Main point: The Church is built on the finished work of Jesus and filled by the Spirit of God

Current Event: Have you ever searched for just the right word but you simply could not find it? Below is a list of words from other languages that don’t exactly have English equivalents. Attempt to match the words with their correct descriptions.

1. Excess weight gained from emotional overeating
2. That panicky hesitation just before you have to introduce someone whose name you can’t quite remember
3. The trick in which you tap someone lightly on the opposite shoulder from behind to fool him
4. The urge to pinch or squeeze something that is irresistibly cute
5. Coffee shop dwellers who sit at tables a long time but spend little money

A. Tartle (Scots)
B. Mencolek (Indonesian)
C. Kummerspeck (German)
D. Seigneur-terraces (French)

1 https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-amazing-words-in-other-languages-that-dont-translate-well-into-English
E. *Gigil* (Filipino)

**Transition:** Today's lesson introduces us to a thrilling scene on the day of Pentecost: the coming of the Holy Spirit. On this day, God performed a miracle of hearing as people of many languages heard the Gospel in their respective tongue.

Answer key:

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. E
5. D
Week 3, Acts 2:1–41

Book

Main point: The Church is built on the finished work of Jesus and filled by the Spirit of God

Text Summary: Acts 2:1–41 In one of the most dramatic passages of the New Testament, we witness God gathering to Himself the very beginnings of His Church. The early Christ-followers demonstrated their obedience to Jesus’ instructions as they waited after His ascent, and now Jesus does what He promised He would do—He sends the Spirit to be with His disciples as they bring the Gospel to all of the world. Just as Jesus preached a Gospel of repentance and salvation while employing signs and wonders to confirm God’s authority, the disciples are sent out to preach the same message while drawing on the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to direct, strengthen, and multiply their witness. In this passage, we are given a special glimpse of God’s breathing life into His Church for the first time.

Acts 2:1–21 [Read]

Sub-Point: Diverse people are gathered by the Spirit to be a unified Church.

Verses 1–4 Luke describes an incredible movement of God that occurs as the followers of Jesus meet on the Jewish holiday of Pentecost (v 1). Verse 2 speaks of a loud, rushing sound similar to that of a violent wind, and in verse 3 Luke describes an image like fire appearing over the heads of all the disciples. He is careful to point out that these phenomena come from heaven (v. 2). The disciples also begin to speak in other languages (v. 4).

This moment is so spectacular because it demonstrates God’s presence coming to dwell among His people in the presence of the nations. This is not the first time in Israel’s history when God’s presence came to dwell among His people, and Luke’s choice of language is not accidental:

- God “moved Himself” into the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34–38).
- God “took residence” within Israel’s temple (2 Chronicles 7:1–3).

Both Old Testament examples use similar imagery to describe the events. Notice that both of these examples demonstrate God’s filling a place of worship with His presence. In John 4:24,}

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2 Peterson notes that Luke is careful to describe Jesus’ ascent “into heaven” in 1:11 with the same vocabulary as his description of these forces coming “from heaven” (133). Peterson explains this is meant to affirm the direct link between Jesus’ leaving and the arrival of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus promised in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8, He would be the one to send the Spirit.

3 We treat these moments with careful vocabulary because the Bible makes it clear God dwells in heaven’s eternity (Psalm 103:19, 115:3) and is not consigned to an earthly place or time. However, the Bible also makes it clear that
however, Jesus speaks of God’s desire to move worship directly into the hearts of His people rather than providing restricted access to Himself through a single building or location.

Because of the victory Jesus gained over sin and death, God can now dwell directly within His people (through the Holy Spirit), making them His new temple of worship, and in verse 4 Luke makes sure to point out that it is the new indwelling of the Holy Spirit that sparks this incredible event.

In the Gospels, many were recorded as hearing Jesus’ teachings and believing in Him, but this passage in Acts celebrates a new occasion where God has initiated the beginning of His Church by filling people directly with His Spirit. Later in the New Testament, the apostle Paul will present his teaching about how God transforms the believer into a living temple of His presence (see 1 Corinthians 3:16 and Ephesians 2:21–22).

