

Free Preach

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Date: 08 June 2025

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[0 : 00] I just have this wonderful sense of Jesus looking at us this morning and saying, I love you.

You might say, well, I've never been to church before. I'm not even sure I'm a Christian. But Jesus loves you. That's the truth of the gospel, the gospel which we share today.

Jesus loves you. Do many people follow Pete Gregg on 24-7?

Good. Did anybody have time to see what he sent out this morning? Pentecost Sunday. Praise God.

How wonderful that we can celebrate Pentecost Sunday. As Christians, we have a lot to celebrate. And it's good that we remember these things. Of course, every Sunday should be Pentecost Sunday.

[1 : 21] But it's just something special today. Not because I'm preaching, but because it's Pentecost Sunday. And I don't follow Pete Gregg, just in case you think I do.

But somebody sent this to me this morning. Nothing wrong with him, but you can't follow everybody, can you? You follow Jesus.

And praise God for people like Pete Gregg. And he says, Lord, at this time, when we are perhaps seeing the first signs of a generation turning back to you, bring in the harvest, I pray.

And this is a challenging bit. You might want to miss out this bit, but we can't. Propel us out of our prayer rooms and into the public squares, out of our church meetings and into the streets.

Out of timidity and into courageous confession of your gospel. Revive us, sanctify us, unite us, and fill us once again, I pray.

[2 : 31] And then another challenging bit, which we don't always like to hear. Forgive us our many sins. We'll talk about that later.

And make us holy. Set our hearts on fire again with the good news of your gospel. I don't know. Do you want your heart to be set on fire with the good news of the gospel?

I do. And I hope you do. I know it's a challenge, isn't it? Because lots of things try and put that fire out. Our fear. Our uncertainty. But Jesus wants to come and touch us this morning by his Holy Spirit.

You know, we've got this, haven't we? Devoted to God. Devoted to each other. And devoted to mission. And we had this when we started.

This is what Acts is all about. And it's challenging. You know, am I more devoted to God than I was when we started doing Acts at the beginning of the year?

[3 : 38] Are we more devoted to each other? Are we more prepared to lay down our lives for each other? As the Bible says. And am I more dedicated to mission?

Because if I'm not, perhaps it might have been better if I just stayed at home on Sunday. I don't know. I don't want to be harsh. God is not harsh. God loves us.

And he wants to stir us with his own encouragement. So, but you know, I've just worked out yesterday, but you've probably worked it out before, that if I deepen my relationship with God, that will automatically deepen my relationship with you.

And it will deepen my relationship for mission. Shall we pray? Father God, we thank you that we can be here this morning.

We thank you we can celebrate the victory of Jesus over death. The victory of Jesus on the cross. The victory of Jesus in ascending to heaven.

[4 : 43] And being given a name that is above every name. And a place that is above everybody else. We thank you, Father God, for the power of our faith.

We live in a world where there's so much that is anti-Christian and anti-God and anti-Jesus. But we thank you in our hearts. We know the truth and we know it's powerful.

And so just come, Holy Spirit, we pray. And just touch us this morning. We're hungry. We're hungry. We're desperate, Holy Spirit, for you to touch our lives with a fresh impression of Jesus and the gospel and what he's done for us and what he can do for this needy world in which we live.

Just come, we pray. And Lord, we wouldn't forget the children downstairs. We thank you for the people that go down there and teach to them week by week.

Lord, perhaps they might rather be up here. I don't know. But Lord, it's a sacrifice. And bless that sacrifice. And Lord, may they see your Holy Spirit moving down there this morning.

[5 : 48] Lord Jesus, we do pray. Touching those young lives with a wonderful power. We thank you, Jesus. Be with us.

We pray in your name. Amen. Emmanuel, could you put up the Bible reading, please? And this is from Acts 2.

So if you've, well, you can follow it on there. Of course, you can follow it from your Bible, too, if you like. But this was the day of Pentecost. And the background to this is that Jesus had ascended into heaven.

They'd seen him go back. And they were pretty, I guess they were pretty sad. Pretty cut up. What was going to happen next? So 120 people met. It sounds like they met constantly in an upper room. And they prayed. And what was going to happen next? There's a sort of a story. It's not in the Bible. But Jesus goes back to heaven.

