

God's Promised Spirit Arrives – Acts 2:1-47

(Expanded Sermon Notes)

It was late when they had picked us up at the airport. We had already had a full day of work and then travel. To say that we were a bit blurry-eyed is an understatement. But, we were at our final destination and ready to meet new people in a place we had never been to, and one that we would eventually call home, Iowa.



At the airport, as we waited for our luggage, we had exchanged the usual pleasantries when you first met someone. You know, names and excitement for meeting. How the flight or travel went... What you do for a living, etc. It wasn't too long into the car ride from the airport that we got to the nitty-gritty of conversation that was really aimed at sizing us up. Who is this young couple from the east coast? Are they really going to make it here? Do they know what they're getting themselves into? Are they going to fit into our community? His next question was as much an affirmation for us as it was for them... Calmly he turned to us as he was driving, "You're not a vegetarian, are you?" To that, I replied, no, no, I like bacon on my bacon! 😊

The desire for community is normal. The need to be understood and to fit with others is something that has been divinely hard-wired into us. However, on our own, our sense of community is deeply flawed. Why? Well, because we have a proclivity for preference. In that, we tend to have an overestimated sense of self-importance or value. And with that, we then look to be in communities and groups of other people that will affirm my heightened view of myself. In other words, we will seek out a community that puts me first. The great tragedy in this is that we miss out on one of the most important aspects of being with others... others. We tend to be so self-centered that we divide and exclude based on arbitrary boundaries rooted in our preferences. Even for those who claim to be part of inclusive and diverse communities, if we press just a little, what we find is that their community is built on self-centered preferences as much as anyone else's.

It doesn't have to be this way, though. If we want to realize and experience the fullness of what community is supposed to be, good news, there is a way. And when we step into that way, what we will find is that the values of an inclusive and diverse community are actually possible. We don't all have to be the same or share the same opinions or perspectives to be united in community. That type of community can only happen when we put others first. And an other's first perspective is only possible through life in Jesus. In fact, that is the truth we are going to see in the book of Acts this morning; **lasting and genuine community is only possible through the power of God's Spirit.**

1. The arrival of the Holy Spirit (vv.1-13)

a. What was promised long ago is now fulfilled!

- i. Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit → The Helper / Advocate (Jn. 14:26)
- ii. The Father promised to Abraham that his line (family) would be a blessing to all nations. (Gen. 12:3)
- iii. Circle the word “arrive.” → This is a key to understanding the role of the Holy Spirit.
 1. **A wordplay alluding to the idea of being fulfilled** cannot, however, be excluded. Conzelmann incorrectly rejects the event’s timing, since a day as important as this would be remembered (“The essential historicity of the incident is firmly assured.”¹
 - a. συμπληρώ, *symplēroō* – **To arrive, fulfill, fill in, help**
- iv. The Holy Spirit now moves into his new role → Declaring the truth of Jesus and equipping the church for life after the cross (discipleship & witnessing).
 1. We have already seen what He has done in the OT. (I.e., He’s been active).
 - a. Gen. 1:2 – Active in creation.
 - b. Exod. 31:1 – Gifting Bezalel artistically to construct the tabernacle.
 - c. Acts 1:16 – The author of Scripture
 2. This is not the idea of someone arriving at your house with no real purpose in mind.
 - a. **Instead, it is someone arriving who has a clear purpose to bring to fruition. I.e., A plumber, electrician, lawn care, etc.**

b. Pentecost – A day pregnant with promises!

