

Pentecost PM

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:14-42

Suggested Singing: 84:1-2 – 57:1-3 – 139:1, 3, 4, 7 – 362:1-3

Ye men of Israel, hear these words!

Without preparation and without visible fear, Peter stands up to preach.

Before him stands a huge crowd of people.

Curiosity drew them as the events of the morning were ‘noised abroad.’

Like wildfire catching dry grass, so the story of what happened that morning, spread throughout Jerusalem.

But once they arrived, their curiosity turned into mass confusion.

“How can these men speak my native tongue? Where did they learn Arabian? Or Egyptian? Or Latin?”

Others mocked the whole event. They dismissed it with a shrug, “They are all drunks!”

But Peter was not drunk with wine. He was filled with the Spirit as never before.

It was not Peter preaching that day. It was the Holy Spirit using Peter!

And He used Peter as a sharp sword. He made Peter into a powerful preacher.

We need such preachers today. We need men who are filled and driven by the Spirit.

Pray that we will experience the Word of God as awakening, as powerful, as sharper than any two-edged sword.

Pray that God’s Words will pierce every soul with the truth the Holy Spirit wants to drive home.

The Word of God we will consider is found in the sermon preached on Pentecost, in Acts 2:14-41.

In this sermon we are to hear ***God’s call to repent and to believe His Gospel.***

Let us consider three truths from Spirit’s message to us.

1. His charge in verses 22-23
2. His direction in verses 37-38
3. His promise in verse 39

First, then, hear God’s charge.

The address to which this charge is sent is clearly spelled out.

In verse 14 God spoke, *Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and hearken to my words.*

In verse 23 He spoke, *Ye men of Israel, hear these words.*

Must you and I place myself among them?

Yes, my friends, this word is spoken to you all, as you will see.

Do not doubt that God is addressing each ear here present.

These truths apply to us all as well.

Peter’s sermon is remarkable in a few ways.

First, notice how bold he was. Seven weeks earlier, he had crumbled before a maid.

Now he stood here before a huge crowd, many of them hostile. And yet he spoke without fear.

Secondly, the sermon is nearly 50 percent of straight Old Testament quotes.

What amazing insights was Peter given in the prophecies and psalms he quotes!

Thirdly, the words Peter spoke were empowered by the Holy Ghost.

Peter spoke in the demonstration of the Spirit and power. And that was saving to many souls.

Let us make these three facts a matter of our prayers, each Sunday as we come to church.

All who handle God's Word in preaching need the Spirit's power each time again.

Pray that all who are called to preach and the words they proclaim, may be filled the Spirit's power.

Pray also that the Spirit opens our understanding and makes us mighty in the use of Scripture.

Yet the most remarkable thing about Peter's sermon is its directness.

He addresses his congregation with 'you'.

Have you ever noticed that Peter never preached 'We have done this?'

But why did Peter not include himself? Shouldn't he be a little less bold? Didn't he himself fail?

Yes, Peter is undoubtedly aware of that.

But he was also aware that he is speaking on behalf of God.

He is bringing *God's* message to his hearers.

Therefore he didn't include himself though he himself is just much addressed.

And those addressed are we today as we gather at Jesus' feet to hear His Word.

Even though we live about 2000 years away from Jesus' crucifixion, we also stand charged by God!

So, what is the charge Peter had to issue in the name of God?

Murder!

Murder??

Yes, murder!

The Holy Spirit charged those men of Israel with murder. Hear this in verses 22-23.

"Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, ...

Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain Him."

You did that even though the only thing He did was miracles, and wonders and signs.

You did that even though you knew He raised your dead, healed your lepers,

fed your hungry and received your shamed ones.

You did it though you knew that He never used His influence or power to serve Himself.

All of you knew He was a man approved of God.

You all knew He was not guilty to die on the cross.

And still, you took Him and by wicked hands have crucified and slain Him.

In a later sermon in Acts 3:14-15, Peter added,

"But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you.

And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses."

Charged with murder!

Did the audience hold their breath? Did they look stunned at this preacher's claim?

Perhaps some of are a step ahead.

Yes they did that, but wasn't Jesus death according God's plan?

Wasn't that the way Jesus needed to go?

Didn't He Himself predict that He would be crucified?

Indeed, everything took place as it did because of God's eternal plan.

Peter stated this truth in his sermon: *"Jesus was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.*

In Acts 4:28 it is added, *"For to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done."*

But do not draw the conclusion that God's plan cancelled the serious charge against them!

Though the cross of Jesus was the revelation of God's sovereign, wise and gracious plan for salvation, it in *no way cancels the charge of what they did!*

They acted upon the knowledge they had and upon that level God will judge them.

They acted willingly evil despite the knowledge they had.

They murdered One Whom they knew was not guilty.

But is that me?

