

ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" Volume II Number 6

Pentecost is Here!

Editor's Note: This sermon is the 6th email message of 2003 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers and Christian workers around the world. This message focuses on the great 2nd Chapter of Acts and the great event that took place on Pentecost. The June sermon is coming out earlier than usual since it is appropriate for June 8, Pentecost Sunday. May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Regional Development Director

PENTECOST SUNDAY: Christ, Converts, and Commitment

OPEN:

Over breakfast one morning, a woman said to her husband, "I bet you don't know what day this is."

"Of course I do," he indignantly answered, going out the door to the office. He thought to himself, "She thinks I've forgotten our wedding anniversary! I'll show her!" Now the funny thing is, in truth, IT WASN'T THEIR ANNIVERSARY! SO...

At 10 AM, the doorbell rang, and when the woman opened the door, she was handed a box containing a dozen long stemmed red roses.

At 1 PM, a foil-wrapped, two pound box of her favorite chocolates arrived.

Later, a boutique delivered a designer dress.

The woman couldn't wait for her husband to come home.

"First the flowers, then the chocolates, and then the dress!" she exclaimed. "This is the most wonderful Groundhog Day in my whole life!"

You may have forgotten your wedding anniversary, but did you remember what day THIS IS? It is Pentecost. In the OT, it was the "Feast of Weeks" that occurred 50 days after Passover. Hence: "Pente" for 50. It was on this First Day of the week in the first Century that the church of our Lord was born. Let's read about the way it happened:

Acts 2:1-47

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?"

8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?

9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome

11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs-- we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

14 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.

15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

These introductory remarks by Peter lead into his message; we probably have excerpts only from that first sermon, but what we have is terrifically relevant to the church of every age:

22 "Men of Israel, 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.

23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

24 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.

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

3 keywords: Christ, Converts, Commitment. The first lesson we learn from the original Pentecost is:

1. CHRIST IS CENTRAL 22-24 It all starts with the foundation!

Who is Jesus? This is the crux of the matter, the central question of foremost importance! It is the same Peter who declared the good confession: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God" --in Matthew 16:16 – that stands on Pentecost to declare the Messiah and His Gospel. Jesus had promised as much when He gave him what Matthew called the Keys to the Kingdom. Peter summarizes the Christ in 3 basic ways: MIRACLE WORKER 22 MARTYR BY CHOICE 23 MASTER OF THE GRAVE 24

A. MIRACLE WORKER 22

"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."

Healings, control of wind and waves, power to raise the dead – thru all of these demonstrations of divine power, Jesus was shown to be the Christ, the Messiah, the special anointed deliverer of all sinful men. There are always scoffers. There will always be non-believers. But let the Bible speak for itself: When John the Baptist sent a question about the Messiahship of Jesus in Matt 11:3-5, John's disciples asked Jesus:

3 Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

The foundation of the church is the Christ who worked miracles. And furthermore, this Messiah is:

B. MARTYR BY CHOICE 23

23 This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

Jesus had said that no man would take His life, but He would lay it down for the sheep. He was a voluntary sacrifice. As it says so well in Heb 2:9 "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (KJV)

Our Christ was Miracle worker, martyr by choice, and:

C. MASTER OF THE GRAVE 24

24 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. (and later...)

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

The crowning miracle and the climax of His Power and Identity is the Resurrection!

It is the Christ, miracle worker, dying and, now, Risen Lord, Who gives the church her strength, stability, and stamina. He is the Rock on which the church is built. As He told Peter in Matt 16:16-19:

16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (KJV)

Christ is our Rock, our Foundation, the Head of His church.

Gregory Elder writes about growing up on the Atlantic Coast: "I spent long hours working on intricate sandcastles; whole cities would appear beneath my hands. One year, for several days in a row, I was accosted by bullies who kicked and smashed my creations. Finally I tried an experiment: I placed cinder blocks, rocks, and chunks of concrete in the base of my castles. Then I built the sand kingdoms on top of the rocks. "Just let them kick, now!" he thought. When the local toughs appeared (and Greg disappeared), the bullies' bare feet suddenly met their match.