[6 : 56] And you think heaven must have been thrilled to see Jesus. The angels must have given him a great welcome. Here he came back having defeated Satan, having defeated death.

And God gave him the highest place. And perhaps one of the angels, this is all surmised, but forgive me. Perhaps one of the angels could have said to Jesus, well, what's going to happen down there now?

And Jesus said, well, I've left 11 men. What? Peter and John and that lot? Well, they all ran away and left you when you went to the cross.

And Jesus said, yes, but you see what happens to them when the Holy Spirit comes. So we'll pick up on Peter's preaching.

Peter refers to the Old Testament. He goes back and in this section he refers to David because he was speaking to Jewish people.

[8 : 05] And they knew all about David. And, you know, there's nearly as much in the Old Testament about the gospel as there is in the New. Isaiah is often called the fifth gospel.

And it's wonderful if you've got a study Bible and you read it through and it often says, Jesus Christ foretold. God was planning right through the Old Testament from the time that Adam and Eve were turned out of the garden.

God was planning for this day, this day of Pentecost when the gospel would be preached. And the Old Testament is full of signs. So I think I'll read from verse 23.

This man was, this is Peter speaking to the Jewish populace of Jerusalem who had come to see what all the fuss was about.

These people who were, they were talking in other languages. They appeared to be drunk. And he says, This man, Jesus, was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge.

[9 : 16] 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 hold him.

And then I'll read on in verse 34. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.

Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Messiah. And when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do?

And 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 promises for you and your children, and for all who are afar off, for all whom the Lord God will call.

A few months ago, the editor of the Christianity magazine wrote an article, and he said, Why are we the funny ones?

[10 : 59] You know, perhaps you haven't come across that. We're funny because we go to church on Sunday. We believe the Bible. We believe the Bible is a literal word of God. We believe that

there is a God.

We believe he created the world. And most of us in the lifetime of most of us, that has all been taboo for society. That is all outdated.

And he said, Why should we always let them get away with thinking we're the funny ones and they've got it right? And when you stop and consider, you say, Yeah, why?

We've got everything. And yet sometimes we behave, we act as though we haven't got anything.

We're sort of downtrodden little Christians struggling away.

And then you have to say, perhaps not unkindly, what have they got? What is a person who hasn't got Jesus?

[11:57] What have they got? An uncertain life? No hope after death? All the things that the Christian has. And you know, if I was to ask you, what is the most powerful thing in the world today?

Or person or whatever. Would you think of a leader? There's got some funny ones around at the moment, haven't we? What would you think?

Would you think of the vast nuclear arsenal that could destroy the world several times over? But the most powerful thing in the world today is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And that is thrilling because that is what we believe. And that is the only hope there is for the world. So you say, well, back that up. Why is it powerful?

Well, the Christian population of China is very difficult. We have to be very careful with things, don't you? But, you know, 40 years ago, there were estimated there were 1 million Christians in China.

[13:09] Anybody know what the population of China is? A lot. Okay. Today, there's estimated to be 100 million Christians in China.

And that's in a country where the gospel was almost stamped out. In the Cultural Revolution in the 60s, everything was done to destroy Christians and destroy the gospel.

And yet today, God has built his church there and there's possibly 100 million believers. I'm told 8 or 9% of the population of that huge country.

A country like North Korea where you can, if you're found with the Bible, you can get hard labor for 15 years. And yet, they're supposed to be estimated that in Korea, North Korea, there are 400,000 people who believe in Jesus and are not afraid to be Christians, although they have to hide it.

And they obviously tell other people because North Korea has been communist since the end of the Second World War. And yet, there are still 400,000 believers there. Iran.

[14:19] The church is growing quicker than anywhere else. And I understand in Brazil that there's 17 new evangelical churches open every day.

And they have so many people wanting to go to Bible college that they said, you can't come to Bible college unless you've planted a church. So, I think, I think God is working in our world today.

And you say, well, what about England? What about Europe? Why isn't it happening here? Well, perhaps we'll come to that in a minute. But you see, it's the uniqueness of the gospel.

The gospel is powerful. We saw how in Acts, it spread so quickly. And it took, it got to Rome. It got to Greece, Athens.

It got to Turkey, Ephesus. It got to these different places in a very short time. It spread because it was the work and the power of the Holy Spirit.