I was not there. I did not cry, "Crucify Him!" I do not have the blood of Jesus on my hands!

Are you sure you are innocent?

Are you sure that you have never acted against the knowledge of what is right?

Are you sure that you have never acted against the voice of your conscience?

Are you sure that you are innocent of this great transgression: *to neglect Jesus Christ and to reject His Word as it comes to us?*

Friends, many of those in Peter's audience also did not touch Jesus with their own hands.

None of them held the nails and hammer that spiked Him to the cross. That were the Romans.

Yet the Holy Spirit declares plainly: ***You have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain Him.***

We can do this also spiritually.

When we ignore or reject the claims and commands of the WORD of God, we reject the Lord Jesus!

It is therefore very real that each unbeliever, each neglecter, each despiser of the message of the Gospel stands charged before God with the sin of all sins: unbelief!

Oh, let us take this to heart. We all stand guilty before God.

We all have sinned against love, light, knowledge and against warning.

Peter knew all about it.

He had felt like piercing arrow when the Lord's look touched his conscience and broke his spirit!

No, there are no softening circumstances to our sins.

Our fallen state does not soften the truth of our sins.

Instead, it only reinforces our dire condition.

Even when we sin in ignorance, it is still sin.

Even when we do not realize the full extent of the wickedness we do, it is still sin.

God is reminding you today: face your sins! Do not deny the hard facts!

How often has your conscience been pricked and you ignored it?

How often do you reason away the call with a vain appeal to a truth that is misapplied?

How often has the Saviour called you as 'hen calls her chicks?'

Inviting?

Reassuring?

Sincere?

Urgent?

Just as Peter could say to them, "*You fully well knew ...*" so God says to us, "*You fully know what you are doing.*"

You know – you know! – that He has often told you to *come to Him as you are!*

You know – you know! – that He has repeatedly reassured you *that He will not cast out those who come to Him!*

You know – you know! – that He has often warned you that *you cannot stand before Him because He marks each iniquity, weighs each word we speak, and He has recorded all our secret sins!*

You know that He *knows about your pride, hypocrisy, covetousness, discontent, ill-feelings to others, worldliness, coldness and indifference to His glory.*

Don't you sense a shame to have all our sins set out before us?

Please, don't dismiss the charges God has pronounced upon sin and sinners that we are.

After setting out the charge, Peter unfolds two very unsettling truths in his sermon.

First, he proved that the Jesus they killed was the very Messiah God had promised to their fathers.

But then comes the clincher in verse 36: *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made **that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.***

Men and brethren, the One we dishonoured and disobeyed is now the Judge of heaven and earth.

We will one day be summoned to stand before Him.

Like Joseph's brethren who finally came eye to eye with Joseph, so, we will we face Jesus' eye to eye one day!

Though now we can easily dismiss Him and His calling, then we cannot escape His piercing eyes.

Though now we can so quickly deny Him like Peter, because we are afraid of a smirk, or cold rejection, then then He will deny us.

Stop soothing your conscience. Stop ignoring this fact: *you will face the same Jesus as your Judge.*

Stop lulling yourself to sleep with unsound reasoning while unsaved and unrepentant.

Stop thinking, “Well, at least I have tried my best. I have been good. I am not like all those easy-believers.”

Begin to ask yourself, “Can I meet this holy and righteous God against Whom I have sinned?”

In the second place, let us hear the Spirit’s direction in verse 38.

Peter’s sermon felt white-hot to the hearers.

This is preaching at its best. The arrow of truth penetrated deeply.

The end of this day showed that this sharp preaching was saving for many.

Thousands were converted as we read in verse 41,

“then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

The effects witnessed on Pentecost were astounding even though it seemed so unlikely.

A mere man stood up. He preached at once a sharp and shattering message.

And within this huge crowd, consciences were ripped open, hearts were humbled and lives were changed.

Repenting and believing sinners flooded into the Kingdom of God that day.

The Holy Spirit accomplished through Peter’s one sermon what most ministers will never experience in their lifetime.

As they listened to Peter’s piercing message, it dawned on many that that *Jesus of Nazareth was actually the promised Messiah!*

It made sense. Now they saw it. His miracles and His life testified that God was with Him.

The truth began to dawn on them: *That preacher is right: we knew He was innocent and yet we took Him with wicked hands and crucified Him.*

Oh, what have we done? We have killed Him – we have killed the promised Messiah our fathers told us about!

As the waves of fear and shock pulsed through their minds, Peter’s next words gripped them even more.

*“Men and brethren... this Jesus whom you have crucified **hath God raised up**, whereof we all are witnesses.*

We have seen Him! We met Him! He ate with us. He spoke to us. He is back! He rose from the dead.

We have seen the signs of the nails in His hands and feet.

And ten days ago, we were with Him when He ascended into heaven.