- i. For a first-century Jew, Pentecost was the fiftieth day after Passover. It was an agricultural festival. It was the day when farmers brought the first sheaf of wheat from the crop, and offered it to God, partly as a sign of gratitude and partly as a prayer that all the rest of the crop, too, would be safely gathered in. But, for the Jew, neither Passover nor Pentecost were simply agricultural festivals.
 1. **Also known as “Feast of Weeks” or “Day of Firstfruits.”**²
- ii. These festivals awakened echoes of the great story which dominated the long memories of the Jewish people, the story of the **Exodus** from Egypt, when God fulfilled his promises to Abraham by rescuing his people.
 1. Passover was the time when the lambs were **sacrificed**, and the Israelites were saved from the avenging angel who slew the firstborn of the Egyptians. Off went the Israelites that very night, and passed through the Red Sea into the Sinai desert.
 2. Then, 50 days after Passover, they came to Mount Sinai, where Moses received the **law**. Pentecost, the fiftieth day, isn’t (in other words) just about the ‘first fruits’, the sheaf which says the harvest has begun.
- iii. **It’s about God giving to his redeemed people the way of life by which they must now carry out his purposes.**³
 1. God rescued Israel then → Now, God is rescuing the Nations!
 - a. We will see that a new type of community is about to form.

¹ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 94–95.

² Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 95.

³ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 21.

- b. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that is bringing about the fulfillment of God's long-promised redemption!
 - 2. The whole point is that, through the Spirit, some of the creative power of God himself comes from heaven to earth and does its work there.⁴
- c. Notes on reading narrative in the Bible
 - i. Read the whole story. → Just like you would with a book.
 - ii. Look for scenes within the story. → Just like a movie or play.
 - iii. Keep an eye out for markers and details that explain the setting, characters, and plot.
 - 1. Pentecost (v.1) – Scene 1
 - a. Devout men of every nation (v.5,9-11)
 - 2. Speeches (vv.14-36) – Scene 2
 - 3. 3,000 saved! (v.41) – Scene 3
 - 4. A new community (v.43) – Scene 4
 - iv. When we step back and see the whole story, we can understand the individual scenes with greater clarity.
- d. How will they know the Spirit has arrived? → What will give them confidence? (Two experiences)
 - i. Theophanies – Mighty Rushing Wind & Tongues of Fire
 - 1. These are the physical manifestations of the presence of God's Spirit.
 - a. Think of Exodus → Cloud by day & Fire at night. (Ex. 13:21-22; 19:18)
 - i. **¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.**
 - b. The primary background is probably John the Baptist's **association of the Spirit with fire as a means of cleansing and judgment** (Luke 3:16).⁵
 - 2. Luke intends to explain how it was that a small group of frightened, puzzled and largely uneducated men and women could so quickly become, as they undoubtedly did, a force to be reckoned with right across the known world.⁶
 - 3. This demonstrates something significant is happening that is not of the Apostle's doing. → I.e., It can only be a God thing!
 - ii. The nations hear the gospel!
 - 1. Tongues: These tongues allow the disciples to speak about God's activity in the foreign languages of their audience (vv. 4–11). Thus these tongues function as an evangelistic enablement, so that each person can hear about God's work in his or her own language.⁷
 - a. We can get distracted by things like this in the Bible. Yes, it is amazing, and deserves our attention. But, without understanding the whole story, we will rarely understand unique elements like this.
 - b. The big idea of the passage is God's Spirit ushering in a new Kingdom and God's redemptive work.
 - i. Remember – A text can never mean anything more than what it originally meant.

⁴ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 22.

⁵ I. Howard Marshall, [Acts: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 73.

⁶ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 23.

⁷ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 97.

- c. These Jerusalem pilgrims are present for Pentecost and have come from every direction of the globe, as verses 9–11 will specify.⁸
 - i. **This list appears to highlight the key communities where Jews of the Diaspora congregated and suggests the gospel’s universal scope.**
 - ii. **It also suggests that Rome may not have the claim on humanity that this dominant nation thinks it possesses.**⁹
 - 1. Rome is not more powerful than the resurrected Jesus!
- iii. **This isn’t from God.. they are drunk!**
 - 1. One group in the crowd does not understand what is taking place and admits it. They raise the question “What does this mean?” or, in effect, “**What might this be?**” (using an indicative for a direct question).
 - a. This is a rare idiom that refers to trying to understand the meaning of an event.¹⁰
 - i. **This sets up the need for Peter’s speech.**
 - 2. Others in the crowd make an effort to explain, mocking the claims, even though this explanation will turn out to be completely wrong.
 - a. So, these scoffers render their judgment that the disciples are filled with sweet, only partially fermented wine.¹¹
 - b. In addition, this is not the season for new or partially fermented wine, as that normally takes place in the month of August, still two months away.¹²
 - c. Could just be a reference to the cheap stuff... 2 Buck Chuck.
 - i. In any event, the crowd thinks their words are drunken gibberish.
 - 1. v.15 – Peter defends them... It isn’t even 9 am!

