

Title: Meant For Evil, Overruled For Good, Part 2  
Text: Acts 2.22-36  
Theme: The bad and good news of Jesus  
Series: Acts  
Prop Stmt: Jesus is whom he claimed to be.

Read Text:

Aleksandr Myasnikov was a Jewish pathologist who practiced medicine in Moscow in the 1950's. Stalin had just accused the Kremlin doctors (many of whom were Jewish) of an alleged conspiracy that supposedly had resulted in top Soviet officials of being killed. Stalin was going to oversee the trial of these doctors himself. In preparation for this very public trial, these doctors were being arrested and interrogated. Myasnikov was in the middle of his interrogation, when his accusers suddenly began asking him for medical advice. Stalin had suffered a stroke and now, no one knew what to do. The doctors that were summoned, were terrified. Witnesses said that their hands were trembling so much, that they could not adequately examine him. The very people who could possibly save his life he had either killed or he was threatening to kill and now, he was experiencing the consequences. Perhaps he should have thought about that.

We have a saying that reflects this. It is: Cutting off the branch you are sitting on. This is exactly what the Jewish people and leaders did to Christ. The only One who could save them, they condemned to die and were complicit in his death. Now, think about this. The rejection and execution of Jesus is the ultimate crime of the universe. There is nothing that is more offensive in its nature, nor more potentially disastrous in consequences than rejecting Christ. He is God, he is Creator, he is King and he is eternal.

But, that is not how his own people saw him and it certainly is not how many people see him now. And yet, that is what happened. But, this is what is fascinating to me, to us, and obviously to many of the Jews. When Jesus commissioned his disciples, he gave them orders to go back to Jerusalem and to wait to be empowered by the Spirit and then, they were to start in Jerusalem. Wait a minute! Wouldn't you be tempted to say, "Hey, I think that we're done here."? But, Jesus was not done with Jerusalem. In fact, Jesus was launching his church in Jerusalem. Jerusalem, in that sense is our home. And here in Acts 2, the Spirit comes upon these disciples who were gathered in the upper room. The supernatural events that accompanied the Spirit's baptizing them, drew a crowd and Peter took advantage of it to explain what was going on and why.

**I. Uh-oh. we're in trouble! (22-36)**

**A. Look at the miracles of Jesus.**

*"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..."*

Peter hits them right between the eyes doesn't he? He says to them; look you cannot argue with the reality of the miracles of Jesus. These are miracles! These are objective realities that demand some sort of an explanation. There are people in this city who used to be blind but who can now see. What do you do with that? There are people who used to be dead who are now alive. What do you do with that? There are people who used to be deaf and lame who can now hear and walk. What do you do with that? People do not reject Christ because of a lack of evidence. They reject Christ because they love their sin and they hate God.

Christianity is not rejected because of a lack of evidence, but by those who simply do not want to face reality. These mighty works, wonders and signs were done very publicly. YOU KNOW THIS! (and now these undisputed miracles of Pentecost) So, how are you going to interpret this?

### **B. Look at what happened to Jesus, (resurrection) (24)**

In this sermon, Peter also publicly declares the objective reality of the resurrection of Jesus. He states this clearly in v. 24 and 32 even declaring, "of that [the resurrection] we all are witnesses." One of the old liberal lies is that the resurrection of Jesus was a myth that evolved over time. It was a story that someone came up with that sounded good and so it was repeated over and over until it worked its way into folklore and became so much a part of the culture, that no one could tell whether or not it had actually happened. Sort of like George Washington and the cherry tree. The problem is, that Peter is saying this less than two months after the death of Christ. If there was no resurrection, and if there was proof of a grave, and a body, etc., this public statement would have been challenged. But, it wasn't. People knew. There was no other explanation that made any sense, Jesus had not only done supernatural miracles, he had risen again from the dead.

Do you see the contrast that Peter is setting before them? You put Jesus down. You rejected him. You nailed him to a cross. You sentenced him to death. God, on the other hand, raised him up from the dead. Look at this phrase in v.24. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. It was impossible for Jesus not to rise again. The power of death crumbles before the power of God. Like birth pangs that end when the baby is born, so the pangs of death ended because they could not hold Jesus back. God exalted him. Jesus did not become the Messiah because he rose again, he rose again because he was the Messiah. If you thought that Jesus ought to die and even were part of the people who rejected him, perhaps you might want to rethink this. Think about what Jesus endured. I think I got a very small taste of this the other day.

