

Scripture as Real Presence - Sacramental Commissioning

by Michael Flowers

The sermon emphasizes the importance of scripture as a sacrament, the role of the Holy Spirit in mediating the presence of the risen Christ, and the significance of baptism as a sacrament that symbolizes our death to sin and our new life in Christ.

Duration: 26:19

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:47-49, John 6:63, Acts 2:37-38

Topics: "Sacramental"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes four key points. First, the mission of proclaiming repentance and forgiveness to all nations is highlighted, emphasizing the message of turning from death and destruction towards life and receiving forgiveness. Second, the importance of apostolic authority is discussed, with the speaker emphasizing the role of witnesses in proclaiming the message. Third, the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual renewal of all things is mentioned, particularly in relation to the day of Pentecost. Finally, the significance of baptism is emphasized, with the speaker explaining that it is not just a demonstration of faith, but a completion of faith, leading to forgiveness of sins and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The sermon also references the story of Jesus appearing to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and how their eyes were opened when he broke bread with them.

Transcript

Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart and all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. Oh, Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Let's be seated. I want you guys to know that we have some hardy people in this church, very hardy. I was being Marco Polo yesterday when your priest and his wife went out from going to the Royals game, so it's a little too chilly for us, but I was getting all of this, you know, this electronic media stuff coming at me, letting us know how wimpy we really are.

There must have been 20 plus people there. I don't know. But I tell you, the Royals needed you.

They needed my wife. She's the real fan, right? She she wore a Royals T-shirt all day yesterday. I have, you know, around the house.

Yes, go Royals. They need help. We all do, don't we? Yeah, we all need help.

We are into the third week and we're at the third Sunday of Eastertide. We crazy people celebrate the resurrection about 50 days a year. Of course, every Sunday is a little Easter, right? We're Eastertide people, actually, but we set aside 50 days to contemplate the resurrection as if any of us understand it or really get it.

You know what I'm saying? The resurrection from the dead, the one new human being, Jesus Christ, new creation. But we can rejoice in what the scriptures tell us, and that is what we base our faith on, not just experience, not just knowledge, but the holy scriptures. Jesus himself did the same thing, as we're going to see in these readings today.

Jesus, who said, my words are spirit and life and who breathed into the disciples. The breath of God also has breathed upon the holy scriptures. The holy scriptures are God breathed.

That's what inspiration means in the Greek text. The holy the scriptures are inspired. That means God breathed, God breathed upon frail human beings like those, you know, we'll just skip the Old Testament, but just just those guys in the upper room had been with Jesus for three and a half years, were afraid, were unbelieving.

And those are the kind of people that Jesus called those afraid, afraid, unbelieving, fearful people were the ones who became the foundation stones. And they're the reason that we're here today, building upon that faith. You know, God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, love and a sound mind.

And they came to know that they came to be converted and transformed into that and passed on that that holy scripture to us to this day. I'm just a little taken back with just the word scripture today. It for me, it's resounding this week is a beautiful word.

And I truly do believe that the scriptures are sacramental in that, Jesus said, my words are spirit and life and that they're God breathed. And so there are more than just words on a page, but it takes the promise of the father in verse forty nine that we read today, which was left out in your bullet. And I'm sorry, the actual lectionary stops at verse forty eight.

And I said, that's a bad place to stop. You know, you at least got to finish the thought. Verse forty nine, verse forty nine is added to complete the thought of how the resurrected Christ is actually going to continue his ministry through his church, through that promise of the father, the Holy Spirit.

All right. In pondering both the news this weekend, as well as Micah four, I definitely want to commend this passage to you as a means of intercession. For our country, especially for the nation of Syria, I am leaning into the promises of the new kingdom and the new risen community.

Eschatologically, in the last days, it says that mountain, the kingdom of God is what that's talking about. The house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the kingdoms, highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills and the people shall flow to it. And many nations shall come and say, come, let us go to the house of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways, that we may walk in his paths for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord.

Here it is again. The word of the Lord. What causes our hearts to burn is the word of the Lord.

