



Sermon Growth Guide

January 30, 2022

Missing Pieces - Hear the Word



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Acts 3:17-26

Key Verse: Acts 3:25 “And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all people on earth will be blessed.’”

Big Idea: From the beginning, God told His people to gather for the purpose of hearing His Word. Something uniquely powerful happens when you come with other believers to hear the Word.

Foundations

Welcome to week four of *Missing Pieces*. In Christ, what is missing is found. What is lacking is filled up. The Missing Pieces of our lives become places of hope.

This week, we celebrate God’s Word. Pastor Tim summarizes Peter’s message in Acts, “I know you are celebrating God’s Word, you are giving thanks for God’s Word, but open God’s Word and you will see that the things that happened to Jesus are in there, foretold.”

If you join us for church on Sunday, the climax of the service is not the music or the preaching. We gather and we find the climax is the reading of God’s Word. And here is why: We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God. This Word is infallible; we see how it interprets itself; it is written through human voices but accompanied by the Holy Spirit. As we open our Bibles we see the face of Jesus, who is the suffering servant long foretold who came to take the sins of the world.

Open God’s Word and see how these promises are for you. These promises given to us are a blessing, a gift, and we are blessed to be a blessing.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Acts 3:17–26. This week we’re paying special attention to God’s Word. Notice how Peter references Scripture. Did you know that you are heirs of the prophets?

Applying God’s Word

How do you like to celebrate? Cake? A special meal? Balloons? God’s Word is a gift to us, and the act of celebrating unites body and soul. Celebrate the reading of God’s Word with someone this week.

We hear God’s Word, and we are grateful. What are some ways you practice gratitude for other things? How could you transfer that gratitude practice to God’s Word?

Witnessing God’s Word

We, the church, are witnesses of God’s grace in Christ through the Word. We celebrate God’s Word, we give thanks for God’s Word, we can see the work of Jesus foretold, and He is still at work. Where do you see God’s transforming work? Can you find in Scripture a promise that goes with where you see Him working? That work was first born in a promise, and we are the witnesses of it.

There are plenty of good reasons to have a festival. In college, some friends and I road tripped, last minute, from Chicago to Memphis to visit Graceland. When we got there, Beale Street was filled with people and live music. We had no idea, but we had just arrived at the Memphis in May Jazz Festival! Jazz is a good reason to have a party. Our first year in Colorado Springs, we were looking for some fun with the kids. I had never heard of the Emma Crawford Coffin Races in Manitou. I kind of wish I never did. I guess rolling a coffin down the street is a reason to have a party. There are lots of parades and festivals in the world. But have you ever been to a Bible Festival? In 2008, Abigail and I were leading a mission trip in Kenya when we saw a huge public gathering in a park in downtown Nyeri. Now, this was 10 years after the embassy bombing, seven years after 9-11, and only a few months after an episode of tribal election violence. One of the key rules for travel was to avoid all large public gatherings. I asked the driver what was happening. "This is the Bible Society of Kenya," he said. "They are celebrating. They have just published the Bible in the native tongue of Kikuyu." We pulled over! Most Kenyans speak some English. They had the Bible in English. The common language of East Africa is Swahili. They had the Bible in Swahili. I met a woman who had tears streaming down her face. She said, "Finally, I hold the Word of God in the language of my heart." The native tongue. Kikuyu. The Bible Festival carried on, loud and joyful and full of great food!

What does it mean to you to have the Word of God? Do you celebrate it? What does it mean to gather together with others and hear it and celebrate it? When we don't, when we only interact with it personally, individually, alone, it is a Missing Piece. We have the Word of God. United Way is a great organization. It is very effective.

United Way has the power to organize action. Care and Share is a killer food bank; huge! Care and Share has food. Springs Rescue Mission is the most effective agency to care for homeless in Colorado Springs. They have beds. What do we have, church? We have the Word of God. We have the Word. Springs Rescue Mission does too! They share the Gospel. That's why they're so good. But do you get my meaning? The church has the Word of God. The church is uniquely endowed by God to carry the message of the Gospel, to gather under the Word of God and bring it to bear on the world. Schools have education. City Hall has policies and government. Hospitals have medicines and treatments. What do we have? What do we have to offer the public square? We have the Word of God and we celebrate that together.

Peter continues his speech now in Acts 3, a sermon, if you don't know, that winds up landing him in jail. The charges will be that Peter and John were disturbing Pentecost, the Festival of Weeks. The reason the city is full is that this is one of the three pilgrimage festivals commanded in the Old Testament. Fifty days after Passover, you were to bring first fruits of harvest up to Jerusalem as an offering. But it was also a Bible Festival. It was traditional during Pentecost to give thanks for God's Word, the Torah, the Five Books of Moses. Peter says in effect, "I know you are celebrating God's Word, you are giving thanks for God's Word, but open God's Word and you will see that the things that happened to Jesus are in there, foretold." "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:17-19).

