

*Five Forks Church*  
*Sermon: "Telling the Truth About Jesus"*  
*Series: The Truth of the Matter*  
*Text: Acts 2*  
*Brian Black*  
*Traditional Services: October 14, 2018*

## **INTRODUCTION**

How good are you at giving directions?

Billy Graham told this story of how, early in his career, he had gone to a small town to preach at a local church. Needing to mail a letter, he asked a boy where the post office was. The young man told him, Dr. Graham thanked him, and then said to the boy, "If you'll come to the Baptist church this evening, you can hear me telling everyone how to get to heaven."

"I don't think I'll be there," the boy said. "You don't even know your way to the post office."

Now, most of us here likely know our way to the post office. Or at least the way to our own mailbox! And we may even know what the Bible has to say about how one gets to heaven. If you've been a believer in Jesus for any length of time, you know how important it is to share the good news about Jesus with others. I want to give some thought to that subject this morning.

We're in a series I've entitled "The Truth of the Matter." We're looking at different events found in the book of Acts to gain insight into what happens when people encounter truth. We want to learn from them how to deal with God's truth whenever we encounter it in our own lives.

### **I. SPEAK THE TRUTH**

This morning will be somewhat different as we are going to consider how we tell God's truth to others. Hopefully, we are speaking and living in a such a way that others will be encountering God's truth through us. God loved us enough to tell us the truth; therefore, we also ought to love others enough to tell them the truth.

We'll be in Acts 2 this morning, where Peter confronts his fellow Jews with the truth about what they have done to their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, whom God had sent to them. Before Peter speaks to the crowd, however, God the Father fulfills His promise to baptize the apostles and disciples of Jesus with the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them.

Let's put together a timeline of events leading up to the coming of the Holy Spirit. The night before He was crucified, Jesus spent the Passover meal with His disciples in an upper room. One of the things He told them was...

**John 16:13 – When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>1</sup>**

Note that Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of truth,” and He says that the Spirit of truth “will guide you into all the truth.” The Spirit of truth will guide Jesus’ apostles into all the truth – truth they could not get otherwise.

The day after the Passover meal, Jesus is crucified. He gloriously rises from the dead three days later. Then, over a period of about 40 days, the risen Christ appears regularly to His disciples, instructing them in things concerning the kingdom. He tells His disciples to remain in Jerusalem because, He says, “you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Then, right before He ascends to heaven, Jesus says to them...

**Acts 1:8 – [Y]ou 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.<sup>2</sup>**

Remember, our goal in this series is to observe how people receive truth and how they respond to it. The apostles have been told that the Holy Spirit of truth will be coming to guide them into the knowledge of the truth. They are to tell others the truth about Jesus. Hence, that same Holy Spirit of truth will then *empower* them to be witnesses to others regarding the truth of Jesus.

From these early followers of Jesus and their experience, what then can we learn about telling folks today the truth about Jesus? In the same way as it was for them, God the Holy Spirit ministers to us as the Church to lead us into the knowledge of the truth about Jesus Christ. As we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will then empower us to be witnesses about Jesus, telling other people in

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Jn 16:13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ac 1:8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

words they can understand who Jesus is and why they need Him in their lives. That is our job as His Church. That's our mission.

I've heard it said, "Preach the Gospel at all times and, when necessary, use words." Have you heard that little quote before? It may surprise you, but I'm going to go on record this morning and tell you that I don't particularly care for that statement. For one thing, for whoever said it, it was necessary for them to use words to say it! I would never have gotten that idea from observing their life example!

More importantly, I object to it because it downplays the idea of using words, making the use of words seem to be of secondary importance. It gives those of us who are already reluctant to speak the truth about Jesus an easy excuse to not ever say anything at all! "I'll just let my life witness for Jesus." Really? What if someone hadn't told you about Jesus – hadn't *explained* to you about who Jesus is and why you need Him? Where would *you* be? It is *always* necessary to use words to preach the Gospel – and the life that you then live better back up your words!

That's the tougher row to hoe, no doubt about it. But truth must be spoken. It must be verbalized. The Holy Spirit of truth has given us the words of truth to say, *and He has also given us the power to say them – and He has also given us the power to live the life of truth that backs up those words of truth!* I'm convinced that any shortcomings we have today of not giving verbal witness to Christ are really power shortages. We are ignorant today of what the Bible teaches us about accessing the power of the Spirit to speak and to live the way Christ desires us to speak and to live. We live powerlessly, though the power is readily available to us.

How do we then access that power? Let's see what we can learn from events on the Day of Pentecost!