Many people see the church in grave peril from a variety of dangers: secularism, politics, heresies, or plain old sin. They forget that the church is built upon a Rock – the Rock which is Jesus Himself --(Mt. 16:16), over which the gates of hell itself shall not prevail.

As Christ is central, we also learn that:

2. CONVERTS ARE THE CHURCH 37-41

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?"

38 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.

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."

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

A. BELIEF IS CLEAR FROM THEIR QUESTION IN VS. 37

B. REPENTANCE AND BAPTISM ARE COMMANDED IN THE MOST SIMPLE TERMS

3. COMMITMENT IS THE KEY TO CONTINUATION 42-47

42 They continued steadfastly in, or devoted themselves to, the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

What a great description of a growing, flourishing church. It isn't always that way, is it? Preaching Christ and converting souls sometimes is the easy part. But "continuing steadfastly"

Three preachers got together for coffee one day and found all their churches had bats in the belfry problems. "I got so mad," said one, "I took a shotgun and fired at them. It made holes in the ceiling, but did nothing to the bats." "I tried trapping them alive," said the second. "Then I drove 50 miles before releasing them, but they beat me back to the church." "I haven't had any more problems," said the third. "What did you do?" asked the others, amazed. "I simply baptized them," he replied. "And I haven't seen them since."

Here's a whole sermon, but we'll quickly list the disciplines of Christian growth:

- **COMMUNICATION FROM GOD** Apostles Doctrine - Bible sermons, lessons
- **COMMUNITY Fellowship in Christian relationships** Joint participation
- **COMMUNION** The breaking of the bread in remembrance Communion
- **COMMUNICATION WITH GOD** Prayer Daily communication in prayer

The Holy Spirit power was unleashed explosively on Pentecost. And His power is still the driving force in the church of Christ. You see, power can be used in at least two ways: it can be unleashed explosively, or it can be harnessed and used over time. The energy in ten gallons of gasoline, for instance, can be released explosively by dropping a lighted match into the fumes above the can. Or it can be channeled through the engine of an automobile in a controlled burn and used to transport a person 250-350 miles. Explosions are spectacular, but controlled burns have lasting effect, staying power. The Holy Spirit works both ways. At Pentecost, he exploded on the scene; His presence was like "tongues of fire" (Acts 2:3). Thousands were affected by one burst of God's power. 3000 were immersed into Christ that day. But He also works through the church--the institution God began to tap the Holy Spirit's power for the long haul. Through worship, fellowship, and service, Christians are provided with staying power.

But it is up to us to keep up the disciplines of the Christian life. We choose to continue steadfastly or we choose otherwise.

You determine what the church will be: If we are a joy-filled church, it is because you know the Lord and share your joy in serving Jesus. If we are an active church it's because you are active in the service of the King. If we are a generous church it is because you are a generous Christian, tithing and giving offerings for the Kingdom. If we are a friendly church it's because you are friendly and share the hospitality of the Lord. If we are a growing church it's because you are growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and sharing the gospel with others. If we are a church pleasing our Christ, it is because individually, you and I are pleasing to Him.

What kind of church would this church be, if every member were just like me?

And because we have a great Savior, we have a great future. The church will not be defeated! The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it! Adjust? Yes! The church will adjust our methods, but never change the everlasting truth of His Gospel. Adapt? Yes! Entertain new ideas in reaching the lost? Yes! But we have the word of Christ that His followers will remain successful as they remain committed to our Eternal Head. We will be victorious! We will win! Will you be a part of that church? Will you be -- by virtue of your faith, repentance, confession, and baptism -- a part of the army of the Lord?

We are still the church.. we WILL go on! Even so, Lord Jesus come quickly!

"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B