He shall judge between many peoples, God's new society, justice, and he shall decide disputes for strong nations far away. Oh, God, we need that now. And they shall beat this violent, warlike image, they shall beat their swords, write a weapon of death, they shall beat their swords into plowshares, tools which cultivate life.

This is what we need to be praying into our nation now. Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, weapons of death into tools used to cultivate life. Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, that's what God wants, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Hallelujah. Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Psalm 98, sing to the Lord a new song for he has done marvelous things with his right hand and his holy arm.

Get this. This is resurrection, man. He has won for himself the victory.

He's trampled down the powers of death and sin, and he is seated on the throne of the universe, the throne of grace, and he has won for himself the victory. Therefore, the scriptures out of Micah 4 are sure to come about. We just need to keep praying the Lord's prayer.

Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen. The Lord has made known his victory in his son, in his risen son.

His righteousness has he openly shown in the sight of the nation and he's sharing that righteousness with his people. He's sharing that righteousness with his church and he's bringing us into right order through his risen presence as we submit our lives to the sacrament of the scriptures, as we allow the scriptures to come alive to us, as we give our hearts to the reading of the slow. Contemplative reading of the scriptures, they will make you come alive, my words are spirit and life, go to the Bible with that promise, my words are spirit and life, go to the Bible saying, Holy Spirit, come, I need you now to unlock my mind and cause my heart to burn because I want to live in newness of life.

And God mediates that life through his inspired God breathed spirit and life words. Amen. I'm just taken up with that this morning.

I just had to dump it on you. Amen. Let's jump into Luke 24.

We're going to jump into the last section, but I want to back up and just sort of summarize. On the road to Emmaus, there was an encounter with these two just disillusioned disciples. Jesus is showing up and he's walking and he's showing up in another form.

They don't know who he is. They don't recognize him. And then after listening to their sorrowful story about his defeat and his death, we thought he was going to be the redeemer of Israel.

Listening to this sob story, he opens the scriptures, says, and he says, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning him, concerning himself, verse 25 and 27. And then as they approached the village to which they were going, he was going another way because it was getting late and they urged him to come into the house and stay with them that night. Nice hospitality there.

You don't know who you're entertaining, right? Some entertain angels, some entertain Jesus, the risen Lord. And that's what's going on. And they urged Jesus to stay with them.

And so it says when he was at the table with them, he took bread. He gave thanks. He broke it.

And he began to give it to them. So I sound familiar when he did that, their eyes were opened and they recognized him in the breaking of the bread. And the minute they recognized him.

Blinked, he disappeared, he didn't walk through walls or anything, he just disappeared. Boy, that's a guy that will leave you hanging right there. They asked each other, we're not our hearts burning within us on the road when he opened the scriptures to us.

And I want that to be our prayer church is that we would be a church of burning hearts because we know that we just can't read the Bible like any other book. That the voice of God will speak through the holy scriptures if we submit ourselves to them, all the major guidance in my life has come through the voice of God speaking to me through the scriptures, not not a word apart from the scriptures. And God does give you words like that.

He does guide outside the scriptures. He won't contradict what the scriptures teach. So let's stir up our hearts to expectancy in the scriptures.

They got up immediately after he disappeared and said, well, let's go back into Jerusalem. And it was dark. And so they were walking back into town and they entered the upper room.

Most scholars believe this is the same upper room that they were in in Acts two and Acts one. And it was a place where they met. It was a place where Jesus inaugurated the Eucharist.

It's the same upper room it's thought to be. This great and glorious holy church began in a house, in an upper room. With encounters from the risen Lord, they entered the upper room where the eleven and others followed and gathered together and they began to share the moment, that moment of epiphany where they recognized him in the breaking of the bread.

OK, now they're up there. They're talking to the whole company of apostles and the women who saw the resurrection and they're still trying to figure that out. And it says in verse 36, while they were still talking about this, those two Emmaus disciples, Jesus himself stood among them.

And he said, hi, peace be with you. We talked about that last week, that this is not any kind of peace, it's the shalom of the kingdom. It's the peace that he wrought through his blood.