## **II. THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND POWER**

**Acts 2:1-4 – When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested**

on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. <sup>3</sup>

The Day of Pentecost, also known among the Jews as the Feast of Weeks, was exactly fifty days after the day of the Passover. Jewish men from all over the region would, by requirement of the Law of Moses, come to Jerusalem for Pentecost. Jerusalem was packed out on this day with people from all over, many of whom spoke different languages.

Now, the apostles and the other disciples, about a hundred and twenty people as it says in Acts 1, had been gathered in one location for about a week or more, waiting for the Spirit to come as Jesus had told them to do. They spent that time in fellowship together and, also, in prayer together. I figure that right here are two vital hints on how to access the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the church's mission to tell others about Jesus.

Hint #1: We must spend time in fellowship together as the body of Christ. I'm not saying we need to be here whenever the doors are open. We'd all be here all the time! But some of us, maybe many of us, likely need to be here more often than we do. Find out what's going on around here. Find a way to get plugged in. Show up at churchwide events like the auction, family nights, church picnics, Christmas dinners. Help out in Awana, in VBS. Maybe Ray Rottler could use some help at Celebrate Recovery. Come to Sunday school, come to midweek Bible studies, find out about life groups and what's going on with them. Can you help with the archery ministry? Can you help greet people on a Sunday morning? Can you help collect offering? Can you help in the café? Food pantry? Clothes closet? These ways and many more are the ways that we fellowship here and share together here as a community of fellow believers.

And Hint #2, more importantly, *praying together*. I feel safe in saying we don't pray together nearly as much as we ought.

I know there've been all kinds of reasons offered as to why we don't do this anymore but, somewhere along the line, churches today have, in large measure, eliminated the midweek prayer meetings. Here, at Five Forks, we used to have monthly prayer hours. We no longer have them. You want to

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<sup>3</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ac 2:1-4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

know why we stopped? Hardly anyone ever came. Praying together is just not a priority. I'm not saying we must return to midweek prayer meetings or monthly prayer hours; that's not my point. But I think we need to find ways to pray together again. Because we're missing the power of the Spirit! That's what I'm getting as I read and study the book of Acts.

On the Day of Pentecost, the apostles and other disciples are gathered together in one place. The Spirit comes upon them with great noise – a sound like a rushing mighty wind. What are described as looking like “tongues of fire” settle upon each one. And they begin to speak in other known languages. Languages unknown to *them* but known to other Jewish people who have gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost!

This miracle of speaking in other languages clearly impresses upon us, once again, the priority of telling other people in words they can understand who Jesus is and why they need Him! That's the good news of the Gospel, and it is necessary to use words to preach the Gospel.

Now, the noise of all this activity at this house in Jerusalem begins to draw a crowd. This tells me that when we do the work of the church in the power of the Spirit, people will come. Jesus said...

**John 6:44 – No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.<sup>4</sup>**

The Father also promised the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit, when allowed to do so, will work through the Church to draw people to Christ. When you start to read this Acts account with an open heart, you begin to realize that it is the Spirit who is doing all the work! We just need to make ourselves available to Him! The Spirit moves and works. It reminds me of the words in Zechariah....

**Zechariah 4:6 – Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.<sup>5</sup>**

Here's how Acts describes what is happening....

**Acts 2:6-8,11 – At this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup> And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we**

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<sup>4</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Jn 6:44). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>5</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Zec 4:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

hear, each of us in his own native language? <sup>6</sup>.... <sup>11</sup> [W]e hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.”<sup>7</sup>

“We *hear* them *telling* us, in *words* we can understand, the mighty works of God.” This is the power of the Holy Spirit of truth witnessing through a church surrendered to His power and to His truth. Witnessing by means of *words*, *preaching* the mighty works of God. Telling others. Notice that the Spirit’s power is what is drawing people towards Jesus Christ, as they *hear* the Spirit’s truth expressed in the *words* of the Gospel. This is what can happen in a church that fellowships together, most especially prays together, and surrenders to the Spirit and to His truth.

### III. EXPLAINING THE TRUTH

Now, look at this question that’s on the minds of people in the crowd as they witness what is happening....

**Acts 2:12 – And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?”**<sup>8</sup>

Do you get what’s happening here? The local people see the power of the Spirit at work in the disciples. They hear the disciples’ declarations about the mighty works of God. And a question bubbles up in their minds: “What does this mean?”

The people recognize that this event has great significance because of the power on display. And they are intrigued by what they see. But they need further clarification! They need to hear words of explanation! “Somebody tell me what this means!”