[15:23] But it does come with a price. We read about those people who were scattered. And if we're going to believe and pray for the gospel to grow and to spread, it will come with a price.

I don't know what that might be. You see, Rob challenged us last week, didn't he? He said, what's God saying to you in your life now? What's his plan for your life?

Do we ever stop? Or are we so settled that we think, well, you know, I'll do this and I'll do that and I'll retire and I'll, you know, blah, blah, blah. And you think, hang on a minute, God, you know, I want to be open to you.

What do you want me to do? And I've, before I bring this word to you, I've had to challenge myself because it's no good me preaching at you and not having challenged myself.

What's God saying to me? Am I happy to settle or am I ready to do what he wants me to do to spread the gospel? And you see, the gospel is so unique because it's about a man, a man called Jesus.

[16:31] And there is no other man, there is no other person like Jesus. We don't preach a creed, we don't preach a doctrine, we don't preach a set of rules, we preach Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And that is so powerful because we read in this, in this verse 36, Peter says, God has made this Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.

Wow. Imagine him standing there, he's full of the Holy Spirit, but, you know, I bet when he stood up, he was nervous, like I was this morning. However much you trust the Holy Spirit, you're always nervous, aren't you, when you stand up because you think, well, you know, all those people looking at me and I've got to preach the word, I've got to bring what God wants me to bring.

And, but, and yet he says to them, this Jesus whom you crucified, he gave, he said, you did it. It wasn't anybody else, it was you.

I saw you, you were there. I was there. And, you know, that, that is the message of the gospel. And, you might be sitting here this morning and it's lovely to see you, you may not be a believer in Jesus Christ.

[17:51] You, you, you, you may not have any faith. You think, I don't know, even if God exists, I don't know why Jesus died, what's it got to do with me? But, the starting point is, if you're thinking this morning, the starting point is, we all had to start that we put him on the cross.

And, you say, well, I wasn't there. How, how did I put Jesus on the cross? It was, it was my sin and your sin that put Jesus on the cross all those years ago.

Because, if, if it hadn't been for our sin, he wouldn't have to go to the cross. He didn't go there just to please God. He went there to please God and to save us. And so, Chris, the gospel, I, I think, I was thinking about this and, you know, maybe Tim will put me right if I got this wrong, but, I, I, I think the gospel is the only religion that, that deals with sin.

Um, he's raising his eyes and looking around. Um, but, man's greatest problem is sin. It's, all the trouble in the world, the wars, the fighting, the crime, the marriage breakup, all the sad things that happen, the, the, the corruption, it's all a result of the sin of man's disobedience all those years ago to God in the Garden of Eden when man went his own way.

And, it's sin. And, the only way that our sins and the world's sins can be dealt with, is he smiling at me now, that's good, is through the blood of Jesus. Sorry, that was very bad of me because, that is, that is a, sorry, I have a drink.

[19:33] That is, that is, the blood of Jesus is, there's nothing more precious or more powerful than the blood of Jesus because, if you want to become a Christian this morning, you have to come to Jesus and say, I'm a sinner.

I can't do anything good. God, I need, I need washing in your precious blood and that blood is so powerful that it not only washes away the sin, it says that God doesn't remember our sins anymore. You might be struggling with sin this morning. I know some of us may be but, but God can deal with that. God has dealt with that at the cross. He's not surprised by your sin. He's, he's, just wants you to confess it and ask for the blood of Jesus to wash you.

So, what about, what about today? What about the gospel today?

Praise God for everything that this church and many other churches do. Praise God for food bank, for one way, for, I can't remember them all but you know what I mean.

[21:00] Praise God for every activity that's done in church to spread, to show that God is love and to show people that God loves them through the gospel.

and, but you see, sharing the gospel I believe is very important and, there's a scripture in, Peter says in 1 Peter 3, 15, but in your hearts revere Christ as Lord.

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

And then he goes on to say, but do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience. You know, the trouble is I think sometimes when we want to share Jesus we get ourselves a bit wound up.

We sort of think, well, what if they reject me and get nasty with me? What about if they ask me an awkward question? What about if there was a case just the other day somebody said, well, I'm a Buddhist and you think, oh, well, how do I handle that?