It has cosmic dimensions. He's announcing it right into their fearful hearts where the kingdom needs to come. God has not given you a spirit of fear.

Peace be with you. I know you're disillusioned and upset. The Lord is saying that peace be with you.

I know you're unbelieving and it's hard for you to handle what's happening in front of you right now. You've never seen this before. Peace be with you.

And in this, we see that there's a new presence, both visible at that moment and now invisible. The presence of the risen Christ is always with us. That was one of the promises that he made when he gave the Great Commission in in Matthew 28.

And behold, I'll be with you always, even until the end of the age, even after the ascension. Seated at the right hand of the Father, he will be with us even to the end of the age. How? Through the spirit of Jesus Christ, that he's sending the spirit to do that.

He's no longer limited to one location. Now, we all know this. It's just a beautiful thing to proclaim that God is everywhere present through the power and presence of his spirit, because Jesus rose and conquered death.

I used to picture this as Jesus walking through walls, but really he doesn't have to do that because there are no walls for Jesus. He dwells in all things. The risen Christ doesn't have to walk through walls.

The risen Christ hears every word we say. He sees everything that we do. And he's with us in every car ride that we take.

You can't get away from him. Hallelujah. Right.

It's not like I think I'm going to invite the Lord here. Well, go ahead. That's good.

But he's already there. When we say come Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit's already there. We're just trying to get in alignment with the presence that we've not acknowledged, that we're not we're not we're incapable of like being fully aware of this.

Right. It's a beautiful thing that God is omnipresent and this is this is it. This is it's what we're talking about, the presence of the risen Lord.

And his presence is the same, whether it's visible or invisible. You see, it's the same presence for us today. I'll be with you always, even until the end of the age.

I may not be showing up in your upper room and showing you my hands inside because we're not the witnesses of those things. The apostles are the witnesses of those things, and we carry on the apostolic testimony and we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. And so we don't have the same experience, but we have the same presence.

We have the same redemption. We have the same salvation. We have the same Christ.

It's just that he manifests to us differently than he did in that brief period right after his crucifixion. But they had to be witnesses of those things so that we can continue to proclaim the witness that they received. And so, in a sense, we're second hand witnesses, but in a sense, we're not because we are in the same communion of the saints.

They took the same body and blood. Then, as we do today, why? Because it's his presence that makes it that it's the same body in place, the same Eucharist, it's the very same presence. Now, as then, therefore, we have the same communion because communion is Eucharistic.

This is my body. Do this, not something else, do this. As worship, do that and you'll have the presence of the risen Christ, do that and you will become what you eat, Christlike, because it's eating the body of Christ that makes us the body of Christ, St. Augustine said.

And I so believe that. It wasn't for a while, you are what you eat. Paul said it a long time ago.

That was a ripoff from what we are, what we eat, and so this is Luke's version of the great commission that we're looking at today. And he's gathering these frail, weak, fearful disciples and he's showing them evidence that he's not a ghost, he eats some fish. This is a new kind of materiality.

It's not a it's not a vision and it's not a ghost. It's not a spirit. It's it's a new kind of materiality called resurrection.

And it should blow our minds. The commission that Luke is giving us, and it's for us today, he's commissioning us today. We're all we're always being commissioned every day I wake up, I have to live into that great commission, I have to live into my baptism, I have to live in to all of that.

And so it's a it's a continuing thing that we respond to. It's called obedience, the obedience of faith. And this is Luke's version of commissioning his church to continue mediating the earthly presence of Christ through his church, the body of Christ.

That's what the church is. It is the body of Christ. It's not a metaphor.

We are the body of Christ. And then what does he say, though Jesus is showing up in a new transformed materiality, he insists on referring back to the scriptures. Here it is.

I mean, here's this. It's almost like an alien from outer space or something, you know, it's he's standing in the room. They've never seen anything like this and they have no idea who and what they're looking at.

They they don't have the grid for it yet. And yet that person, that risen person, this risen Messiah, this redeemer who has risen from the dead is still quoting the scriptures. That's the importance.

