

“The Game Changer”

Acts 2:14-41

When my fitness conscious cousin named Michael invited me to go on a twenty-mile bike ride with him last week in the hills in and around Santa Barbara where he lives, I was more than a little reluctant. It wasn't just because I haven't ridden a bike for a few years; it was because I haven't exercised at all for a few years (at least according to Mindy). I am embarrassingly out of shape. Never mind not keeping up with him; I was afraid I'd be so gassed on the slightest incline that I wouldn't be able to continue.

Michael must have sensed my trepidation, because he patted me on the back and said, “Don't worry old man. Look at this.” He showed me a button near the right hand grip and said, “If you need some help on the hills, push this button and the bike goes into turbo mode. It'll do all the work for you.”

And so, after clumsily mounting the bike and starting to pedal, I switched to turbo mode. Forget about the hills; I needed help on the flats, too, so I kept it in turbo mode the entire twenty miles. And almost immediately, several things happened: My fear vanished; my confidence soared; my youth was restored...at least it felt like it. Instead of struggling to keep up with Michael, I struggled to keep from running him over. Instead of being intimidated by the hills, I welcomed them...and conquered each of them with ease. In fact, on some of those hills I was passing serious cyclers that looked like they were training for a triathlon...and smugly waving to them as I went by.

Turbo mode was a game changer. It gave me new capabilities and new competencies. It enabled me to do what I could not possibly have done on my own and allowed me to go where I could not have gone otherwise. It made my bike-riding experience seem like I was, literally, along for the ride.

I want to suggest to you that what happened to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit is a bit like when I got on that bicycle and pushed the turbo-charge button. It is not a perfect comparison by any means, but when the disciples were filled with the Spirit it was a game changer. They were given new capabilities and new competencies. They were enabled to say and do what they otherwise could not have said and done.

You'll recall that just before He ascended into heaven Jesus ordered the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit. A few days later, on the Day of Pentecost, as they were gathered in one place, **verses 2-4**, ² *...suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.* ³ *And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.* ⁴ *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Last week, Pastor Grant provided the context for this momentous event. If you did not hear that message, I would highly recommend that you listen to it because it is foundational for understanding the entire Book of Acts. To summarize briefly, Grant told us that what happened on this day is a pivotal point in the history of God's dealings with mankind—particularly God's dwelling with mankind.

In the Old Testament, God's presence was most often manifest by fire or intense light. The burning bush with Moses, the fire on Mount Sinai, the pillar of fire to guide the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings, and the Shekinah glory that filled the Holy of holies in the Tabernacle and Temple. The “tongues of fire” that rested on the disciples when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit signified that God would now dwell *within His people*—followers

of Jesus. God's presence would no longer reside in the Holy of holies visible by only one person (the High Priest) on one day a year (the Day of Atonement); His presence would reside in the bodies of Jesus' disciples, and it would be out of those bodies that He would speak and act and reveal Himself. Their bodies would now be His Temple.

And He immediately does just that. The disciples begin to speak in other languages. Not languages that they had previously learned or even heard, but languages spoken through them by the Holy Spirit. And this phenomenon, along with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, created a scene.

Verses 5-13. *⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."*

This event is the fulfillment of Jesus' promise that His disciples would soon be baptized with the Holy Spirit. It also illustrates the reason why this baptism of the Holy Spirit occurred. After making the promise, Jesus had said, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (1:8). The disciples are being witnesses in Jerusalem, but they are witnessing in the native languages of people in the audience who have come to Jerusalem from the ends of the earth.

When these people heard uneducated Galileans proclaiming the mighty works of God in their own languages they were astonished, and, naturally, it raised questions. "What does this mean?" they asked one another.

But there were also cynics in the crowd who presumably did not perceive that the words coming out of the disciples' mouths were the native languages of people in the crowd. They assumed it was gibberish, that the disciples were drunk and were making a public nuisance of themselves.

This is the setting for Peter's address, which begins in **verses 14-36.** *¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:*

¹⁷ "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

The phenomena you are witnessing in these disciples is not just extraordinary, says Peter, it is supernatural. It is the Holy Spirit Himself who has filled us to the degree that we are under His influence. What is coming out of our mouths are utterances that, in days past,

would only on rare occasions come out of the mouths of individual prophets who were singled out by God to speak on His behalf. But that same Spirit who spoke through them has now been poured out on all people, enabling everyone, even poor, uneducated, ordinary people, to come under His influence. That's because God is now doing a new thing—the very thing that He prophesied through His servant Joel.