**Q: In what ways has God demonstrated His desire to be near to His people?**

**Q: It may be easier to put trust in a place or person you can see—but how is God teaching you to find comfort in His presence in your life? How does He tangibly confirm that He is with you?**

**Q: How does your role as a temple affect your day-to-day life?**

Verses 5–13 Here, Luke describes the incredibly diverse crowd of people who witness the events. Not only has God moved in a supernaturally visible way, but the disciples’ behavior is being displayed before a crowd of various languages from “every nation under heaven” (v. 5)! What’s even more incredible is that verse 6 says the crowds are able to understand their proclamations in their own languages! This diverse group is among the first to be impacted by the Gospel message preached by Jesus’ disciples.

As we noticed earlier in Acts 1:12–14, the earliest followers of Christ found unity across gender and class barriers, and in these next moments of Acts, God demonstrates that the powerful freedom of the Gospel breaks down even the dividing walls between cultures and ethnicities. Verses 7-11 give a glimpse of the far-reaching range of Jesus’ message. These places are the beginning fulfillment of Isaiah 49:5–6 and God’s ancient prophecy to Abraham that, through his descendant, Jesus, all nations of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:3, 22:8). The resurrection God, in all His power and glory, still finds a way to dwell among His people in a manner that gives the comfort of His presence but is restrained from overtaking them in their sin and weakness.
power of Jesus is offered to the entire world. Once it has been brought to the Jews, it then goes out to all the nations of the world.

Verses 12-13 We see that the people respond with two opposing reactions. In verse 12, many are amazed and seek further answers regarding these miraculous acts of God. Simultaneously, in verse 13 other members of the crowd are somehow able to ignore the supernatural events happening before their eyes and simply mock the disciples for drinking too much wine.

Q: How does your lifestyle reflect God’s desire to have people of varying nations join together to worship Him?

Q: Where are you most comfortable proclaiming the truths of the Gospel? How have you limited yourself to a certain group of people OR how have you learned to diversify your witness?

Verses 14–21 Luke describes the apostle Peter standing in front of the crowd and defending a careful explanation of the work God is accomplishing among His Church (vv. 14-15). In verses 16–21, Peter quotes from a specific prophecy by the prophet Joel. The idea of God’s Spirit had long been a part of Israel’s relationship with God, but it did not have the immediacy and intimacy that was accomplished at Pentecost.

Israel’s prophetic voices longed for the day when God would give Himself to His people in a new way that supernaturally empowered them to know Him, love Him, and walk in obedience to Him. This longing was a theme of many prophets, including Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Peter is now testifying to the fact that God has accomplished what He promised.4

In verses 16-21, the prophecy Peter quotes from5 provides information about all the people God’s Spirit will impact, including both genders (sons and daughters, men and women), all stages of life (young and old), and the two standard economic statuses (servants and free). We might think that striving for equality in our churches is a modern movement, but God has long promised equal access to His presence by His Spirit. Peter holds high this beautiful promise of a God who willingly draws near to everyone He has created and makes His Spirit available to anyone who would “call on the name of the Lord” and “be saved” (v. 21).

Q: Have you struggled to feel confident in your personal access to God? Are you tempted to view other Christians, especially your leaders, as having an extra secure relationship with Him?

4 For additional study, consider reading Isaiah 59:21, Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 37:14.
5 Joel 2:28-32.
Q: Have you felt excluded from the Church? How have Christians failed to back up Peter’s declaration that God has offered Himself to all, regardless of gender, race, class or geography?

There are no other events in the course of human history like those recorded in Acts 2:1–21. Yes, throughout the Bible God moved in tangible ways to demonstrate His presence with His people, but until the Day of Pentecost after Jesus’ return to heaven, mankind is not given immediate and intimate access to the very being of God Himself. This groundbreaking closeness is an essential mark of the Church, and as Christians, we should be mindful of our role as God’s holy temple on earth. We only exist as the Church inasmuch as we are filled and united by His Spirit across all of our temporary, earthly divisions.