He's not like, oh, I'm beyond that now. I'm beyond the Bible. I don't need that anymore.

He's the fulfillment of it and the author of it and the inspiration in it. This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written.

When Jesus was in the wilderness, the way he overcame the enemy, three quotes from Deuteronomy, it is written, it is written, it is written. You getting beaten up these days? Are you using the right weapons? Can't beat what Jesus did. It is written.

Everything must be fulfilled that was written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms, and then he opened their minds so that they can understand the scriptures because they had this blockage about Messiah especially and the death of Messiah. They could not accept it. Thus, it is written that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, the cross and the resurrection in our preaching and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things and see, I am sending upon you what my father promised. Stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high until you get the ocean of the Holy Spirit. Scripture as sacrament, it takes the resurrection to embody a visible sign to make it a visible sign of an inward grace, it takes the resurrection to do that.

Verse forty nine emphasizes the need for one more promise to be fulfilled. The coming of the spirit, the spirit will continue to mediate the presence of the risen Christ in opening our minds and causing our hearts to burn, to believe, to be refreshed, to be softened, to forgive, to be converted. It takes the Holy Spirit to do

all of that transformative work in us today.

If you hear my voice, harden not your hearts. The ears of the heart are tied together. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you sing psalms.

Let that living word of Christ dwell, live in you as you sing psalms, where you connect with the inspiration of the scriptures, you're singing what God, what he's offered. And then all of a sudden your heart comes alive when you begin to do that, when you begin to worship with the word. Jesus is teaching us how to view the scriptures, how to approach and handle the scriptures and how to base our lives in ministry on the scriptures.

In this commissioning, he begins with the importance of the scriptures. So if you walk away today, what did he say? The scriptures are important. That's it.

That's all you need to remember. Number two, the mission of proclaiming verse forty seven, this is the mission of proclaiming repentance and forgiveness to all nations. You see, that's our message.

Turn from death and destruction towards life and receive forgiveness. And then number three in verse forty eight, apostolic authority. We are witnesses of these things.

We continue to witness to their witness of these things. And then number four, verse forty nine, the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual renewal of all things, the sending of the Holy Spirit, verse forty nine, the promise of the father, which came down on the day of Pentecost and Acts two. They asked the question, what must I do to be saved? It's a beautiful question.

And the answer is, repent, repentance and forgiveness of sins. Here it is. Peter's he's trying it out.

He says, this is what Jesus said to do. I'm going to I'm going to say it. My first sermon, repent and be baptized, not just repent or not just believe, repent and be baptized because spirit and matter are not split apart.

Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Whoa, the power of baptism for the forgiveness of sins. That's what Peter says.

Repent and be baptized, all of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit in the ocean of baptism. You will receive forgiveness of sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sacrament because of that, you take that out of the equation of baptism, it's no longer a sacrament, it's just a memorial, a memory, a, you know, an act of obedience to like, you know, I'm going to demonstrate my faith now.

No, you're going to complete your faith when you're baptized. And so as we go and make disciples, baptizing them. Why did Jesus say that? Right.

Just go make disciples and just tell them to believe in me. No. He didn't say that, he said, make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the father and the son and the Holy Spirit, where you'll receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Spirit.

Folks, that's all we need. Forgiveness of sins and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, and when you know you're forgiven, you'll bring other people into that glorious state of forgiveness because you have cast off all condemnation. Out of your life, and that's what we're in the process of learning how to do right, is getting

the old tapes out of our heads and open up my mind to understand the scriptures and cause my heart to burn.

That is the goal. And let's go for the goal. If that's not happening in your life, let's do that together.

Our growth curves and our faith curves and our encouragement and discouragements are all over the map in this room this morning. I want us to keep reaching for the goal, the upper call of God in Christ Jesus. That's what Paul would say to us.

Keep doing that through the grace of God. And if you don't have that desire to say that desire, God will give us the desires of our hearts. Oh, Jesus, I just am struck again with the power of your scriptures.

We can be witnesses of these things in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy

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