

- Thanks Dawn and worship team for leading us in worship today.
- For those that don't know me, here today and online, I'm Dave James and I am one of the elders here at SVBC. It is my humble privilege to share with you from God's word this morning. Before I do, please join me in a word of prayer.
- Heavenly Father, thank you for this time of remembrance and worship and I pray that as we open your word this morning, you would work in all of us to teach and strengthen and change us so that we more boldly profess Jesus Christ as Lord in the days ahead. Amen
- This morning we are going to look at the boldness of the early disciples and the work of the Apostles and the Holy Spirit in the early church.
- As we do, consider the ordinance that we just celebrated at this table - remembrance of Jesus and looking forward to his return.
- The table at which this ordinance was introduced was a key part of the story of the early church - the final instructions of Jesus to his disciples before he died,
- ...his prophetic statement to Peter
 - "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times." John 13:38
- ... his example of service in the washing of their feet,
- ... his betrayal by Judas, and ● ...his High Priestly prayer.

- Notwithstanding all they had heard and learned, that night his disciples would abandon him as he was arrested and seven weeks later 120 people - about this group of people in these pews - would receive the Holy Spirit and in his power profess Christ in Jerusalem, and extending through other disciples also to Judea and Samaria, and through all the nations under heaven.
- We are gathered here today because a small group of people believed in Jesus Christ, abided in him, and shared the gospel of Jesus Christ boldly and courageously in his power
- What is your story? Why are you here this morning?
- For me it was, a family of believers in Jesus Christ who shared their lives with me in a humble and authentic way, who took me to a small church where I heard testimonies of how Christ changed people's lives.
- It was the prayers of my father and his church in Nova Scotia for a wayward son.
- It was because Valerie Campbell tapped me on the shoulder and said “come sit with James and I” when I walked through the doors of Bay Park Baptist church 30 years ago this December.
- That is just some of my story, and in a few minutes we will hear some of Marisol Watt’s story.
- But before we do, I want to take us back to those seven weeks from the last supper to pentecost, and the weeks that followed as the church of Christ began - because their story is our story.
- As we walk through the life of the early church, I want you to pay careful attention to three critical things that are still applicable to us today:
 - First, the Apostles teaching was focused on sharing the good news or the gospel of Jesus Christ and all he had taught them

- Second, Jesus' disciples are empowered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
- Third, the early disciples - not just the Apostles - showed courageous faith in the face of significant opposition
- Following the last supper in the upper room, Christ went to the Garden of Gethsemane and spent time in deep prayer with his heavenly Father, he was arrested, falsely accused, beaten, and crucified. He was placed in a tomb and the Jewish world thought the story was over.
- The disciples despaired. Peter had denied him three times and he wasn't even at the cross when Christ died - only John, Jesus' mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, and some of the other women were present.
- His disciples were scattered and they despaired.
- Then on the third day, Mary went to the tomb and found the stone rolled away. The world turned upside down that day.
- Christ had risen. He is risen, and we serve a living Saviour.
- The Angels testified to the resurrection, and Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene on the day of the resurrection. He also appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that same evening.
- Over the next 40 days Luke and John record several more instances where Jesus appears physically to the disciples following his resurrection as we see in Luke 16:

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your

hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish,⁴³ and he took it and ate before them. **Luke 16:36-43**

- We often pass over these forty days and go straight to Pentecost and the Holy Spirit’s arrival. But, as I examined the scriptures and researched about these forty days, there are a few things that stood out for me above and beyond the essential truth of Christ’s physical resurrection.

