

WEEKEND Edition 04/05 June 2022 "Repent!!" (Acts 2:37-40)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends on this first weekend of June,

Have you ever been in a crowd of people listening to someone speak when suddenly what they said pierced your soul like a sword? How did you respond?

Yesterday I left you standing in a crowd in Jerusalem about 2000 years ago, and Peter, the flamboyant disciple of Jesus, was finishing a spontaneous speech which had everyone holding their breath! He'd just made a statement which pierced the hearts and challenged the minds of his listeners. It's recorded for us in Acts 2 in the Bible, and we've spent the past three days trying to understand this unexpected, unplanned event, and learn what God wants us to see in it that pertains to our life experiences today, no matter where you live in the world.

Peter's concluding statement, which was the last thing we heard yesterday was, **"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ (Messiah)!"** (Acts 2:36) None of us Gentiles can really imagine what that sounded like in the ears of these thousands of Jews who had gathered for their festival of Pentecost, only 50 days after they'd been there in Jerusalem for their annual Passover Festival. In both Festivals, among other things, they were calling on God to soon send their long-awaited Messiah... *and here Peter is proclaiming that not only had God already sent their Messiah, in the person of Jesus, but the Jews had rejected Him, and Jesus was crucified during their Passover weekend!!* But then Peter claimed God had raised this Jesus from the dead! More than that, Peter had seen resurrected Jesus, spoken with Him, eaten with Him, and now Peter claimed Jesus Christ had ascended back to heaven, in full view of Peter and others of His followers!!

Peter paused, his eyes and arms wide open, look at him! He had made his case... what would the crowd do now? The tension was so thick you could feel it. The record says: **"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"** (Acts 2:37) In this moment if God had allowed all the people in that crowd to see with spiritual eyes, I believe they would have seen angels and demons, both God's holy kingdom and Satan's evil kingdom poised, ready to sweep in and take control of this precious moment. Satan and the demons would have wanted to turn the crowd violent and kill Peter, and all the other followers of Jesus, right there in the street, and end this Jesus movement before it even began. But the Holy angels of God watched as the Holy Spirit softened hearts and awakened spiritual hunger in the crowd. These people wanted to know the truth. *Could God forgive them, would He forgive them? And what might God do if they trusted what Peter had said to be true, and became followers of Jesus as Peter and these others were?*

Peter recognized the Holy Spirit was working in the hearts and minds of this crowd, so Peter leaped at the opportunity to invite them to action: **"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. This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call."** (Acts 2:38,39) The people understood the word 'repent', for John the Baptist had preached it with passion a few years before. **"Repent"** means I acknowledge to God that I am wrong, and HE is right! **"Repent"** means I turn away from my wrong thinking, my wrong words and evil attitudes and sinful actions and turn TO God's right and holy way. **"Repent"** means I am determined to STOP what I'm convicted in my heart and mind is WRONG before Holy God! You see friends, **"repent"** is not a passive word, not a lethargic or lazy word. **"Repent"** is a word of courageous, truthful action! **"Repent"** will bring change, immediate change, into my life!

When we 'repent' to God of our wickedness, then God RESPONDS, and His response is two important actions:

First, if God finds our repentance to be genuine, authentic, *then God applies the horrific crucifixion death sacrifice of Jesus to our wickedness*, our sin, the long list of all we have done that is anything less than perfect! Jesus' death payment pays the full atonement price. God can then pardon us of our wickedness! *More than that, God then declares us 'justified'!* It means we are forgiven and NONE of all that horrible stuff remains on our heavenly record! (Romans 5)

Second, God sends the Holy Spirit of God to begin doing a great work of cleaning us up and restoring us to God's original design for us! The Holy Spirit cleanses us from all our wickedness (1 John 1:9). The Holy Spirit births (John 3:3-7) in us a new, holy, spiritual nature so we can live in relationship with God no longer in bondage to sin! (Romans 6) The Holy Spirit then begins to live in us guiding us in living God honoring lives! (John 14:26,27)

Did you notice Peter said: **"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins."** *It means EVERYONE is eligible!* Everyone can understand their sinfulness and repent! Everyone can experience God's response of forgiveness. **The ONLY person who is ineligible for God's forgiveness is the person who REFUSES to repent, REFUSES to trust Jesus to be their Savior!** That refusal disqualifies them from being forgiven of their sin and will leave them wallowing in their eternal condemnation by God for their sins! (John 3:36)

But what about this other action Peter urged them to take... **"Be Baptized"!?** The people listening to Peter that day understood, for John the Baptist had been quite famous for preaching repentance and baptizing people in the Jordan river. The difference was no one was FORGIVEN by God when John preached, because Jesus had not yet been crucified, He had not yet paid the full sin death price when John was preaching.

But now, as Peter preached, Jesus had died and rose again, so God was ready to forgive! In John's baptism, people simply acknowledged their sin and proclaimed their desire that the Messiah would come soon to help them. *But the baptism Peter proclaimed was a public act of water immersion declaring their full trust in Jesus for salvation and sin forgiveness, but also their full allegiance to Jesus as their Lord, their master!*

And then do you see Peter's finishing promise? **"And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call."** Peter was repeating a powerful statement Jesus had made: **"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them..."** (John 6:44) Peter was explaining to this crowd that God the Father was working right then to open their minds to understand the truth Peter had spoken and stirring in their hearts to draw them from their reluctance to see Jesus as Messiah, to fully trusting in Jesus as their Savior Messiah! Peter was making it clear it was for those listening to him, and everyone else, young and old, who would hear and trust this good news to be God's truth! Finally, do you see Peter promising those who repented and were forgiven of their sins by God; those who were baptized, would receive from God the promised Holy Spirit!?

Peter paused, the people scratched their heads, turned and talked with one another. This was really powerful, deeply challenging stuff they had heard! It stretched their minds and reached deeply into their hearts. These people loved God and wanted to honor God with their lives. How should they respond to Peter's powerful, radical message?

The record says: **"With many other words Peter warned them, and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation!'"** (Acts 2:40) No one was throwing rocks, no one was shouting at Peter to be quiet, everyone was listening intently, so evidently Peter kept preaching. Luke doesn't tell us what else Peter said, but clearly the people were like thirsty sponges soaking up this radical message. May I ask... do you have the same appetite to hear God's Word, God's truth, God's good news? Once again, we're going to pause right here with this crowd as they ponder some of the most radical statements they've ever heard and consider the radical action of repent and believe and be baptized, that Peter challenged them with! I invite you to look into your heart. Do you see anything there that needs repentance? Any new step of faith in God you need to take? Have you fully trusted in Jesus? Have you been baptized? Is the Holy Spirit powerfully alive and at work in your life?

We'll come back to this crowd on Monday and see what happened next... meanwhile, how will you worship God this weekend? Here's a song to help you ponder all this, my friends:

Today's Scripture is Acts 2:37-40.