He has been exalted by the Father to the throne of heaven.

It was fulfilled what we read in Psalm 16, brethren!

David was not speaking about himself in that Psalm.

It cannot be. You know he is dead, buried and his grave is with us still.

But David was prophesying about the Messiah.

And this Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth Whom you took and crucified.

He has now been exalted to the throne of the universe as Psalm 2 prophesied.

And He will return and make all His foes His footstool.

Terror grips the hearts of the multitude. The horrible truth begins to dawn on their hearts.

Their consciences are pricked. Fear grips them. They have killed the Messiah!

Now He is also become the King of heaven having all power and authority in heaven and earth!

Perhaps they remembered the rest of Psalm 2 in which it says,

“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron. Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

Who can stand before His holy anger, even if it is kindled but a little?

Where can we hide from Him Who is Almighty, as His miracles and signs proved clearly?

Congregation, have you ever felt the striking force of God’s message in your heart?

Have you ever come out of church crying, *“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”*

Are you asking this very question, perhaps already for some time already, as you realize more and more your sinfulness?

Have you come to the sermons and to readings with this question on the tip of your tongue?

How different will our listening be when that is truly the reason why we come to church!

What must I do? How can I be saved? Lord, please, show me what I need to do!

Why are you asking that question?

Is your conscience restless? Do you feel guilty? Do you feel condemned?

Are your words, your thoughts, and your life condemning you?

Do you say, “Lord, I know I have defied and denied Thee so many times.”

I have so often ignored Thee with a shrug. I have given Thee lip service.

I have always done the ‘church thing’ but easily left Thee alone.

It was all so hypocritical, so shallow, so routine.

I serve the mammon of my work, my money, my pleasure, my ego.

All I want from Thee is to fill my needs.

Now I see it: I have ignored Thy calling, Thy gentle reminders, Thy reassuring invitations!

I have dismissed the many warnings.

I cannot deny knowing the teaching of Thy Word and yet I ignored and lived on happily without listening.

I have done year upon year.

Oh, God, I have hurt Thee. I have offended Thee. I have dishonored Thee. I despised Thy goodness.

Thy forbearance with my sins I abused to sin more.

I have done evil in Thy sight and Thou art justified in whatever Thou does.”

Oh, what must I do!? What can I do? Where must I go? I am guilty and undone!

Friends, if you are sitting here with that burning question on your heart, then listen to the Spirit’s answer!

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.

Or to say it shorter, *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out* (Acts 3:19).

Or to say it shorter yet, as Jesus Himself preached in Mark. 1:15: *Repent and believe the Gospel!*

Before we consider God's answer, let us join together in singing of Psalter 139:1-4.

God's answer to the inquiring cry was like Jesus' first sermon: *repent and believe the Gospel.*

We need to repent! What is repentance?

Repentance does not mean, "*Go and retrace your steps. Go and undo the wrong you did.*

Go and prove yourself worthy. Go and balance out your bad with good needs.

That is entirely impossible to do.

The wrongs we did are known with God.

Doing good will not cancel the wrong you have done.

Tears are fitting but will not wash away your guilt.

Confession is necessary; but it also does not lessen your guilt.

In the Old Testament, to repent means to *turn or return* from your ways of evil.

In Malachi 3:7 it is used in that way, *Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone astray from mine ordinances and have not kept them. **Return unto me, (or repent ye), and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.***"

In the Greek New Testament, the meaning of repentance is 'to have a change of mind.'

Yet repentance is not just a matter of your *head*.

The *change of mind* will also result in a *changing of the way you live*.

Repentance is a radical reversal of thinking that flows into a radical change of living.

You will actually turn away from the sins you have done or begin to see in your life.

It is turning and living into a Godward direction.

Unrepentant sinners are moving away from God.

They follow their own sinful impulses in serving their idols.

But when the grace of repentance is experienced, the heart makes an about-face.

A repentant person begins to move toward God and holiness.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 describes the repentance of the Thessalonians:

For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

Repentance is also not just a moment in your life.

True repentance is the beginning of a life-journey. True repentance is a life of repenting.

For often again we fall into sinful ways of thinking, talking and acting.

God commands us to repent. As Paul preached later in Athens, so God calls us, "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent!*

Delay is deadly for there is day appointed already in which Jesus will judge the world in righteousness.

Oh, I plead with you to take the question to heart: *What are my sins I need to repent of?*

Will you take that question yourself before the Lord Jesus today in prayer?

Will you ask Him directly and specifically, “Lord, what are the sins in my life Thou calls me to repent of?”

Will you open your Bible this week to listen to His answer?

Will you observe the voice in your conscience that points out the sins in your life?

Guard yourself against opposing your conscience with unsound reasoning.