- First, remember that at the last supper Jesus told the disciples he had more to teach them:

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” John 16:12

○ ...and

““I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.” John 16:25

- The scripture is clear that during these forty days, including the specific examples above, he did just that, look at the first verses of Acts:

¹ In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

- Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God, just as he said he would.
- Second, he spoke plainly about it and opened their minds to understand the scriptures, something they had been remarkably slow to do during his three years with them. Take a look at Luke 24:

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for [b] the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **Luke 24:44-47**

- Third, at the Last Supper he promised them the Spirit of truth or the Holy Spirit would come to them:

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. **John 16:13-14**

- Luke also records that prior to his ascension he instructed them to wait for the Holy Spirit:

⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. **Luke 24: 48-49**

- ...and

“... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” **Acts 1:8**

- At that time Jesus ascended and the disciples obeyed his command:

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³ And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴ All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.” **Acts 1:12-14**

- The fourth thing I observe is that the disciples were not sitting idle. They were devoting themselves to prayer.
- I believe that the disciples were studying the scriptures in detail and reviewing all that Christ had taught them at the same time. The disciples had their minds open to the scriptures as Luke described, and would have seen a richness in the word that had not been available to them previously.
- All of this, the opening of their minds, the prayer, the study of God’s word, the focus on worship all prepared them for the work Christ had ahead of them in building his church starting with the arrival of the Holy Spirit.
- And arrive it did, with a mighty wind, the Nooma, and fire as Pastor Paul described a couple weeks ago.

- Picture it, Jerusalem filled with people for Pentecost - one of the three

Jewish Feasts when all Jewish men were required to return to the temple. And the Holy Spirit arriving with wind and fire, and the disciples each speaking in foreign languages.

- My research suggests that as many or more people would have attended in Jerusalem at Pentecost as the Passover - scholars suggest anywhere from 100,000 to 250,000 people. The temple mount would have been the largest gathering area in the city and it would have been packed.
- And it wasn't passerbys, these were obedient devout Jewish men from every nation under heaven as Luke tells us in Acts 2:

- ⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language...

- ^{11b} we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others mocking said,

"They are filled with new wine." **Acts 2:5-6,11-13**

- It is important to not miss the difference in the people in this passage:
- The first group were those who were amazed and astonished as they heard the words of the disciples in their own native languages. The second group however, mocked them saying they were drunk. These people had no understanding and were not hearing the disciples tell of the mighty works of God - it was gibberish.

- This pronouncement that they were drunk prompted Peter to begin his first speech:
 - **14** But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. **15** For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.
- Peter calls them out, and says these men are not drunk, in effect he says it is ridiculous for you to think that - devout Jewish men attending the celebration of Pentecost, drunk at 9 in the morning.
- but let me first talk about the Apostles and their teachings.
- I want to look at the early disciples, and I want to come back to these different groups in particular, in a couple minutes, but we have only passing references to the early disciples so understanding what they saw and heard and the environment they lived in is important.
- Therefore we must look at the work of the apostles, what they did and what they taught to understand the boldness of early disciples.
- Here in Acts 2 and over the next several chapters we see the Apostles, and specifically Peter - the same Peter who denied the Lord, and was an uneducated common man as we read in Acts 4:13 - share the good news of Jesus Christ, boldly, powerfully and unashamedly to the multitudes in Jerusalem, to the priests, the Sadducees and to the Sanhedrin.
- He takes what he has received and shares it with the people and the Jewish leaders in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- What is important to note, is that he uses the scriptures and does this in a way that is clear and relatable to these devout men - but it isn't easy to hear. It challenges hundreds of years of belief that the Messiah would physically restore the Kingdom of David.
- Clearly that didn't happen, and as we see in the trial and crucifixion of Christ - the Jews turned away from Jesus and his teachings as they called for his crucifixion.
- But now over the coming days and weeks Peter and the apostles teach the people and call for them to repent and be baptised.
- Let's read in some detail the first speech on the day of Pentecost and then we will touch on some of the key statements in the other speeches:

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—²³ this Jesus,[c] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. **Acts 2:22-24**

- And...