Having the Word of God is worth celebrating. The people of God knew they had received a unique gift in

God's Word. As Moses said when the Word was being revealed, "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?" (Deuteronomy 4:7–8). The people of God celebrated the Word as a gift from God, and they knew it was a particular blessing. Look at Psalm 147: "He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws. Praise the Lord" (Psalm 147:19–20). But it could also be a point of spiritual pride and superiority over others. Peter says, I wish instead of spiritual pride you had humbly searched the Scriptures to understand what has just happened with Jesus.

What does Peter wish they had seen and understood? If they had their Bible open, they would have seen that Jesus was the Suffering Servant foretold in the prophet Isaiah. From last week: "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed" (Acts 3:13). This was promised in the prophets about the Messiah. God's Messiah would be denied, betrayed, and handed over to be killed. This is Jesus. Just look at how Peter refers to Jesus in this sermon. "You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this" (Acts 3:14–15). Jesus is the Holy One. Jesus is the Righteous One. Jesus is the Author of Life. The name of Jesus, it says in verse 16, has its own power to heal and restore—as seen in this lame man who now walks. "By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has

completely healed him, as you can all see" (Acts 3:16). With an open Bible, they would have seen it.

But the people were ignorant. "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer" (Acts 3:17–18). I wish you had your Bibles open to understand. Who is Jesus? "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets" (Acts 3:19–21). Who is Jesus? Jesus is a Savior sent from God who causes the people to repent, to turn around and return to God. Jesus is a Savior sent from God who wipes away sins. Jesus is a Savior sent from God who can remove sin and bring "times of refreshing" from the Lord. Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the One who is appointed and anointed by God to accomplish salvation for you. But not only that, Jesus, received in heaven just now, Jesus is the Savior from God who will "restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." Oh, I wish you had your Bibles open to understand what you have just seen. What would they have seen? Jesus. They would have seen Jesus. Peter says you still may. You still can if you will put yourself humbly under the Word of God. Hear the Word.

Remember how we began this series? We noted how the early church was devoted to four things. "They devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**" (Acts 2:42). Be devoted to the apostles' teaching, the Holy Scriptures. What do we believe about

this Bible? Let me offer five things. **(1) It is inspired by God.** “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16) It is unique. It stands alone. It is not accompanied on the shelf by other books of the same genre or family of literature. The difference between this Word and religious or inspirational writings is clear and stark. It is different from Quran or Haddith or Talmud. It stands apart from the Epic of Gilgamesh or the Code of Hammurabi or anything else. There are writings that ape the Holy Scriptures, pretend to be the same, but they are not. The difference is as stark as the difference between humanity’s search for God and God’s self-revealing accommodation to humanity. There are writings that demonstrate our search, and there is this—God’s saving help. God’s revelation. God’s Word. The direction is different. This is not us to God; this is God to us.

(2) It is infallible. It is, as the Westminster Confession says, “the word of God written...given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life.” We believe that. Infallible. It will not fail to guide us in faith and in life as we understand it fully and apply it humbly. First Pres is a Bible church. We know the scriptural basis for everything we do. **(3) It interprets itself.** Scripture interprets Scripture. When we are trying to understand a hard part or a confusing part, we use the clear parts to cut the fog and gain understanding. No, you can’t make the Bible say whatever you want. Careful and consistent study reveals the full counsel of Scripture.

(4) It is written through human voices. Sixty-six books written over 1,400 years by 40 authors comprise the Scriptures. God allows those voices and personalities to show through. We benefit from study of context, history and theology as we mine the Scriptures for understanding. We do the work of study to fully and

deeply receive the Word. We mine the Scriptures.

(5) It is accompanied by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit accompanies the Word. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Word guarded its transmission down through history in the church and now accompanies the Word as it is received in your heart and mind. What does that mean? That means these books, this Bible, it can read like a dead letter on the page. But, if you ask the Lord, if you pray and open your heart to the Lord, the Holy Spirit can read this book to your heart. The Holy Spirit can accompany this Word into your heart and mind, and you can hear the living voice of God through it. “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

Keep your Bibles open. Keep the Word close. Some of you may have brought your Bible today. I mentioned in *The Weekly*, the Tuesday email, to bring your old worn-out Bible if you wanted. At home, grab that old worn-out Bible. Here’s mine. This goes back to before I came to Christ in 1986. My mom gave me this one. It’s been around. Why does it matter to me? Why does it matter to have God’s Word in my life? What a Missing Piece! Where would I be without it? A guide. A rule. A help. A comfort. A light to my path. But most of all, it shows me Jesus. “For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you’” (Acts 3:22). That’s Jesus. You can see Jesus. You can hear Jesus. Listen to Him. Hear the Word of God.