[22:38] I don't know anything about Buddhists. And then you say to them, well, you tell me about Buddha and about Buddhism and you learn all about it because they like telling you and then you find actually they don't really know much about it after all.

It's a bit of a cop-out. Then you say, well, actually, let me tell you about Jesus because I think he's got more to offer you than Buddha has. And you know, we often don't have to say very much to

share the gospel.

It's like lots of little seeds that as we walk around we drop little seeds and God makes them grow. You know, we might, yeah, we might do something practically but we might just say a few words and that's powerful.

Just a very short story. One day we were on the bridge on the River Thames. It was a lovely autumn afternoon and a lady came along and we said to her, isn't it beautiful?

Isn't the countryside lovely? And she said, yes, it's amazing, isn't it? And we said, do you believe in God? And she said, well, the trouble is I don't know what God's like so how do I know if I can believe in him?

[23 : 48] So we said, well, do you know about Jesus? Oh, yes, he said he was a really good man and I think his teaching was good. So we said, well, Jesus came to show us what God was like and God is like Jesus was when he's here on earth and she carried on with her walk and you said, well, you know, that wasn't much of the gospel, was it?

You know, we should have given her three points and a summary and all the rest of it but it doesn't matter. Be encouraged, be encouraged to share a little bit here and a little bit there.

Mention the name of Jesus because it's powerful. Because, you know, Jesus wants us to lift him up. You know, I am, I know every generation has, thinks that the current generation is much worse than the one before but, you know, I think the state of our country is terrible.

I really do. I think we're financially bankrupt. How are we going to defend ourselves? I don't know. We're morally bankrupt. We're spiritually bankrupt.

[25 : 12] There's so much violence and, you know, our country needs the gospel so badly and you and I have a responsibility to share the gospel.

We also have a responsibility to pray and it was great on Tuesday that there were 27 people at the prayer meeting.

Now, that may not sound a lot for a church this size but it was an improvement on before and I don't want to put anybody under condemnation but brothers and sisters, if we're going to see a move of the Holy Spirit, we need to pray and you say, well, I can't actually make a Tuesday night.

Well, go to the elders and say, look, I can't come on a Tuesday night but if there was a daytime prayer meeting or a once a month Saturday morning prayer meeting, I'd be able to go. We all have a responsibility to pray because God answers prayer.

You know, I did have a picture a while ago of a prayer meeting here and it was full, full.

[26 : 27] It was like a Sunday morning but it wasn't a Sunday morning, it was a prayer meeting and the children were downstairs praying and then they came up and they joined in and they prayed for their parents and parents prayed for their children.

I just long to see the day and ask God to quicken your heart that we might be a church of prayer so that our nation can be changed by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, if we think that there's talk, isn't there, a revival, a quiet revival and that's good, that's wonderful that more people are going to church but if we think that we're going to sit in here and people are going to just come into church, we've got another thing coming.

We thank God they do but we haven't touched Alton yet, we need to pray and we need to have our lives right with God and this is challenging and I've had this challenge for several weeks and there was a man in America in the last century, the 1900s, by the name of A.W. Tozer and he said you can't have revival without reformation and that's absolutely true.

If we want to see revival in our country and if you don't you need to ask God to help you to see that but if we want to see revival we need to be open to the Holy Spirit and he also said that one of the things that hinders revival more than anything else is sin and sin in the lives of Christians and there's that wonderful there's that scripture which can be misapplied but in 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 14 it says if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven I will forgive their sin and I will heal their land if brothers and sisters we want

[29 : 03] God to heal our land we want the lost whether it's our in our families our children our grandchildren whatever our neighbours the people of Olten we want to see people saved because that is God's heart and God this morning wants to pour his heart of love into you with love for those out there who are lost you see it's humbling ourselves and it's praying and sometimes this scripture has been applied in 2 Chronicles that well them out there they've got to repent from their wicked ways and of course they have but it doesn't say that it starts sin here that you and I have to repent

from our wicked ways so you say well I don't think I'm very wicked yeah okay I do sin and of course there is that sin that I keep doing but God is gracious he keeps forgiving me and of course that's true he does

God forgives every sin however much we do it but God may want to deal with sins that we haven't been able to deal with in our lives sins that we carry because he's building his church and we don't want anything that hinders the work of his Holy Spirit I I just felt and I I shared this with Rob and with Christine because she's leading worship as you know I just felt that we should have a time of quiet and just sit you know sometimes we're afraid of silences we think oh we should be singing we should be praying we should be doing something but no what about that still small voice and let's I'll say a few things

I'll just lead us because I think God wants to interact with our lives God wants you to go out of here this morning a bit different to what you came in because not because the preaching or the worship but because of God's presence a holy God's presence and the power of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit just just ask God to come close to you to say Lord in this silence speak to me you may have spoken to me already Lord continue to speak to me I want to hear I want to listen do

You know, if I could just say a few things.