Peter continues, **verses 19-21**:

¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens

above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;

²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

The prophet Joel identifies a number of apocalyptic phenomena that would precede the climactic day of history, the Old Testament prophets called, “the Day of the Lord.” This is the day the Lord Himself would appear and consummate His promise of salvation for His people by establishing His kingdom on earth, and it was a concept with which every Jew was familiar and anticipated with great eagerness.

But the most relevant thing for Peter's audience was what Joel predicted would happen prior to that great and magnificent day. Look at **verse 21**,

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

Peter wants his audience to know that the phenomena they are currently witnessing—the prophecies, the foreign languages, the sound of hurricane force wind—and the apocalyptic phenomena predicted by Joel that will precede the Day of the Lord, are merely the signs and wonders that announce a major shift in God's eternal plans and purposes. God will no longer be the God of the Jews only; He will be the God of anyone who calls on His name. He is opening the door for *everyone*—people of every tribe and nation.

This should not have surprised Peter's Jewish audience, for they were familiar with Joel's ancient prophecy. But what did surprise them is how the Holy Spirit, through Peter, interpreted the identity of “the Lord” in verse 21. In the original prophecy, written in Hebrew, Joel used the word “Yahweh,” which was translated “the LORD” in the Greek version of the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit, through Peter, is about to reveal the identity of Yahweh, and it is not who the audience thought.

Look at **verses 22-23**. ²² *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*

You yourselves saw Jesus do many miracles, and if you didn't see them, you undoubtedly heard about them, because He has been the talk of this town for the last three years. You yourselves are witnesses that He was crucified here in Jerusalem less than two months ago. Some of you were part of the group that turned Him over to Pilate to be sentenced to death. Some of you were part of the mob that insisted that Pilate release Barabas and crucify Jesus instead. You people, whether you realize it or not, are personally involved in the unfolding drama of God's story. And you should know that the death of God's appointed Messiah and your role in crucifying Him was all part of God's plan. The hastily convened kangaroo court at the home of Caiaphas the high priest, the shocking alliance between the moral leaders of Judaism and the pagan leaders of Rome, the bloodthirsty Jewish mob that kept shouting, “Crucify Him!”, even the method of execution, crucifixion, the

most barbaric and humiliating form of execution ever conceived. Down to the last detail, this was God's definite, predetermined plan.

But the story doesn't end there. **Verses 24-31**, *²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him,*

"I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence."

²⁹ *"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption."*

The Holy Spirit, through Peter, quotes a portion of Psalm 16, written by King David, and tells us that David was not writing about himself, but prophesying about his descendent, the Messiah, who would die but not stay dead. Neither would His body undergo decay like every other person who has died.

He goes on, **verses 32-35**, *³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,*

*"The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool."*

We are witnesses that Jesus not only rose from the dead, says Peter, but we saw Him ascend into heaven where He has been exalted at God's right hand. That, too, is a fulfillment of David's prophecy in Psalm 110. So, in light of all these things, **verse 36**, *³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."*

Joel said, "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Who is the Lord? It is none other than Jesus, whom you crucified. David said, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand...'" Who is David's Lord? It is none other than Jesus, whom you crucified. If you want to be saved, call on the name of Jesus, whom God has made both Lord and Christ.

This is Peter's first post-Pentecost sermon, his first message after being baptized with the Holy Spirit. It is what we call a gospel message, and it was the perfect gospel message for this particular audience, because it was authored by the Holy Spirit who knew exactly what this audience needed in order to change their minds and hearts about Jesus.

It is a simple, straightforward presentation that appealed to the minds of an audience that already knew *some* things about Jesus, but had, heretofore, rejected Him as Lord and Christ (some of them, in fact, were culpable in His death). So, the Spirit shows them from their own authoritative source of truth, the Old Testament, how Jesus precisely fulfilled the prophecies with which they were familiar, even showing them how the prophets predicted that Messiah would die but then be raised from the dead. And not surprisingly (since this sermon was authored by the Holy Spirit) the message hit the target.