I was helping my grandson put his socks on. I got the first one on and he said, "it doesn't go like that." And I had the seam at the toe of the sock in a straight line running directly along his toes. And I said, "what do you mean?" He proceeded to jerk it so that it didn't fit his foot right and he said, "that's how it's supposed to go." And I said, "no it's not, it goes like this," and I moved it back to where it was supposed to be. He argued with me again and moved it back. And I thought, this is absurd, I'm arguing with a four-year old over how he is supposed to wear his socks! And I'm thinking, are you crazy? You are 4 years old!! I am 58 years old!! I've spent ten years in

graduate school and can tell you the word for sock in both Greek and Hebrew and you haven't even been to Kindergarten and you honestly think that you know more about socks than me? Besides that, you don't even like to wear socks. Don't tell me how a sock is supposed to go.

But, Jesus was patient. He knows trillions times more than these people and they wanted to argue with him, like they knew more. But they were wrong. And they were being confronted with the reality of just how wrong they were. What are you supposed to do with this? That is very difficult to come to terms with, isn't it? You are guilty of executing the Messiah. Wow, talk about cutting off the branch you are sitting on, right? But, this is what is so difficult. Jesus is not the Savior that these people had come to believe in or come to expect. They had a health and wealth view of the Messiah instead of looking through the lens of Scripture. There was no doubt about the reality of Christ's existence, his miracles, his death and resurrection. What was unclear for many of them was what it all meant. This is why God gives us his Word. His Word helps us think rightly about our world and our lives, including the life of Christ.

### **C. Look at what the Word says.**

In this sermon, Peter quotes 3 Old Testament passages in order to show his audience the meaning of what they were witnessing. First, he quotes from the prophet Joel (2.17-21) to show that the outpouring of the Spirit on these believers as evidenced by the gift of languages and tongues of fire was authentication from God. Now he quotes from Psalm 16 in order to prove how the resurrection of Christ was the ultimate proof that Jesus was the Messiah. Basically, Peter is saying, here is what happened, here is why it happened and here is the proof. And the proof that Peter appeals to is God's Word.

Now, let's step out of the story for just a second. When I read the gospels, I am tempted at times to think of Peter as being a bit, well, rough around the edges, running his mouth before he has fully engaged his brain, someone who is not what most would consider leadership material. But Jesus obviously saw something else and this sermon is proof of that. Peter was a fisherman from Galilee. He was not from Jerusalem. His wedding did not have any A-list attendees. He was a fisherman because his dad was a fisherman. His brother was a fisherman. In those days, people stayed in their lane. Please understand what that means. He was not from the city. He was not educated. He was not in the club. He was the laborer, not management. His dress was not sophisticated and his manners betrayed his culture. So, we, and certainly the Pharisees (as we will see in chapter 4) are not prepared for what we hear come out of his mouth. His use of the Old Testament in order to form his argument is brilliant! This fisherman knows God's Word. This unschooled, unaccepted, unsophisticated, unassuming, unremarkable, plain man is an awesome weapon in the hands of God because he knows God's Word, believes God's Word and he uses God's Word. Here, he uses Psalm 16 as proof of his argument.

In this Psalm David is reflecting on, rejoicing in and enjoying what it means to choose to live under the authority of God. When I read this Psalm, I get the sense that David is laying on his back out in a field underneath a brilliantly blue sky with mountains peaks off in the distance and he exhales and opens his arms and hands in order to receive this moment from God as a gift that reminds him of all of the goodness of God. This is how life is intended and designed to be lived. You will either choose to live happily under the authority of God or you will live miserably

under the authority of God. But you will live under the authority of God and since you will live under the authority of God, you might as well choose to do it and do it happily.

Well, the benefits of living under the authority of God are bountiful. It's not that at this moment I am enjoying something that I hope will never be taken away. No, it's more than that. My hope in God means that death itself carries no terror for me. Oh, I will die (10), but death will not win. Death has no power to break the relationship that I enjoy with God. This is a great psalm and the love that David has for God and the love that God has for David is all captured in it. What Peter does is he demonstrates how David, in writing about his own life and experience was also pointing the life of the One to come, namely Jesus. In fact, this Psalm is in reality a prophecy about Christ. Wow! Hold the phone right there because I want you to try to grasp how difficult this is for Peter's audience. These were Jews who were in Jerusalem. When they read and sang Psalm 16, they naturally assumed that they were the good guys. They were the saints in the land. Now, what they are hearing is that this Psalm is about Jesus, whom they hated and crucified. That means that they are not what they thought they were. What do you do when you have built your life and identity on one thing, only to find out that it is not right, or it is not real, or it does not work? I thought I was on God's side, but now I am realizing that I am an enemy of God? That is crushing! Uh-oh! We're in trouble!!

