

2. 'Thy kingdom come'.

Three religious men of different faiths decided to combine their efforts one day to help their community. Each one made a sign, and positioned himself alongside an 'A road' near Liverpool. Soon a car came speeding towards them, and the first guy held up his sign for the driver to read, it said, 'Turn Around, You Are Going the Wrong Way!' The driver barely gave him a glance as he sped on by towards the next. The next guy raised his sign, which said, 'The End is Near!' the driver shouts back, 'Religious nuts!' and drove towards the next guy who had a sign that said, 'Give Heed, Lest You Die!', and so the driver laughed as he passed without a second thought, and shouts, 'You guys are too much!' Suddenly there was the sound of screaming tyres on the road, the twisting of metal and then everything went quiet. The three religious guys thought about what had happened and agreed that they needed a new sign, which would read, 'Stop! The bridge has collapsed'.

We saw the last time we were together we saw that God, through His prophets had clearly given the signs that His kingdom was to be established with the coming of the Messiah. We saw that Jesus said, 'thy kingdom come' and today we're going to see that 'thy kingdom come'.

But what was going to be the sign that the kingdom had come? Jesus said in Mark 9:1 "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power." Jesus says they'll know the kingdom has come because they'll witness its power. That word 'power' is the Greek word 'dunamis' and it means force, miraculous power. In other words, everyone will know His kingdom has come because it will be accompanied by miraculous power.

A little later when Jesus is speaking to His disciples, He tells them in Luke 24:49 "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Now we know that the promise, is the promise of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. But again notice that Jesus told the apostles to wait in the city until they had been clothed with power.

And as we enter Acts 1, we see that the apostles are still thinking physically and looking for a physical kingdom. And so they ask Jesus in Acts 1:6-8 "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Notice Jesus says, the kingdom will come with power, stay in Jerusalem until you've been clothed with that power, you will receive that power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Now did that time come? Yes, the miraculous came in a powerful way. Acts 2:1-4 "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

Now the day of Pentecost was a Jewish feast, which was celebrated 50 days after Passover, and pilgrims had come to Jerusalem from all over the world to celebrate the event. It was the busiest time of the year, so busy in fact, the temple was open 24 hrs a day to allow those people who arrived in the early hours of the morning to bring their sacrifices to the Lord. And it was on that day that the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in different languages and all of this signalled the arrival of God's new kingdom, the kingdom that Daniel prophesied about.

But imagine being there and witnessing this, imagine the local paparazzi. Imagine the local newspaper, the 'Jerusalem Times' has on its front page, 'apostles drunken house party literally shakes the house.' We can imagine, on the front page of the 'Temple News' newspaper, 'alcohol fuelled apostles speak languages they've never learned or studied before'. Imagine the guy at the newspaper stand at the temple gates shouting, 'Read all about it! Read all about! The drunk apostles claim that God's kingdom has come!'

And it's at this point, when everyone is amazed and perplexed that Peter explains what's going on. Acts 2:14-16 "Then 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. These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel."

Peter says no, we're not drunk, we all know that on a festival like Pentecost, none of us Jews would ever eat or drink anything until after 9:00 a.m.

Peter says, no, this is exactly what the prophet Joel said would happen when God's kingdom came. This is the power that Jesus spoke to us about, the power of the Holy Spirit. And just in case Peter's audience forgot about who this Jesus was, He goes on to remind them. **Acts 2:22-24** "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. This 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. But 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. David said about him."

Now we all have read about all the miraculous things Jesus did in the Gospels, whether it be healing the lame, restoring peoples sight or even raising people from the dead. But Peter said, these guys had witnessed these things, they know full well know what Jesus did. And the proof that God was with Him was in those miracles, wonders and signs. His death on a cross was all a part of God's plan from the beginning. But the good news is, despite being crucified and buried, He rose again because God gave Him the power to do so.

Peter says, **do you remember David, do you remember what he wrote in Psalm 16? Psalm 16:8-11** "I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." David prophesied about the resurrection of Jesus, but David died and was buried.

And so, Peter asks, **you want proof that Jesus rose from the dead?** Go and visit David's tomb, it's still there and if you open up his grave you'll find his remains. But if you go to the place where Jesus was buried, you'll find no remains, **why?** He's risen. In other words, as much as David was still dead, Jesus was still alive.

And so, Peter continues and says in **Acts 2:36** "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." Now remember that the name Jesus was very common in Biblical times and here Peter doesn't want anyone to think about any other Jesus than 'this Jesus'. Peter proclaimed that God had made this Jesus, the One whom the Jews had crucified Lord of all things. He was the anointed One, the Messiah of the Jews, He was the Messiah for which all Israel had been waiting for, for centuries.