2. The Difference of the Holy Spirit (pivot #1): Hearts to Hear (vv.14-41)

- a. Peter’s sermon explains what has just happened and why they are not drunk.
 - i. **The Holy Spirit and God himself is at work! → This is what was promised!!!**
- b. This initial speech by Peter is entirely about promise, fulfillment, and the resurrection-ascension. What does this pouring out of the Spirit show? Peter strings together three OT citations (Joel 2:28–32 in vv. 17–21; Ps. 16:8–11 in vv. 25–28; Ps. 110:1 in vv. 34–35) with one linking allusion from Ps. 132:11.
 - i. **In verse 30, the allusion refers to God’s promise to set a descendant on David’s throne to rule, a promise Peter sees as messianic.** In fact, all the passages cited in the speech combine to explain God’s plan. God had promised an outpouring of the Spirit before the day of the Lord (Joel 2:28–32), a resurrection (Ps. 16:8–11), and an ascension to the side of God (Ps. 110:1). These events initially fulfill OT promises of a Messiah bestowed with divine authority.¹³
 - 1. v.30 is key to this section.
 - ii. Israel’s restoration is not done yet, because as a nation it still needs to say “**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord**” (Luke 13:35; Acts 3:18–22). The function

⁸ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 100.

⁹ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 103.

¹⁰ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 105.

¹¹ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 105.

¹² Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 105.

¹³ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 109.

of Jesus and the position he has as a result of his ascension discloses the significance of his person as well, because no one shares God's glory but divinity.¹⁴

1. A moment when a huge sigh of relief would give way to a huge sense of new possibilities: now, at last, things could really start!

- a. That is how the Jews of the first century read their scriptures. They saw themselves as the generation for whom it should all come true. In the book of Daniel, one of the Old Testament books people studied most carefully in the first century, there was a prophecy of an exile that would last for 490 years, starting with the Babylonian **exile**.¹⁵

iii. The long promised redemption of Israel is that there would be one who would sit on the throne of David and never be removed.

1. Contrast: Culturally, Rome sat on David's throne.

- a. Yes, there were kings (Herod), but they were appointed by Rome and were nothing more than puppets.

2. To be sure, these references indicate that David would be the father of a line of kings; the throne would remain in his family and not be taken over by usurpers from some other family. **Nevertheless, Peter takes it that one descendant in particular is in mind.**¹⁶

- a. The throne discussed in these OT texts is located in Zion, and the promise is that one day such a rule will take place on the earth (Isa. 2:1–4), yet Peter's point throughout his speech **is not about the future but about what is evident in the present**. Even now Jesus exercises messianic executive authority and prerogatives, as the Spirit's coming shows and the Scripture promised.¹⁷

c. **vv. 2:33, 38 – The promise of the Holy Spirit / The gift of the Holy Spirit**

i. **The outpouring is now what the crowd is witnessing.** The promise realized is what they see and hear (Luke 7:22; 10:23–24; Acts 8:6; 28:26–27). Luke often alludes to promises made to the fathers of old that the events associated with Jesus fulfill (Luke 1:55, 73; Acts 2:39; 3:13, 25; 7:17; 13:23, 32; 26:6).¹⁸

1. **Jn. 14:26** – Jesus promised the Holy Spirit that would be sent by the Father.

a. **They are “cut to the heart” (v.37)**

ii. **At the core of the gospel is the offer of the gift of the Spirit and what the Spirit provides to the one who believes.** Paul taught this as well in Rom. 1:16–17 and Rom. 6–8. It reflects core Christian orthodox teaching about the content of the gospel. All four references to a gift in Acts are to the giving of the Holy Spirit to those who respond to the preaching of the church (2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17). **In the Spirit is the enablement for new life and for sharing the new message, as Acts 2 itself has shown.**¹⁹

- 1. It is only in the light of this that we can begin to understand verse 27, which summarizes, in a sharp and difficult way, the point of view of the whole New Testament.²⁰

¹⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 108.

