

# “Repent and Be Baptized”

Acts 2:14a, 22-36

This reading from Acts is part of Peter’s great Pentecost sermon. Peter is preaching to the crowd gathered in Jerusalem for the Jewish festival of Pentecost – which was an annual harvest festival where the Jews were to bring a sheaf of barley and offer it as a wave offering which then would be given to the priests for their food. Peter tells the crowd how the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus have been fulfilled; and he tells them that the Savior of the world, the Christ, the Messiah, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God is the man that you crucified.

When Peter finishes his sermon, Luke records that when the people had heard what Peter said, “They were cut to the heart.” They feared the wrath of God. They were frightened for their very lives. They had killed the Chosen One, the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament – and if they weren’t in the crowd yelling “Crucify Him” they were at least complicit and didn’t do anything about it; guilty of a sin of omission. On that day of Pentecost, the sin of those people was brought out into the open and placed before them for everyone to see.

Blame was being laid on the entire “House of Israel.” Peter says, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

They were guilty of a great sin, and they didn’t know what to do. If you continue reading on, they ask Peter and the other apostles, “What shall we do?” They could not think of anything that could fix the situation. There was nothing that they could do to change what had happened. They killed the Holy One of God.

But then Peter spoke words to them that they did not expect, “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” In reply to this plea of “What shall we do?” Peter says to them, “Put your faith in the Savior of the world. Put your faith in and be baptized in the name of the man whom you killed. Believe in the forgiveness of sins. Repent; turn; God has brought forgiveness to you.”

But Peter doesn’t stop there. He continues and says this promise in not only for you and your children, but it is also for those who “are far off -- for whom the Lord our God will call.” Peter says that these words of forgiveness, this promise of the Holy Spirit is not just for the people listening to him on that first Christian Pentecost, but that promise is for us. We are the ones who were “far off.” We are some of the people that Peter said God would call into the faith. We too are called to repent and be baptized. And that promise is for “you and your children.”

Everything that applied to those people listening to Peter that morning, that free message of forgiveness that they received – even though they had committed such a terrible sin and demanded Christ’s crucifixion – that same

message of forgiveness is meant for each one of us (for all of the terrible things we have done).

No matter what our sin is. No matter what we have done to bring guilt upon ourselves, we have that same promise that Peter spoke to the crowd that day, “Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” I encourage you to take the time to read all of Peter’s sermon from Acts Chapter 2.

We are God’s baptized children. We are God’s forgiven people. We don’t need to ask the question, “What can I do to fix this situation that I got myself into?” There is nothing that we can do except repent; turn; have a change of mind; think differently, have the desire to act differently, and know that you are forgiven through the grace brought to us in our Baptism.

When we are led to repent of our sin, when we are turned from our sinful ways and say, “I am a poor miserable sinner. God, please forgive me for what I have done, and give me the strength to amend my sinful life,” God forgives us and Scripture tells us that He no longer remembers that sin against us. We repent of our sin, our guilt is washed away, and we are assured through the faith of our Baptism that the Holy Spirit is dwelling in our hearts and that there are streams of living water flowing within us.

When we become cut to the heart as those people on that day of Pentecost; when we see our sin and know that there is nothing that we can do to change the fact that we have sinned, it is comforting to know that we are completely forgiven as our sins were washed away in Baptism.

Those people who were listening to Peter’s sermon were sinners like us. They had great, open, and public offenses against God. Even more,

they had rejected Christ, and some of them may have even been the ones yelling, “Crucify Him!!”

Yet these people repented and were saved. It is my prayer that the people of this world, those in my family and your family who continue to reject Christ and His Church would also repent of their sins, receive God’s forgiveness, and finally come to know the richness of God’s mercy and grace – the value of their Baptism.

Last week we heard how God placed His Name upon the Temple in Jerusalem and how the promises made to Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon continue to be fulfilled. God has chosen you to be His temple, the place in which He dwells. And He has placed His Name (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) upon you in Baptism. And “this promise is for you and your children, and for those who are far off.”

Next week, we will hear from St. Paul how we carry this Name and this most precious treasure of the Gospel – how we carry it around in these “jars of clay.”

The Almighty Eternal God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has placed that name on you in Baptism and has filled you with the joy of the Gospel and the promise of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. God is merciful and gracious, and He desires to gather together all of His family – even those who yelled, “Crucify Him.” Jesus even pleaded on their behalf and prayed, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” If our Lord died for them and desires to forgive them, trust that He desires that mercy and grace for you also. That is the message preached on Pentecost. That is the message preached in Christ’s Church still today. Amen.