“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of

God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” ³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “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 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” **Acts 2:29-39**

- In his second speech, after healing the beggar who had been lame for forty years on his way to evening prayers, which we read about in Acts Chapter 3, Peter continues to boldly confess Christ as the risen Saviour:

“Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant[b] Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

¹⁶ And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus[c] has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. ¹⁷ “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ

would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out. **Acts 3:12-19**

- In both of these passages Peter straight up calls them out for their part in the death of Jesus, and he calls them to repentance.
- But his focus is entirely on Christ and he fearlessly shares this, using references to prophecies about Christ from the scriptures, to devout Jews in the midst of what was without a doubt at least a partially hostile crowd.
- We can confidently say this based on the conduct of the people at the Passover only a few weeks before, the conduct of the chief priests and Sadducees, and also from later passages in Acts including the false accusers and stoning of Stephen in Acts chapter 7, and the ravaging of the church that began in Acts Chapter 8.
- In fact, he makes the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees very annoyed and they arrest Peter and John.
- The next day we see their first testimony before the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 4:

And when they had set them in their midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,

¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for

there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 4:7-12

- Before I continue, let me say that one more time:

¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

- I cannot pass this point without saying, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ - this must be a great encouragement to you. He is your Saviour and Lord, just as we are hearing Peter profess.
- He is risen and these men witnessed it and were so confident in this that they stood before the very men who condemned him to death mere weeks before.
- If you are here today and don't know Jesus, don't miss that Jesus is the name by which you must be saved. He lived, died and was raised from the dead and offers all who call on his name the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.
- We are all of us sinners and called to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of our sins by our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ.
- I pray that you will see in this message the person and power of Jesus Christ the Saviour.
- Let's continue...
- You can see the full account of this interaction in Acts Chapter 4, but in the end, the Sanhedrin threatened them and then let them go, having charged them not to teach in the name of Jesus.
- This would be similar to the Supreme Court of Canada admonishing us and charging us not to talk about Jesus Christ today.

- Needless to say they ignored this. In fact, after their release, we read a little further on in Acts 4, that they met together with their friends and reported what the chief priests and elders had said to them, and they praised God and prayed for boldness:

²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. **Acts 4:29-31**

- God continued to empower them and change lives in Jerusalem. As they continued, they found themselves back in front of the Sanhedrin some days or weeks later with all of the Apostles who had once again been arrested for teaching the people.
- They once again professed Christ as the Messiah before the Sanhedrin and this enraged them, and if not for a Pharisee named Gamaliel, they would have killed the apostles. Instead, based on his advice, they determined to punish them and let them go.

So they took his advice, ⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. **Acts 5:39b-42**

- Don't miss the significance of what has happened over these few short weeks.

- The apostles, who a few weeks early had scattered and were in despair, had encountered the risen Christ.
- They learned from him, had their minds opened to the scriptures, and received the Holy Spirit who would remind them of all things and show them the truths that the Father wanted them and us to know.
- And importantly, they had unceasingly preached the good news of Jesus Christ and a call for repentance with a boldness that was only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- This gives us insight into the core message of the apostles teaching - Christ Jesus is Lord and they know this because they witnessed it first hand and were testifying to it boldly.
- It is important to understand the boldness of the apostles, the example they provide, and the teachings they shared with the early disciples.
- Even more so as I will admit it is difficult to put myself in the sandals of the Apostles - these men who had physically been with Jesus, had seen him ascend in the clouds, had spoken to Angels, performed wonders and miracles in the power of Christ.
- How can I be like them, how can I stand in front of others and share my faith and my testimony - my story boldly. It is easy to dismiss being bold since we say - Well, of course, they were with Jesus.
- So let's consider the early disciples, who they were and how they responded.
- We see in the word, that they were changed by the apostles teaching about Christ and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, and they gathered together in fellowship as Pastor Justin talked about last week.

- I believe that they were also bold and courageous and are an example for us to follow.
- Lets go back to Pentecost - 3000 were added to their number - 3000 people out of a crowd of tens of thousands, many who were hostile to Christ, heard and understood the message that Peter preached about Christ and they repented and were baptised. I also believe they received the Holy Spirit as we do today when we profess Christ as Lord.
- Notwithstanding others had mocked the disciples, and seven weeks earlier Christ had been denied by most in Jerusalem as they called for his crucifixion, these 3000 devout Jews who would have been in the minority, accepted Peter's teaching and professed Christ as Lord.