¹⁵ Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1–12* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 31.

¹⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 82.

¹⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 129.

¹⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 133.

¹⁹ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 144.

²⁰ Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1–12* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 38.

- iii. **What it does is simply to say: (a) God intended Jesus to die as the climax of his rescue operation; (b) the intentions and actions that sent Jesus to his death were desperately wicked. This doesn't for a moment justify the wickedness. Rather, it declares that God, knowing how powerful that wickedness was, had long planned to nullify its power by taking its full force *upon himself, in the person of his Messiah, the man in whom God himself would be embodied.***²¹
- d. What happens when Jesus is proclaimed and the Spirit is at work?
 - i. V.41- 3000 as saved!
 - ii. It would have been perfectly possible for a crowd of that size and greater to hear Peter in the open air (if John Wesley and George Whitefield could be heard, so could Peter), and if the other disciples shared in the actual baptizing, there would have been plenty of time to accomplish the task.²²
 - 1. Don't forget that there would have been an immense population swell at the time of the Feast of First Fruits.
 - iii. **The only way to explain such a mass response is the power of the Spirit!**

3. The Difference of the Holy Spirit (pivot #2): Hearts to Love (vv.42-47)

- a. **The four landmarks of community that is distinctly Christian.**
 - i. **One of the clear roles of the Holy Spirit is that he transforms our hearts from seeking our own good to seeking the good of those around us.**
 - 1. **I.e., He gives us hearts to love.**
 - a. **He makes a way for people who should not be able to live in gracious and loving community, to do so.**
- b. Luke is careful to point out the **landmarks**. In fact, Acts 2:42 is often regarded as laying down 'the four marks of the church'. The apostles' teaching; the common life of those who believed; the breaking of bread; and the prayers. These four go together. **You can't separate them, or leave one out, without damage to the whole thing.**
- c. **V.43 – Awe came upon every soul.. Something different was noticeable!**
 - i. The fear described here is likely to be similar to that seen in Acts 2:37, where divine activity is associated with the group (Luke 1:12, 65; 2:9; 5:26; 7:16; 8:37).
 - ii. **Such activity causes all to take careful, respectful, even nervous notice of what is happening inside the community** (Acts 5:5, 11 [reaction to Ananias and Sapphira]; 9:31 [church walks in the fear of the Lord]; 19:17 [after the sons of Sceva's failed attempt to imitate Paul]; 1QH 4.26). Luke-Acts has twelve out of forty-seven NT occurrences of φόβος.²³
 - 1. **The reality is this, something was drastically different about this early Christian community when compared to the prevailing culture around them.**
 - 2. Luke's four landmarks helps us to understand what the visible differences were.
 - a. **Question: Is our Christian community distinctly different than the prevailing culture around us?**
 - i. **Specifically, is it distinctly different in that we are proclaiming the goodness of life in Jesus?**
 - ii. **This is the normal Christian response.** – It is not Christianity for superheroes or overly-devout individuals.

²¹ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 39.

²² I. Howard Marshall, [Acts: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 5, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 88.

²³ Darrell L. Bock, [Acts](#), Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 151.

d. Devoted to the Apostle's teaching.

- i. Where no attention is given to teaching, and to constant, lifelong Christian learning, people quickly revert to the worldview or mindset of the surrounding culture, and end up with their minds shaped by whichever social pressures are most persuasive, with Jesus somewhere around as a pale influence or memory.
 - 1. **Life question-** How am I digging into God's word for myself? i.e., Feeding myself?
 - a. We believe that God's word has power and authority over our lives.
 - b. If we want to experience the fullness of life in Jesus, we need to abide in God's word. (1 Jn. 2)
 - c. If we want to lead our families well, we need to feed ourselves.
 - d. If we want to grow in the fruit of the Spirit, we need to feed ourselves.
 - i. **Caution:** Are you reading God's word or just listening to someone talk about it?
 - 2. **"Anyone who deals with truth — as we theologians certainly do — succumbs all too easily to the psychology of the possessor. But love is the opposite of the will to possess. It is self-giving. It boasteth not itself, but humbleth itself."**²⁴ - Helmut Thielicke

