of thinking because there was something unique about the generation of Jews that rejected Jesus. And THAT prompted Peter to say what he did to them.

And if, after hearing what I've presented, you have questions, please feel free to seek me out. We can talk. I would welcome a cup of coffee in Jesus' Name with you.

But this text offers a challenge at levels beyond understanding. The gift of eternal life is given to us by God's grace when we believe. It can be no other way.

It was for Peter's audience and it is for us. But they were spot on to ask, after having received grace, ***"What shall we do?"***

That is a perfect question for anyone to ask who has received the amazing grace of God. ***"What now? What's next?"***

Blessings from God would come to the Jews of Peter's day with wholesale repentance of their particular sin. And blessings from God will come to you when you turn from the particular sins that beset you.

Would you - this week - go to God in prayer and ask Him to reveal to you those areas of your life that need to change. And when you sense conviction, would you take a next step with Jesus - and repent?

Get help. Enlist friends to come alongside of you for support. Pray like crazy. But it will be SO worth it.

I believe that the blessings of spiritual growth, Jesus' abundant life, increased usefulness in God's service, and the fruit of the Spirit will be yours as you walk the painful, delightful path of repentance.

¹⁶ Through the apostles' witness Jesus acquired more followers in one day than in the whole of His public ministry. This seems to me to be part of what the Lord meant when He said, ***[John 14:12] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father."***