

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Minot, ND
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The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church & Conflicting World

Acts 2:14-42

Acts chapter two is best known for the first Apostolic Sermon – Peter’s sermon. But what specifically is a sermon?

Peter’s sermon has two parts. First, he informs the hearers about the inevitable fact of Jesus’ resurrection on the basis of Psalm 16. Secondly, Peter informs his hearers about David’s prophecy in Psalm 110. To the point, though. Peter’s sermon 1) was based on the scriptures, 2) brought conviction of sins, 3) created faith.

With this in mind, let us consider Peter’s sermon and a sermon in general. What constitutes a good sermon? The following criteria is from a Radio Talk Show called “Issues, Etc.” (<https://youtu.be/Tjatou5P4O8>)

- 1) How often is Jesus mentioned?
- 2) Is Jesus the subject of the verbs?
- 3) What are those verbs?

Let us further reflect upon sermons. What should your expectations of a sermon be?

For starters, when you listen to a sermon, you should not be interested in being entertained. Forget the movie quotes, leave out the predictable jokes, and do not anticipate hearing music lyrics! If you want entertainment, you can easily watch a movie on Netflix or listen to music on your iPhone without leaving you home. When you are in the pew, you need to hear something that you can’t hear from ‘Entertainment Tonight’ or from the most recent ‘Avengers Movie.’

When you listen to a sermon, you should not be interested in a list of ‘how-to’s.’ If you are interested in ‘how-to’s,’ there always seems to be a new book or a TV talk-show guest who offers a particular version of self-help exercises to improve your life for \$19.95.

As you sit in the pew, you need something that you can't hear from Oprah or Cosmopolitan Magazine.

Also, when you listen to a sermon, you should not be interested in hearing a bunch of spiritual stories about the preacher. Frankly, the life of that pastor is not your life and his life is not your life.

When you listen to a sermon, you are not interested in hearing mainly about Democrats or Republicans or the most recent social cause or scandal. If you are interested in these things, you can watch MSNBC or FoxNews. You are in the pew to hear more than talking points of the Associated Press.

And so, when you listen to a sermon, what should you expect? We should expect that sermons tell us about our sin – as uncomfortable as that makes us – and about the answer to our sin. Yes, we need to be hammered with God's Divine Law; our idols need to be exposed. We need to be shown where we have failed in thought, word, and deed. We are in the pew because we are broken and in need.

We then should expect to hear again and again about our baptism, the incarnation, justification, grace alone, and faith alone – the Gospel! We should expect to be prepared to receive the very body and blood of our Lord and the life that it gives. After all, we are in the pew; we need to hear more than stories from a pastor's life or what Lady Gaga, Entertainment Tonight, Cosmopolitan Magazine, or the news can say. We desperately need and should expect to clearly hear God's Word, the Word that delivers forgiveness, life, salvation, and hope into our hearts and minds. We need and should expect to hear Christ Jesus: crucified, dead, buried, and resurrected – for you and for me.

This is what our souls need to hear in a sermon, and it is what we should expect!