Look at v.29. Peter gives a two-fold argument. (Note the use of "brothers" - fellow Jews). We are in Jerusalem. This is the city of kings. This is the city where David established his throne, built his palace and ruled the Ancient Near East from. This is the city where he is buried. We know where his tomb is and if we were to open it, we would find his remains. So, the first aspect of Peter's argument is this: when David wrote about the body not seeing corruption, it could not have referred to his own body, because that is clearly not the case. The second part of his argument is based on the fact that God had sworn an oath to David that one of his descendants would reign forever. Well, how on earth was that going to happen? That could only happen if one of David's descendants was resurrected. So, Peter takes both of those arguments and shows how they come together in Christ which proves that he was the Messiah. David's body was still in the grave, therefore Psalm 16 had to be referring to someone else and the only way for a descendant to reign forever, was through resurrection, therefore, Jesus is the Messiah.

This argument is not just good logic, but it is so helpful for Peter's audience. They had a different idea of what the Messiah would be like and Peter is taking back them to the Scriptures to show them that the Jesus is the Messiah and all along their own Scriptures spoke of the Messiah's death and resurrection. Instead of this being a stumbling block, it ought to be proof to them of the true identity of Christ. But, Peter is not done. He goes on to demonstrate the relationship between the resurrection of Christ to what is happening on this day.

Christ was resurrected (we all witnessed this) and then was exalted. He is now at the right hand of God and having received from the Father, the promise of the Holy Spirit (because he completed his mission on earth), he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. There is that little phrase again, "you yourselves." Here is the proof! It is right in front of you. So, after appealing to the Scriptures to prove the death and resurrection of the Messiah was prophesied, he now proves that the Scriptures also prophesied the exaltation of the Messiah.

Peter sticks with David and points out that David wrote, in Psalm 110, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." David was not writing about himself. He was writing about "my Lord" who was the Messiah that was promised to him. (v.30). Again, the argumentation of Peter is brilliant. He is not only proving that Jesus is the Messiah, but he is showing that right now, Jesus is enthroned next to Yahweh, while Yahweh makes the enemies of the Lord his footstool. The first Lord is obviously Yahweh. The Lord that Yahweh is speaking to has to be the Messiah. So, having proved that Jesus is the Messiah, Peter now proves that the exaltation of Christ to heaven, to be seated at the right hand of God was also something that David wrote about. Then Peter goes right for the heart of the matter.

#### **D. The Conclusion (36)**

Peter's conclusion is pointed and direct. This is fact! Jesus is Lord and Messiah. He was made this by God and you killed him. You killed your Messiah. This was hard for them to hear. But, they needed to be crushed by the weight of their sin so that they would realize that they had no hope of saving themselves. And friend, that is exactly where each of us has to come to, in order to come to faith in Christ. We have to embrace the reality of our need so we can hear and understand the reality of our Savior.

#### **2. Wow, this really is incredible! (22-36)**

Peter is pointing out their sin not in order to condemn them but in order to convert them! In view of Peter's terms (14, 22, 29, 36) it is clear that he is preaching with a spirit of compassion and not wrath. He is pleading with them. The most challenging part of the gospel is not telling people about Jesus, but telling people why they need a Savior. When you tell people that God loves them, they are often not all that surprised. After all, they love themselves so, of course God ought to love them. How is that good news? That really isn't very shocking is it? What is shocking is to realize that God ought to hate you. God ought to be furious with you. God ought to condemn you. But, instead, God has provided for your salvation! Instead of condemning you, he condemned his Son so that he would not have to condemn you. Instead of ignoring you, like you have ignored him or bugging off, when you told him to, he has pursued you, he has loved you, he has provided for you, he has relentlessly chased you down and has hemmed you in so that you cannot look anywhere else but to him, because he is determined for you to trust in him. And why would God do that? Wow! This really is incredible!

Why would Peter be preaching this to these people? Why would Peter bother to tell them this? The bad news is the good news. The man they executed died as the payment for their sin. What they meant for evil, God overruled for good. This is the heart of the gospel - Christ has a record of defeating his enemies by making them his friends. Therefore, this is the heart of the church. Our greatest enemy is sin, death and Satan and all have been condemned and sentenced by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. There is no enemy that can hold us. There is no fear that can control us. Being free in Christ, is being free. Therefore, Peter is able to stand and fearlessly preach this message in the same city that less than 2 months previously condemned Christ to die. He was not only free to preach the gospel, he knew that only the gospel would free and forgive those who had been the enemies of Christ.

A guy was on his way to a job interview and got into a little road rage with another guy on the freeway, only to walk into the interview a little while later and see that the guy who was doing the hiring was the guy he tried to run off the road. The job seeker said, "I probably ought to just

go ahead and leave, right?" And the other guy said, "yes." Can you imagine standing before the King, realizing that this is the man you rejected and demanded his execution? Yet, this king is offering forgiveness and pardon. What kind of a king is this? This is a king whose right it is not only to rule, but whose rule is right. There is no one else worthy. He is King of all Kings and Lord of all Lords. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess this.

Pray

Revelation 19.11-16