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe[d] came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42-47

- Then they gathered together daily and learned about Christ - all that the apostles had seen and heard, they were sharing - these were the apostles teaching.
- This is what we have access to today in the bible, both the scriptures of the Old testament that they would have had in written form, and the New testament which these early disciples would have been hearing straight from the Apostles before it was written down.

- And the teachings and the wonders and signs drew many to Christ - we see 5000 more disciples added on the day that Peter and John were arrested after healing the beggar, and the word tells us that more were being added to their number daily.

- This was a bold faith - it had to be. These devout Jews from all the nations under heaven turned to Jesus and as we read in Acts

Chapter 2, stayed in Jerusalem and devoted themselves to the apostles teaching.

- I am inclined to believe one of the reasons we see the disciples selling their possession and sharing as any had need, was there were thousands of new disciples who stayed in Jerusalem after Pentecost to learn about Jesus and they needed to be housed and fed, and clothed.
- This enabled them to learn and mature under the Apostles teachings, something they could only get in Jerusalem.
- Not unlike when the disciples who gave up being fishermen, and a tax collector, and a zealot and followed Jesus, I believe these early disciples put aside commitments to families, employers and communities and stayed to devote themselves to the apostles teaching as we are told in Acts 2.
- As the apostles kept preaching and the disciples kept multiplying, we see the frustration and anger of the chief priests and Sadducees grow - from arresting the disciples, to threatening them, to beating them, and then in the case of Stephen in Acts Chapter 7 - killing him in a rage, at which point they started to arrest and imprison these disciples.
- There was a growing tension building in Jerusalem and these new believers would have been in and around the middle of it - and they did not depart from their new faith.

- This was God's plan. These disciples had come to celebrate Pentecost, had met the Christ through the apostles teaching and God's call on their lives and they were changed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- They stayed and learned so they were equipped with the Gospel, and then we read in Acts chapter 8:

¹ And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. ³ But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. ⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. **Acts 8:1-4**

- The ravaging of the church started, and these disciples who had watched the Apostles be arrested and beaten, Stephen be falsely accused and stoned to death, and their friends and brothers and sisters in Christ arrested and dragged off, scattered to the nations from which they came.
- But they didn't hide, we see in Acts "Now those that were scattered went about preaching the word".
- These people were the foundation of the early church, encouraged and instructed by Paul and the apostles on how to live, but it started with the good news of Jesus Christ.
- I can relate a little better to these people. They accepted Christ as their saviour having repented and been baptised and went to their unique communities and shared the faith they had in Christ.

- They had been changed and they wanted to tell others their testimony, their story - what they had seen and heard and their faith in Jesus Christ.

- And Peter told them on the day of Pentecost:

For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Acts 2:39

- Peter proclaimed this to the people, and it seems to mirror what Jesus had prayed during the Last Supper:
 - ²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **John 17:20-21**
- We are part of this story - Peter tells us this is for those who are far off.
- More importantly, on the night before he was crucified, when he gave us this ordinance to remember him Jesus prayed personally for everyone of those early disciples who would believe in him, he prayed for all those who would believe in him between then and now and he prayed for everyone in this room and online who do or will profess Jesus as Lord.
- The life of Jesus, what he did, who he was, and what he told the Apostles through the Holy Spirit to teach his disciples is by Spirit’s inspiration and leading recorded for us in this book.
- Like the early disciples, we are all uniquely placed in our communities, families, and work places to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

- The disciples shared their testimonies - what they had seen and heard. That is what the apostles modeled, and it is what Christ calls us to do. Just as they were bold in the power of Christ we also can be bold in Christ's power.
- To make this a little more tangible, as I noted at the outset, I wanted to give you a chance to hear the testimony of a current believer in Jesus Christ.
- So as I close off the message, I would like to invite Marisol Watt to come up and share with us this morning.