Acts 2:22–41 [Read]

Sub-Point: The Church exists to confirm and continue the mission of Jesus.

Verses 22–24 As Peter continues to preach to the crowds, one can’t help but be amazed by the fiery passion that burns in his words. Not only is Peter confident in the fulfilled promise of God’s Spirit but he also is confident that God has revealed the full story of salvation in the person of Jesus Christ. The conviction with which he speaks is full of declarative statements about Jesus’ death and Resurrection, and he does not hold back from confronting the consciences of those who have currently rejected Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah.

In these three verses, Peter offers a concise history of Jesus’ mission on earth, summarizing all that he has personally witnessed over the past three years. With confidence, Peter attributes all of Jesus’ life to the sovereign direction of God’s will, even Jesus’ suffering and death (“which God did…” “by God’s deliberate plan…” “…God raised him from the dead…”).

It is this belief in the purposeful humbling of the Son of God that gives Peter confidence in the victorious Resurrection and reign of Jesus as eternal king. It is amazing to consider the personal transformation Peter has undergone since he was rebuked by Jesus (Matthew 16:23) or denied his relationship with him (Luke 22:61). Peter has witnessed the glorious confirmation of all Jesus did and taught, and now he is filled with the Holy Spirit, fueling him to begin sharing his testimony of the Gospel of Jesus.

Q: Are you sure of what you believe about Jesus? What gives you that confidence?

Q: How have you fallen short in your role as the Church to confirm the Gospel of Jesus?

Q: In what ways is your own life a testimony to who Jesus is and how God brings salvation to all peoples?
Verses 25–36 Peter continues to quote from Hebrew scripture, referencing Psalm 16 (vv. 25-28) and Psalm 110 (vv. 34-35). He digs deep into Israel’s collection of inspired writings, inspired himself by the indwelling Spirit of God, and continues teaching with great clarity how the death and resurrection of Jesus confirms his true nature of Savior and Messiah.

The identity of Jesus was often a subject of speculation among those who knew and followed him. People were in awe of His authority and gathered to His miraculous healings, but rarely did the surface level of their admiration penetrate into their hearts to stir repentance. With these Psalms, Peter drives home the message that they have all just borne witness to the fulfillment of God on earth, supernaturally revealing His plan for their salvation that no mere human could accomplish.

As Peter concludes in verses 29-33, if David himself was confirmed to have died and been buried in a grave, how could his writings claim so confidently a miraculous ascension from the grave to the authoritative right hand of God? No person in history had ever demonstrated this sovereign power until Jesus, whom Peter passionately argues to be the fulfillment of these prophecies.

Q: Consider the way you speak of Jesus among your friends, coworkers or family members. Can they tell you have more than just a surface level of admiration in your heart?

Peter does more than teach an excellent lesson in Jewish history. He purposefully includes his audience in the story, reminding them earlier that they were the ones who ultimately rejected Jesus and sent Him to be nailed to a cross (v. 22-23). Now as he nears the conclusion of his sermon, he makes it very clear how great God’s kindness was toward the people who rejected Him. God sent a Savior to be crucified by the very ones He came to save (v. 36).

Verses 37–41 The diverse crowd displays similar responses to Peter’s sermon that they gave to the initial events of Pentecost (vv. 12–13), which are also very similar to previous responses to Jesus’ sermons. Here in verse 37, many experience conviction, while verse 41 reveals that some of those present still do not respond with repentance. Both times in our passage, some are moved to a state of awe, wonder or repentance, while others react with disdain and scorn.

