

## **“WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THIS JESUS?”**

**Rev. Robert T. Woodyard**

**First Christian Reformed Church**

**June 3, 2018, 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Acts 2:37-41**

**Prayer:** Holy Father, we ask for grace, for more grace. Give us soft hearts, open our eyes and ears, help us in our folly and weakness. Speak to us through your Word. Have mercy on me and all of us for your glory and for your name sake. Amen.

### **Introduction.**

Peter’s sermon started as an answer to a question. The Jews asked, “What does this mean?”

He said it was the pouring out of Spirit God had promised long ago by the prophet Joel. Then he went on to make the connection to Jesus. This Jesus you killed, this Jesus God raise up, this Jesus who is now seated in glory with God and who sent the Spirit you now see.

**Acts 2:36-41** Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that *God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*”

Those last words of his sermon, “This Jesus whom you crucified” were ringing in their ears and when they heard it they were cut to the heart and the sermon ends with another question.

“What must we do?”

We are still uncovering all the miracles on that first Pentecost, all the ways the Holy Spirit revealed Himself.

First, there was the pouring out of the Spirit with wind, fire and diverse languages. Second, there was an un-educated Galilean fisherman preaching a great sermon. Third, thousands of them were cut to the heart.

*Cut to the heart* they cry out, “Brothers, what must we do?”

What does it mean to be cut to the heart? Have you ever been cut to the heart? Have you ever been so convicted of your sin you were conscience-stricken with a deep heart-felt desire to change? What causes that?

What cut their hearts? What pierced their souls?

Was it Peter's brilliant sermon or his oratorical skill? No, it was the Holy Spirit wielding the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God and cutting them to the core.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Remember the two disciples on the road to Emmaus Easter afternoon.

**Luke 24:32** They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Why were they cut to the heart? Because the Holy Spirit revealed to their hearts that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ and they had sinned against Him, they had crucified Him. They were guilty of murdering the Son of God.

They believed what Peter said about Jesus was true and they believe what Peter said about them was true.

What a powerful and good and holy and wonderful thing it is to be cut to the heart, when we let down our guard, when we turn off our filters and let the Word of God penetrate into our hearts and after years of resisting or disobeying or neglecting or ignoring we hear with new ears and we surrender and say, "What must I do?"

This is the aim of preaching. It's not just transfer of information, not just new, original ideas, but a cutting to the heart. Pray for this. I can't make it happen, you can't make it happen. It can't be manufactured or manipulated. It isn't by a perfect three point sermon or better music or better preachers. It is the work of the Spirit of God through the Word of God. Pray for this.

What must we do with this Jesus?

**Cut to the chase, this is what you must do.**

Peter answers with two commands and two blessings. Repent and be baptized, and you will receive forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Two commands, two conditions.*

*Repent*, to realize something is wrong, something is not as it should be.

To repent is not just feeling bad or feeling sorry, it isn't remorse or regret or being sad at getting caught. Cain had some remorse over killing Abel, Judas had some remorse over betraying Jesus. They were cut to the heart, but not in a way that led to true repentance.

To repent is to come to same opinion about our sin as God has and then following through with a radical reversal, a change of course, a move in an entirely different direction, toward God instead of away from God.

To repent is to come to a new understanding of sin as a crime, an offense, an injustice against God.

Has everyone ever looked at the cross and what actually happened there and then reasoned backwards to what was it that could possibly cause so great a penalty. What on earth could have been so wrong, so bad, that the only solution was the horrible death of the Son of God? Has anyone ever looked at the cross and said, "I caused that. I have blood on my hands?"

The Holy Spirit used Peter's message to convince them and convict them they hadn't just killed a man, they had blasphemed the Holy God and committed high treason against the sovereign God of the universe, that the man they crucified was actually the Messiah.

The Jews could have said they didn't kill Jesus. Caiaphas or Pilate or Herod weren't in the crowd. How many of the Pharisees or Sadducees were actually there? Or the Roman soldiers?

Why didn't they take offense at the suggestion they were complicity in the worst and most unjust killing in human history? The Spirit showed them all sin is against Jesus.

Repenting is hard. It is our nature to resist it. "Why are you telling me I have to change? Why can't I just believe in Jesus, come to Jesus and He will make your life better?"

Repentance is hard because dying is hard. There is no resurrection without a crucifixion. No forgiveness without a death. We must die to our self and submit to God's opinion.

How hard is it to repent? Parents, you know what is like trying to get a child to repent to another one. It's hard for all of us, we don't grow out of struggling to admit someone else is right.

"Parents who know how to repent in front of their kids give them a greater gift than a Harvard education." (Scotty Smith).