And can you imagine being told that you murdered the very person, your nation has been waiting for? Imagine the guy in the temple court selling the 'big issue' shouting, **'Read all about it! Read all about! The apostles charge us with murdering our very own Messiah!'**

Imagine what was going through their minds? We've just killed the Messiah! We've just murdered this Jesus who was God in the flesh! The Creator and Sustainer of the universe, the Author and Perfecter of our faith. We've just killed the very person God spoke about as the head crusher in **Genesis 3:15!** We've just murdered the very person the Old Testament prophets spoke about coming!

Loved ones, I can't even begin to think about what was going through their minds. But I can imagine that panic stations were setting in because the reality of what they did is seen in the next verse. **Acts 2:37** "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Those words, 'cut to the heart' is the Greek word, 'katanusso' and it means to pierce thoroughly. In other words, when the realisation of what they did, thoroughly hit home in their hearts, they panicked and asked, "what shall we do?" In effect, they're asking, **what can we do to make things right? How can we be right with God after doing this?**

I can imagine them thinking there would be thunder and lightning and the earth was going to open up and swallow them. I can imagine them thinking that God Himself was going to appear from the clouds and wipe them off the face of the earth.

And so, we can imagine them nervously asking Peter, "what shall we do?" **Acts 2:38+39** "Peter 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. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

Now can you imagine their first response to Peter's words in their minds?

Peter we've admitted that we crucified Jesus, we know we're guilty of killing the Messiah, we understand that we murdered God in the flesh and you're talking about forgiveness! Peter, are you sure you're not drunk? Are you sure all we have to do is repent and be baptised in the Name of the very person we crucified to be forgiven? And Peter says, yes, it's that simple, just think differently about your life and turn to Jesus, just do spiritually what Jesus did physically. Die with Him in baptism, be buried with Him in baptism and rise again to a new life with Him.

And I can imagine them saying, but Peter we crucified the Lord and Messiah and you're talking about God giving us a gift! And I can imagine Peter saying, yes, it's that simple, when you are baptised God will give you a piece of Himself to help you live a life worthy of being called a follower of Jesus. But how is all this possible Peter? All of this is possible because Jesus died for us, was buried but rose again.

Now the local paparazzi are on the scene, listening into this conversation and taking pictures. The 'Jerusalem Times' on its front page, has a picture of these Jews crying, with the headline, 'God offers forgiveness to anyone who admits they are sinners.' On the front page of the 'Temple News' newspaper, it reads 'Jews overcome with joy as God offers free gift to anyone who is baptised'. You see, God's kingdom came and it came in a powerfully miraculous way.

And Luke the writer of Acts continues in Acts 2:40+41 "With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." Jesus said, 'thy kingdom come', and after He died, was buried and rose again, His kingdom came, the church was born and it was made up of people who had been born again.

And on that day 3000 souls were spiritually born again and added to the spiritual kingdom of God. Do you notice anything interesting about that number 3000? In Exodus 32 when Moses and Joshua were up the mountain, they came back down to discover that Aaron had organised the building of a golden calf. God was furious, as was Moses and we pick up the story in Exodus 32:25-28 "When Moses saw that the people were out of control—for Aaron had let them get out of control, something that brought ridicule from their enemies—he stood in the gate of the camp and called out: "Whoever is for the Lord come over to me," and all the sons of Levi gathered around him. He told them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'Every man put his sword on his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and each of you kill his brother and friend and neighbour.'" The descendants of Levi did just as Moses told them, and about 3,000 people died that day."

You see when the Old Testament law was introduced it immediately brought death, 3000 souls died on that day. But when the New Testament law is introduced it brought grace, and 3000 souls were saved that day. That's why John said in John 1:16+17 "We have all received one gracious gift after another from his abundance, because while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus the Messiah."

Loved ones, do you remember the day your sins were forgiven and you received the gift of the Holy Spirit? I remember that day well, it was one full of mixed emotions, I felt the guilt in the realisation that I was a sinner and Jesus died for my sins. But I was also feeling overjoyed and amazed that God would forgive me and offer me a gift despite of past. I went down into the waters of baptism, as scum, as a nobody but came up out of the waters of baptism as somebody, a child of God, a Christian. Martin Luther when he was depressed or feeling worried about his life would often recall in Latin the words, 'Baptizatus sum', which means 'I have been baptised!' It was a reminder to himself of who he was and Whose he was.

