

WHO ARE YOU?! AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH PETER?!**Acts 2:14-36****(Read Acts 2:14-36)**

Intro: I spent three wonderful years at Navajo Mission. You know this and you've heard the stories, so I won't tell them again. I will say that when I was there I probably didn't contribute nearly as much as I should have and I certainly learned far more than I ever taught. My boss, the Mission Director, was Dr. Marion Heisey, from right here in Northern Ohio. As a matter of fact, his father, Henry, was the pastor of Valley Chapel in Canton. I'm indebted to Marion for the confidence that he had in me from putting me on a backhoe and telling me I needed to learn it, to being a dorm supervisor for boys that were only a little younger than myself. I also must have given him some concern, or at least it seemed that he never saw in me the potential to be a pastor. He was on the BIC denominational Board for Ministry and Doctrine, which means he read my doctrinal exam when I wrote it in 1986. I would also see him from time to time when he was at Messiah College for meetings, or at some kind of mission reunion. When I would see him, invariably, he would put his arm around my shoulder, and shake his head in wonderment, and marvel at how I had ever become a pastor. I've always wondered, what caused him to ask that question? Was I really that bad in my years as a mission or was my doctrinal paper that scary? Obviously, in his mind, and hopefully in the minds of everyone else, I had come a long way and I was a transformed man and worthy to serve as a minister of the Gospel.

I gave you a heads-up about this via email on Friday so maybe someone has given it some thought: Does anyone here have a story about when God really got hold of you? If anybody wants to share it, go ahead. (If no one shares ask:

What were you like before God got a hold of you?

What was different about you?

Would you say that you were a transformed man or woman?)

You were. Even if you never thought about it that way, you were.

A song has been running through my mind the past couple of weeks, and it begins like this:

I was sinking deep in sin

Far from the peaceful shore

Very deeply stained within

Sinking to rise no more

But the master of the sea

Heard my despairing cry,

From the waters lifted me

Now safe am I

Love lifted me! Love lifted me!

When nothing else could help

Love lifted me.

Love lifted me,

Love lifted me,

When nothing else could help,

Love lifted me.

The song goes on, but these words are a picture of what it means to be a transformed person.

So actually, the name of this sermon could easily be A TRANSFORMED MAN because that was what Peter was. Next week's sermon, is about all the people that Peter was preaching to in the sermon you just heard from my reading from Acts 2 - and I have indeed entitled that sermon, TRANSFORMED PEOPLE. But today as you can see by my title, we're talking about Peter. From where he had been 3 years or even 2 months before, anyone who knew him well would have looked at him and with incredulity and asked, Who are you? And what have you done with Peter? You look like Peter but you don't sound like Peter. You have a different courage from the impulsive courage that you had when you jumped out of a boat and walked on water. In that case cowardice set in and you sank. Or when you pulled out your sword and sliced the servant's ear off on the night before the crucifixion. And what about when you betrayed Jesus? That was cowardly. That wasn't the backbone

that we see now as you preach the Word! And where did you learn that scripture, Peter?! We didn't even know you had a Bible, let alone believed it! You are a transformed man!

And he was. So let's study him a bit.

As I just point out in so many words. . .

Peter was bold

- Our text tells us Peter spoke for everyone. The other disciples, all 120 of them were on either side of him as he spoke, but Peter was their spokesman and he spoke with genuine and, newly acquired, courage.
- Notice also that when he began speaking the tongues stopped. The cacophony of many, many languages ceased immediately and you could hear a pin drop. Now normally, in that culture, teaching would happen when a rabbi would gather a few disciples and preach, but this was a large crowd that Peter was preaching a full-blown sermon to.
- The first thing that he addresses is the fact that he and his friends were not drunk. It was only the third hour of the day, that is, 9:00 AM. And a good Jew, which is what the disciples were, would never have breakfast, and certainly not intoxicating drink, before he had his morning prayers and scripture. These were good godly people, and they were not drunk. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and it was obvious. Once he has this important issue cleared up he launches into his sermon.
- And notice . . .