Look at **verse 37**. ***37** Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”*

That word translated, “cut to the heart,” refers to the sensation of sharp pain one feels when one is pierced or stabbed. In this context it refers to a profound and painful sense of shame or guilt. It is the intense remorse one feels when he comes to the realization that he has been dead wrong, that she has committed a grave offense, that he caused serious damage to someone. And it is accompanied by an earnest and urgent desire to make things right. Which is why the audience said to Peter and the apostles, *“What shall we do?”*

Verses 38-39 ***38** And Peter said to them, “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. **39** For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.”*

Peter is very clear, very direct, and very simple. Repent literally means, “change your minds.” Change your minds about who or what? About Jesus. Up until now you have rejected Jesus because you didn’t think He was God’s Son and Messiah. Now you know. Now you have you have been convinced from the Scriptures that He is. So, change your minds!

But don’t stop there. Pledge your allegiance to Him. That is what baptism signifies. It’s not enough for you to mentally and privately assent to His Lordship and Kingship; you must exercise your will to publicly declare that you are submitting to Him and joining His ranks. The act of baptism is your public confession that Jesus is *your* Lord and King; it is a testimony that you, yourself, are one of His—you are a disciple of Jesus, you are a follower of Christ.

We will talk more about baptism and its meaning in the weeks ahead because we will encounter many more instances where people believed and were baptized. We will also talk more about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on new believers, and what that means for us and for our church.

But let’s move on to the conclusion of this story. **Verses 40-41**, ***40** And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” **41** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

Wow! What an incredible response! The church grew from about 500 to 3,500 in one day, and as we will see, it will continue to grow exponentially in the days ahead. Why? Because from this day forward, God is now dwelling in every follower of Christ by His Holy Spirit. So, at the beginning of the day there were some 500 new temples of God in Jerusalem. By the end, there were over 4,000 new temples. And these 4,000 temples are not just the dwellings of the Holy Spirit, they are the vessels through which He will continue to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and expand His kingdom throughout the world.

The Holy Spirit is a game changer. It is through His empowerment and His enablement that Peter was able to speak these words and convince these previously hard-hearted people. It was the Spirit, I say, because you know what kind of person Peter was before he was baptized by the Holy Spirit. He was often fearful, foolhardy, flighty, fickle, and careless with his words. And yet when filled with the Spirit, he was brave, bold, engaged, focused, precise, and direct. This was a new Peter, with new capabilities and new competencies, enabled to say and do what he otherwise would never have been able to say or do.

But this is exactly what Jesus had told the disciples would happen. He had said, for example, that after His departure they would be called upon to testify about Him in some very tense situations. And He said, *do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11).*

Jesus also told them, ²⁶ *“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness...”* (John 15:26-27).

The Day of Pentecost is the fulfillment of Jesus’ promises. This is His gift to His disciples. They would not do the work of preaching the Gospel and expanding the kingdom in their own strength using their own wisdom. They would be turbo-charged—empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit to say and do what they could not possibly say or do on their own. And it would seem easy and effortless, because just like my experience with the e-bike, they would, literally, be *along for the ride*.

The Game Changer **Acts 2:14-41**

Main Idea: *Through Peter, the Holy Spirit proclaims that Jesus is the anticipated Messiah foretold in Old Testament prophecies, and many are convinced and become followers.*

Peter explains some baffling behavior (15-21)

This is not the influence of alcohol (15)

This is the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy (16-21)
Spirit-induced phenomena in people (17-18)

Catastrophic phenomena in the cosmos (19-20)

Salvation available to all who call on the Lord’s name (21)

Peter proclaims that Jesus is the Christ (22-36)

Validated by miracles and wonders (22)

Handed over and crucified (23)
By those in the audience (collaborating w/ lawless men)

According to God’s predetermined plan

Raised from the dead by God himself (24-32))
Because death could not hold him (24)

Because he is the “Holy One” David foretold (25-34)
Peter quotes Psalm 16:8-11 (25-28)

Peter interprets Psalm 16:8-11 (29-32)
David was not predicting his own resurrection (29)

David foresaw a descendant's resurrection (30-32)
Peter announces Jesus' exaltation (33-36)
Validated by an outpouring of the Spirit (33)

Corroborated by David's Prophecy (34-35)

Authenticated by God himself (36)

The Audience Responds (37)

They were "cut to the heart"

They asked, "What shall we do?"

Peter admonishes and assures (38-39)

The admonition: Repent and be baptized (38)
In the name of Jesus Christ

For the forgiveness of sins

To receive the Holy Spirit

The assurance: The promise is for everyone (39)

Peter continues to preach the Good News (40)

Many receive the Word, are baptized, and become disciples (41)