And this search for meaning provides the perfect prompt for Peter to preach. Unfortunately, we don’t have time to examine Peter’s sermon in detail. For our purposes this morning, let’s examine Peter’s

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<sup>6</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ac 2:6-8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>7</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ac 2:11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>8</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Ac 2:12). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

approach. What is he going to do with the truth that's been given to him, now that this opportunity to be a witness for Christ presents itself?

First, we can note that he uses Scripture – a lot of it. He backs up what he's saying with the Word of God. There is power in God's Word! In his introduction, Peter refers to a passage in the book of Joel about the pouring out of God's Spirit upon the people – the same kind of thing that is happening to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost. For his main Scripture passage, Peter looks to Psalm 16, where David says that God will not allow His Holy One to see corruption. Peter applies this to Jesus....

**Acts 2:22-24 – 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—<sup>23</sup> this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. <sup>24</sup> God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.<sup>9</sup>**

Take note Peter calls upon his audience to “hear these *words*.” You must use *words* when you preach the Gospel! Peter points out that many of those gathered in Jerusalem on that day knew about Jesus of Nazareth. They had heard of His miracles – possibly even witnessed the miracles themselves. But they consented unto His crucifixion! Even allowing Him to be killed by men who lived without the Law of Moses – in other words, the Romans. *But God raised Him from dead, for death could not hold Him!*

Now, a different question arises in the crowd....

**Acts 2:37 - 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?”<sup>10</sup>**

Confronted with the power of God evidenced in the church, the crowd first asked, “What does this mean?” Now that the truth of the matter has been explained to them, they ask, “What shall we do?” They have come to understand that the Gospel of Jesus is calling for a response on their part.

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<sup>9</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 2:22-24). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>10</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 2:37). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Confronted with the truth of their responsibility that compelled Jesus to go to the cross, they now need to do something about it. Peter explains clearly to them that they need to repent for the forgiveness of their sins. The passage later says...

**Acts 2:41 – So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. <sup>11</sup>**

In the early church's obedience in *waiting together* on the Lord for His Spirit of truth, in their seeking the Lord through *praying together*, and their *mutual surrender and dependence* upon the Spirit of truth for His power, the Lord blessed their witness, and many were drawn in by the Spirit, and many came to know Christ on that day!

## CONCLUSION

**John 3:16-18 – For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.<sup>12</sup>**

Beautiful words. Yet sobering words as well. For all the activities in which we as a church might engage, whether assisting the needy, ministering to the heartbroken, rejoicing with the blessed, praying for the sick, or comforting the sorrowful, first and foremost in our minds ought to always be the thought that we are constantly dealing in eternal matters. Eternal life or eternal condemnation.

The Bible tells us our lives here are but a vapor. And so it is with the lives being lived around us – our neighbors, our family and friends, our co-workers, fellow students, the different folks we encounter every day. Even the boy who gives us directions to the post office. We are dealing in eternity; we have been called to do so! Earlier, I asked, "What if someone hadn't told you about Jesus?" If someone loved you enough to tell you the truth about Jesus, maybe there's someone you can love

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<sup>11</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ac 2:41). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>12</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 3:16-18). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

enough to tell them about Him.

This morning, I didn't give you step-by-step instructions on how to lead someone to Christ. I didn't cover one kind of methodology or another. I suppose I could have. But that wasn't what I was led to do.

Instead, we learned together today that we are in this eternal mission together. We need to follow the example set by those early disciples, following them even as they followed Jesus.

As they did, we must meet together in regular times of fellowship. A morning worship service is important, but it needs to be more than just that. Maybe this morning, you need to make a personal commitment to be more involved in this local community of believers. Ask the Lord to show you what He wants from you.

We need to pray together more. There are weekly men's prayer groups meeting early at 5:45 on Mondays and at 6:30 in the morning on Tuesdays. And there's a women's prayer group that meets 6:30 am on Thursdays. Each group meets in the chapel. But I believe we can do even better than that. We can share prayer requests with one another, we can pray together anywhere here in the church on Sunday mornings in small groups. I've prayed with folks over specific requests in the foyer before. You just push past the awkwardness, knowing that the other folks around you really do understand what you're doing in that moment – and that it's okay! And maybe we can fashion some sort of a return to corporate prayer meetings to pray together for our church fellowship and our outreach to others with the Gospel of Jesus.

We need to pray in any case because I believe we have a largely untapped resource in the Holy Spirit of truth who fell upon those early disciples so long ago, empowering them, encouraging them, and emboldening them to tell others the truth about Jesus! After all, that's what we're really supposed to be all about! Telling the truth about Jesus!