Peter has no notes to preach from

- Peter was a fisherman – not a preacher. His seminary had been his three years with Jesus, the ultimate preacher, but he was still a fisherman. He didn't pull out a commentary and he didn't have an iPad with his notes or even three by five cards. Peter spoke from the top of his head because the Holy Spirit was directing all of his words.
- This is a daunting thing. When I was in Africa, especially in Kenya, I would be called on to get up and speak with no warning and with no prep time. I had not even necessarily considered a particular scripture in preparation, as they turned to me and said “Now the Man of God will speak.” And I was fully (and rightly) expected to speak. But, I *had* prepared after a fashion. For one thing my ABC family was praying for me week in and week out. And as I prepared for the trip and knowing that I would be preaching, I had resolved that I would completely rely on the Holy Spirit for the words that he wanted me to say to the dear people I would be preaching to. And the Holy Spirit did just that – he gave me the words he wanted me to say. Now, mind you, it wasn't as dramatic as St. Peter, but for me it was a powerful faith building experience.
- In Peter's case, he was full of what the Holy Spirit had just brought to the Christ Followers, and he leaned into everything he recalled from his 3 years walking with Jesus. And then he had seen Jesus crucified, and he and all of the other disciples hid themselves away, remember it wasn't just Peter who betrayed Jesus. And they had survived that and Jesus had restored and commissioned them with the Gospel. This had brought them all to be standing there, speaking to these Jewish people in Jerusalem and believing in Jesus the Risen Lord with every fiber of their being.
- And . . .

WOW! The scripture!

- Now, Peter wasn't so backward that he didn't know the Scriptures. If he was a good Jewish boy, and he was, he would have sat under the teaching of a rabbi from his earliest years – perhaps 5 or 6 years old when his father would have sent him off to be taught by a rabbinical teacher. This school was probably the first thing he did after he came back from their early morning fishing. So Peter knows the Word. But just think about it, it had to be Spirit led as he pulled out some powerfully appropriate texts here as he shared the Good News of Salvation.
- A quick aside here: We need to realize this isn't the entire sermon that Peter preached. It is instead a synopsis of what Peter preached with the main points as recorded by the author of Acts, Luke, as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Be assured that everything Jesus said in the 3 years that is recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is not included there. Remember, Jesus's ministry was 3 years, but if you started with Matthew and read to the end of the Gospel of John you could read them in just a few hours.

- So it's amazing that Peter, the fisherman, recalls the words of Joel and the words of David in the Psalms. He goes precisely to the spot in Joel where it says that . . . *everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*. Acts 2:21. And it turns out that Peter is living proof of the prophecy of Joel that says, *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*, Acts 2:17a. This was happening right in front of them. Peter believed he was in the last days and indeed, they were. In fact, they still are in the last days, only now we're 2,000 years closer to the return of Christ. And so we are included in Peter's message that the Holy Spirit will come and we will prophesy too.
- Peter also quotes from Psalm 16 with its prophecy that Christ's death and resurrection are all part of the plan. Peter tells the crowd to listen to what the prophet, King David, had predicted centuries before.
- As he finishes Peter refers to Psalm 110 where he says Jesus is alive at the right hand of the Lord. He tells them "You crucified him. You treated him like a criminal and you hung them on the cross in the most cruel and shameful way." And yet he rose again as the Lord – and title only permitted for God – yes he was God the Son risen and ascended and at the right hand of God the Father. David was dead and buried, but he still predicted that Jesus would be at the right hand of the Lord. David was dead and buried in a tomb, but Jesus was no longer in a tomb. He was raised up and Peter says "We witnessed it. We saw it with our own eyes and it changed us."

Conclusion: Yes – Peter was the one standing before them – the same man only transformed in a way that only Jesus can do. The church was beginning with transformed disciples and they shared a transforming message.

We get to see what the message did for the thousands listening to Peter's preaching next week. Amen.