Sin is not just doing wrong things. If you read people like Nehemiah, Daniel, Ezra, they had a very low tolerance of sin.

[33 : 00] They prayed for the people and their sins. And there's a note to my Bible that says that sin is the failure to be what God wants us to be.

And I thought about that for a long time. And I thought, actually, I'm not sure if I like that because I haven't always been what God wanted me to be. But I think that's true.

And, you know, I have this sense that we think sometimes that sin doesn't really matter very much. God's gracious. We live in a day of grace. He's so gracious. He'll overlook my sin.

But, you know, if there's things that you haven't done that you should have done, we have to repent. I've had to do that. And if I know I'm not living as God wants me to live, I have to repent and say, Father, I'm sorry.

Help me to live. Because, you see, the only way to change a lifestyle or to change a habit or to get free of a habit is to confess it. And when you confess it and say, forgive me, Father, and help me not to do it anymore, you might want to use more words than that.

[34 : 24] But you don't have to. That's quite powerful because many of you know that God does help you to overcome that sin. Sin spoils.

Sin destroys. Sin destroys. Jesus talked about the foxes, the little foxes damaging the vines. It's the things that can get in. We can get irritated with people. Sometimes we avoid people. We're critical of people.

You think, well, it's not everybody does. It's not very bad. But, yes, it's the foxes spoiling little foxes, spoiling the vines. And I do just feel there is one thing that God does want to address, particularly this morning, and that is worry and anxiety.

Now, I hope nobody's getting condemned because God doesn't condemn. And the way to get uncondemned is to repent and come to the cross and thank Jesus for dying and taking your sin.

[35 : 41] But Jesus said, you can't add one day to your life by worrying. And, okay, I've been a worrier. I still worry sometimes.

And, you know, the only way I've got free of that worry, and I'll probably always worry at times, but the only way I get free of that is by saying, Lord Jesus, I'm sorry for my worry.

I'm sorry for my fear. And this can be your prayer this morning. Lord Jesus, you're the one who can set me free from worry and fear. I thank you that you can do that.

I believe that you can. Thank you, Lord Jesus. But forgive me. Forgive me. I just feel if anybody's got anything they just want to share at this time, just come and talk to Rob and Helen, because the Holy Spirit may be saying something to you that the church needs to hear.

It's not just me up here. It's a body. And the Holy Spirit might be wanting to speak through you.

Come and share it and see if you can share it with the church.

[36 : 58] Let's just be quiet. Let's have just another period of silence and ask God to speak to us. Lord Jesus, we thank you for your faithfulness and your love to us.

Lord, we pray that you will work in our hearts. Lord, maybe we have confusions. We have struggles. Lord, let us wait on you.

Lord, let us be this morning, be ready to open ourselves up for prayer. Lord, we do ask you. Lord, let us not leave this building with unresolved issues in our lives.

Lord, we do pray. Lord, come and set us free by your Holy Spirit. This is Pentecost Sunday. We're celebrating when the Holy Spirit came. Lord, come and fill us with your Spirit.

We reach out to you this morning. Lord Jesus. Lord, yeah, bless us, we pray. Be glorified in this church, in this town. Lord, let us do what you want us to do.

[38 : 43] We do pray. Lord, I pray if there's anybody here that doesn't know you, that Lord, they will, that it's not a believer, they will come and put their trust in you this morning.

Lord Jesus. Thank you. We love you. Lord Jesus. Just continue with us as we worship, Lord, and speak to us through the worship.

Lord, raise up prophets, people who will bring words and bring your word to us. Lord, raise them up even here this morning. We pray, Lord, for your glory in your name. Amen.

Amen. Amen.