e. Fellowship

- i. Where people ignore the common life of the Christian family (the technical term often used is '**fellowship**', which is more than friendship but not less), they become isolated, and often find it difficult to sustain a living **faith**.
 - 1. **This is why we believe in the power of Connect Groups.**
 - a. We are to be spurred on to love and good works. (**Heb. 10:24-25**)
 - b. We are to remind each other of the power of the resurrection in our lives.
 - c. We are to pray for one another and bear each other's burdens. (Gal. 6:2)
 - 2. **The key ingredient to our ability to experience gracious and loving fellowship is not anything to do with us as individuals... It is Jesus.**
 - a. This is why we can have community with a multitude of people across cultures and perspectives. → We share Jesus.
 - b. In fact, this is powerfully different from the world around us. We have community by uniting in our commonalities. I.e., As long as we agree we can coexist. → This is not diversity or inclusion at all.
 - i. **In Jesus, we have true diversity of community and include all.**
- ii. **Take a step:** 6+2 Dinners / International Friendship partners

f. Breaking of Bread

- i. Where people no longer share regularly in 'the breaking of bread' (the early Christian term for the simple meal that took them back to the Upper Room 'in remembrance of Jesus'), they are failing to raise the flag which says 'Jesus' death and resurrection are the center of everything' (see 1 Corinthians 11:26).
 - 1. This is why we celebrate communion monthly.
 - a. Again, we are not a book club or social group that likes to sing.
 - b. **We are a community that has been profoundly changed by Jesus in the power of his resurrection.**

g. Sharing what they had.

²⁴ Excerpt From: Helmut Thielicke. "A little exercise for young theologians."

- i. And whenever people do all these things but neglect prayer, they are quite simply forgetting that Christians are supposed to be **heaven-and-earth** people. Prayer makes no sense whatever—unless heaven and earth are designed to be joined together, and we can share in that already.²⁵
- ii. This shared life quickly developed in one particular direction, which is both fascinating and controversial. **The earliest Christians lived as a single family.**²⁶
 - 1. **Question: Do I see other brothers and sisters as one single-family?**
 - a. When Paul tells the Thessalonians that, since they already love one another, they must do so more and more, he doesn't primarily mean that since they already have warm feelings for one another, they must have even warmer ones.
 - b. He means that, since they already care practically for one another, they must work at making that more and more of a reality (**1 Thessalonians 4:9–12**). The challenge remains for every generation in the church, especially now that Jesus' followers number several million all around the world.²⁷
 - c. **⁹ Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, ¹⁰ for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, ¹¹ and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, ¹² so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one.**
- iii. **"Enormous problems happen when we exclude our enemy from the community of humans and when we exclude ourselves from the community of sinners – when we forget that our enemy is not a subhuman monster but a human being, when we forget that we are not the perfect good but also flawed persons. By remembering this, our hatred doesn't kill us or absorb us, and we can actually go out and work for justice."**²⁸

- Mirisliv Volf

- 1. Am I living a radically generous life?
 - a. Am I generous with **gentleness** in a world of outrage?
 - b. Am I generous with **presence** in a world of seclusion?
 - c. Am I generous with **wealth** in a world of greed?
 - d. Am I generous with **hope** in a world of fear?
 - e. Am I generous with **personhood** in a world that dehumanizes the person?
 - f. Am I generous with **grace** in a world of retribution?
- 2. **We experience the fullness of God's radical generosity in Jesus.**
 - a. We are called to live in community that is marked by that generosity.
 - b. **Lasting community is only possible through the power of God's Spirit.**

²⁵ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 44–45.

²⁶ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 45–46.

²⁷ Tom Wright, [Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12](#) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 46–47.

²⁸ Mirisliv Volf – From "Exclusion and Embrace"