How rare is repentance in us? How rare is repentance in our world?

If you have never repented, never asked forgiveness, never acknowledge sin and weakness to another person that is not a good sign. Save yourself from this crooked generation and your crooked heart. Make Jesus Lord and Christ.

Welcome this work of the Holy Spirit in all our hearts. When we repent is it a miracle of grace, it is a sign of the hand of the living God at work in our hearts. There is no true repentance without the Holy Spirit.

### ***Be baptized.***

Baptism is the outward sign and symbol of the inner grace. Baptism was the outward thing done to those who inwardly repent of their sins and desire to be saved and to walk in a new life. It is only as valid as the inner work.

The water is a symbol of cleansing and forgiveness and the receiving of the Spirit. Baptism points to Christ, which is why we do it in His name.

Baptism is a sign of submission, it is a sign of humiliation, of going under.

Being baptized in the name of Jesus means submitting to the Lordship of the person we rejected, acknowledging His claims on us, surrendering to His teaching and authority, relying of His forgiveness and grace.

Repentance is a radical change of direction. Baptism is a radical change of allegiance. Baptism is a swearing of allegiance to a new King, coming under new management. It is a transfer of membership, from the crooked world to the Kingdom of Christ.

### ***Who should be baptized?***

Vs. 39 is covenant promise language, very familiar to Jewish ears. They couldn't have heard this in any other way than that it applied to them and to their families, to their children.

**Genesis 17:7** I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring.

Baptism is more a testimony of God's promise and covenant with us, and not focused on our faith or what we do first. This magnifies God's grace, that it extends to children and to Gentiles, to every people.

## ***Two blessings.***

We will receive the two gifts we need most, forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Consider what is being offered here. Consider the grace of the Gospel.

We ***murdered*** God's Son and we are offered God's Spirit. We killed the second person of the Trinity and we are offered the third person of the Trinity. Like the stewards in Jesus' parable, we threw the owners son out of the vineyard thinking then we could inherit the vineyard, and God offers us His Spirit as the deposit and guarantee of imperishable, undefiled, unfading inheritance in heaven ( I Peter 1:4).

Can you believe it? You can murder the Son of God (2:26) and still be eligible to receive the grace of God and the forgiveness of even that sin and all your other ones. God is ready right now to forgive the worst that you have done if you repent and believe in His Son.

Remember when Jesus was on the cross being crucified, dying the most horrible death imaginable? What did He say? "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

He is ready to cancel your worst debts and not just that but give you the biggest inheritance, the gift of His Holy Spirit, His gift to all who call on the name of the Lord.

## **Cut from a crooked generation, three thousand saved.**

Peter presses the warning home one final time. Cut yourselves off from this crooked generation.

Peter is not like our modern preachers who want to avoid any negative message like sin. Peter plainly states the seriousness of sin and its consequences.

There are dangers in this world that can quickly carry our souls into eternal destruction. We can easily shipwreck our faith on the rocks of this world. The enemy is great, his power to tempt is huge.

This calls for a change of associations, allegiances. Changing from the world, from the wicked and perverse and crooked generation of darkness to the kingdom of light.

We are sinners in a sinful world and we must act in order to be saved from the consequences of our sin.

Three thousand repented and believed and were baptized.

They agreed with Peter's convicting Word and said yes Jesus is God and we have killed him.

Three thousand received the gifts of the forgiveness of their sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Three thousand hearts were touched and opened by the Holy Spirit. For how many was the sermon just "meh"? How many heard that same sermons and didn't respond? Woe is us if we are dull, if we are resistant, if we are negligent in making use of the means of grace God has given to us.

### **What must we do to be saved and receive Holy Spirit?**

Pull together the pieces from our text.

First, there must be the faithful preaching of the Word of God.

Second, there must be the work of the Holy Spirit calling us and drawing us to faith.

**John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

Third, there must be a receiving of the Word, believing in our hearts it is true.

Fourth, there is a response, a radical change of heart, repentance, obedience.

This is the sum of Christianity, the nugget of the Gospel, our faith in a nutshell. Repent of your sin and renounce the world in order to turn wholly to God. Receive the complete forgiveness of all your sins and the Spirit who adopts us into God's family, the outward sign of which is baptism.

All of this comes at a price, which is acknowledged when we are baptized in the name of Jesus.

We have no other source of all spiritual blessings, benefits, and fruit.

I urge you to experience the greatest thing in the world: Repent, turn to Jesus, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power of God and the wisdom of God, without which we cannot live a life for God.

And pray that God will add to His Church here and around the world Spirit filled Christians.