You're not part of a church named after the day on which the church was born, you're a part of the church adjectively named after the One who died for His church. Do you realise that you're a part of the greatest living organism on Earth, where Christ is King and ruler over everything? You're a Christian, who is possessed by God and you're a part of His kingdom. You're a part of that Kingdom which Daniel and other Old Testament prophets spoke about. You're a part of that church that Jesus told Peter He would build.

I know that life can get tough at times and that enthusiasm we had in the beginning just seems to fade away. And so, I would like to encourage everyone here who is a Christian to say the words, 'Baptizatus sum' when you're going through difficult times. Remind yourself of who you are, to Whom you belong to and where you live.

Too many times when life gets tough or we go through some trial, we beat ourselves up to the point of thinking that God has abandoned us and we've lost our salvation.

Romans 5:8-10 “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” Notice the phrase, ‘how much more’, our salvation isn’t based on our ability to be good or better ourselves.

Our salvation is based on Jesus and what He did for each of us. We’re not going to heaven because we perform so good here, we’re going to heaven because Jesus performed like no man could on Calvary. **Do we really believe that God, with the motive of love, sent His Son to die for us, would love us less now that we’ve obeyed the Gospel and we’re trying our best to please Him?**

Did we do anything to save ourselves? Well yes and no! Yes, because Peter said in Acts 2:41 “Save yourselves.” **Well how did we save ourselves?** We go back to the question the Jews asked Peter, in Acts 2:37 “Brothers what shall we do?” The word ‘do’ implies an action, something to be done. So, we did do something to save ourselves but at the same time we didn’t do anything to save ourselves because Jesus did it all for us. In other words, because of Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, He made it possible for us to save ourselves. That’s what grace does, grace opens the door for us to enter so that we can be saved.

Now if I were to tell you I had a brand-new house built for you in London, it’s my free gift to you but in order for you to own it, you must go to London. But as you make your way to London, you must get on three trains, one bus and a taxi, or I can’t give you this gift. Now imagine you accepted my free gift and you got on three trains, one bus and a taxi to London. Did you earn that gift? No, it was my free gift to give.

Did you have to do anything to receive that gift? Yes, you had to get on three trains, one bus and a taxi to London. **Would I have given you the free gift if you only used two trains, one bus and a taxi?** No! **Why?** Because my instructions were for you to use three rains, one bus and a taxi.

My point is this, salvation is free but we must do something to receive it. The Bible never says simply believe in Jesus and you’ll be saved. The Bible nowhere teaches that you say the ‘sinner’s prayer’ and you’ll be saved. To receive salvation, we have to follow the instructions God has given us.

The Bible says, we must have faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, we must repent and turn to God, we must acknowledge our faith in Christ Jesus. The Bible says you must be baptised into water to receive the forgiveness of our sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter says, this is what you need to do in order to enter God’s kingdom, the church.

Now if you’re not a Christian this morning, you might be thinking, ‘well I didn’t crucify Jesus’, I wasn’t there.’ There was unknown hymn writer who asked that very question for everyone, Christian or not to answer for themselves.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
 Were you there when they crucified my Lord?
 Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
 Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

You see all through this song, there is a series of questions but the answer ‘yes, I did’ is never said. It’s never said, but its implied with the words, ‘sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.’ It certainly caused those to whom Peter was speaking ‘to tremble, tremble, tremble’ because they asked the question, in Acts 2:37 “what shall we do?” And if you accept that you’re a sinner, maybe you too will ‘tremble, tremble, tremble’ because you’ll realise that Jesus died for you because of the sins you’ve committed in your life.

You see, the promise of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit isn’t restricted to just those who were there present on the Day of Pentecost. Peter says in Acts 2:39 “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Forgiveness is still available today because Jesus did die, He was buried and He did rise again. The free gift of the Holy Spirit is still available today because He did die, He was buried and He did rise again.

You see, accepting that we’re sinners and acknowledging the terrible death Jesus went through for us, should prompt us to ask the question, **what must we do?**

Let me sum up Peter's sermon in Acts 2 with four verses from 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 "Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel, you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."

Peter preached the simple Gospel message, he spoke about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus just as the Old Testament Scriptures foretold. Paul says, if you believe this Gospel and hold onto that good news, you will be saved.

If you're not a Christian this morning, then please know that you too can become a part of this amazing spiritual kingdom of God. You too can have all your sins forgiven, every evil thought you've ever had, every evil deed you've ever done will be wiped clean. God knows how difficult it will be to live the Christian life and so He promises to give you at your baptism a piece of Himself to help you along the way.

You simply have to follow the instructions given in God's Word and when you do, the angels in heaven will write in the 'Eternal Herald', 'Rejoice with us, another sinner has repented and given their life over to this Jesus.'