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In verses 38-40, Peter reminds them of the promise that the forgiveness of sins is for “all who are far off” and walks them through a response of repentance, baptism, and the receiving of the same Holy Spirit who moments earlier came to dwell in and among the disciples. With a mixture of compassion and truth, Peter extends a loving invitation to the crowds to come believe in the Messiah who can save them and bring them into the family of God. In verse 41, Luke records the results: three thousand more people join God’s fledgling, Spirit-filled Church.

The message of the Gospel, of mankind’s great need to be rescued from a life of sin and rebellion, can either be offensive or offer relief, depending on the state of one’s heart. As we continue today to join Peter and the disciples’ mission to share the Gospel with those in our circles, we must press on no matter what reactions we receive. We must trust that God is already working in peoples’ hearts to clarify their position before Him.

**Q:** While Peter does use his intellect and personal experience to testify to Jesus, he relies heavily on the Word of God and the power of the Spirit to stir hearts toward repentance. How well do you do this when you are sharing the Gospel?

**Q:** What gives you comfort and confidence when you face rejection or ridicule from people with whom you share the Gospel?
Week 3, Acts 2:1–41

Main point: The Church is built on the finished work of Jesus and filled by the Spirit of God

Current Event: If you were to search for the most diverse neighborhood in America, where would you look? Perhaps you would look to New York City or Los Angeles. But according to Chad Farrell, University of Alaska sociology professor, one need look no further than Anchorage, Alaska. The neighborhood of Mountain View in Anchorage boasts the most diverse census tracts in America, according to Farrell. However, the neighborhood isn’t segmented into huddles of various ethnicities; there are no set patterns. Everyone lives together. One resident described the diversity and its impact on Mountain View’s unity:

“We all live together...Think how it would be if the whole country had been organized like this. It does people good to break out of their comfort zone and mix with neighbors who are different.”7

Where do we see God’s heart for diversity on the Day of Pentecost?

Describe how unity is cultivated in a body as diverse as the Church?

In what ways might your class become more involved in reaching the nations for Christ?

Lesson Conclusion: The Church is a supernatural accomplishment of God. He calls wayward people to Himself from all walks of life and gathers them into a holy community built on the common belief that Jesus Christ is our resurrected Messiah. God fills His Church with the Holy Spirit so we can enter into genuine union with Him and with one another. As a gathered body of believers, the Church has the potential to give a powerful testimony about the transformation salvation brings, as well as be an effective agent of spreading the message of the Gospel. We must challenge ourselves to find our identity in Scripture’s commission, not the outward expressions of our preferences or the pressures of our culture. God has a beautiful plan to use us as His beloved sons and daughters insomuch as we are walking in the special role He has designated for us. We can be confident that He will give us whatever we need to remain faithful.

Challenges

Examine yourself – What are some ways you are learning to honor yourself as a holy dwelling place of God’s presence? How has God convicted you to re-examine your physical, spiritual, mental and emotional health? Don’t be discouraged by the things you struggle with—God has promised to never leave or forsake you, and once He has taken residence in your life, you will not lose Him. But while He is with you, consider how you might humbly invite Him into more of the dirt and darkness so He can bring more light and health into those places. He wants to transform you into a beautiful house of worship!

Seek unity and diversity – Challenge yourself and your social group to consider what it means to be unified in Christ but diverse in your personhood. We are often way too comfortable seeking communities that look and live just like us. That’s to be expected! We’re human, and our default approach is often the selfish, easy one. But pray for God’s Spirit to bring conviction and inspiration into your heart so that you can see new ways to expand your perception of what the Church looks like. How can you put this into action?

Build your testimony – Like Peter, you can give a personal account of how and why you believe in Jesus Christ as your Messiah. What Scriptures stir your heart to understand Him more? What events in your life have revealed God’s intervention for safety or provision? How have you seen your attitudes and actions grow more like the person of Jesus you see in the Bible? Pray for confidence in what you personally believe; pray for clear words to express Scripture’s truths; and pray for opportunities to be bold and speak into the lives of those who gather around you. You may or may not be speaking to large crowds. But you will be speaking hope and life to people God loves dearly and whom Jesus died to save.