I could imagine people thinking under Peter’s sermon, “Well, I know it wasn’t quite right, but we did it mostly in ignorance. We did not know all this about Jesus.”

How easily we fall into this fallacy of excusing ourselves!

Rephrasing your wrong to make it sound less wrong does not cancel the wrong.

Even sins we do in ignorance are still sin!

Are you serious about *What are my sins I need to repent of?*

Then here are a few questions to ponder through?

Is the blood of a rejected and dishonoured Jesus on your hands also?

Are you neglecting Him Whom the Father has sent to us?

Though your unbelief of the Gospel may not seem so violent as crucifying Christ, it no less offensive.

But the sin Jesus highlighted in John 3:19 is no less offensive to God:

*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,
and **men loved darkness** rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

Think of the crowd standing before Pilate with Jesus next to him.

With one voice they cried, *Free Barabbas and crucify Jesus.*

What did they do there? They loved darkness rather than light!

They preferred sin above truth!

They believed Satan and disbelieved God and His Servant.

Is that any different from what you do as you sit under the Word?

God calls, Jesus knocks, your conscience speaks, yet we chose a lifestyle centered on self!

Keep searching for sins that need repentance? Use the Word in your hand as the light!

Is there sin in the way we use our time? Sins of our mouth?

Is there sin in how we are possessed by what we possess?

Is there sin of covetousness, discontent, unholy anger, dishonesty, murmuring?

Is there sin of unkindness, selfishness, pride, arrogancy?

If you are do not see your sins, meditate prayerfully through the exposition of each Commandment in the Heidelberg Catechism.

Repentance!

It is so needed yet it does not save us for repentance does not remove any guilt.

It does not earn us anything. It does not reconcile us with God!

To be reconciled to God we need something that we can never be or do or never bring!

And to 'that something' Peter proclaims in the next part of his sermon,

"... and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission or forgiveness of sins.

This part of Peter's recorded message is undoubtedly a short summary of the Gospel he preached.

Vs. 40 recorded namely, *"And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourself from this untoward (or crooked) generation."*

Peter would have preached that God in Jesus has made reconciliation and forgiveness possible.

Oh, he knew himself how precious this forgiveness was!

He knew the pain of the burdened conscience and the relief of a cleansed one!

And what could cleanse: *the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*

Oh, do you hear this also?

With God there is forgiveness even though we have so deeply hurt and offended Him so long already.

God is not coming to us with a rod to punish us for crucifying or disbelieving His Son!

Yet we are worthy of that for unbelief is calling God a liar. That is a serious offense.

But instead of coming with a rod to punish, God stretches out his hand to invite us back.

Hear how the Spirit inspired Peter to say in Acts 3:26,

Unto YOU! – first God, having raise up His Son Jesus Christ,

sent Him ... to bless you - in turning away every one of you from his iniquities!

What an amazing revelation of God is this!

Keep that picture in mind: a welcoming, a ready-to-forgive Deity!

This Gospel of grace offered to the very men who crucified Jesus Christ is beyond understanding.

Undoubtedly Peter met the same objections that are rising in your heart, oh sinner!

Undoubtedly many would have responded, "But Peter, how can you be sure? How can God be like this?"

Others may have despaired as they still had, as it were, the stains of the blood of Christ on their hands!

Perhaps that is how you hear the message: always for others, never for you because you have sinned too much.

It cannot be true, for my sins are too many! I am simply too hard, too wicked, too guilty!

Just like Peter, I am proclaim to you, Stop doubting, poor, trembling sinner!

Stop looking at yourself.

Stop thinking about God through your own eyes.

Instead, learn to trust Him for what He says and reveals in His Word.

God's servant John Bunyan hit it right, when he preached once these forceful words,

Wherefore, sinner, be ruled by me in this matter; pretend not to be another man.

If you have been a vile sinner, go to Him in your own colour.

Put yourself among the vilest and let Him alone put you among the children.

You are, as it were, called by name to come for mercy.

You, sinner of Jerusalem – you ... hearken to the call to come!

And say, Stand aside, devil, Jesus calls me;

Stand aside, unbelief, Jesus Christ calls me.

Stand aside all my discouraging thoughts, for my Saviour and my Lord calls me to receive His Mercy!”

Oh, bow your knees this evening. Be encouraged by God’s own words here in Acts 2:21,

“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Call upon His Name and confess before Him,

Lord, I come, though fearful. I come, though struggling to believe. I come and call upon Thy Name.

I hardly dare to trust. Deliver me from all my misgivings, all my fears.

Thou has assured us in Thy Word there is forgiveness for me, for Thy own sake only.

Lord, I seek no other ground for pardon, than Thy own Word and merits.

To Thee I bring my guilty past, guilty present and to Thee I entrust my all now and forever.

Cover me with Thy own righteousness. Oh, receive me for Thy Name sake!

Be Thou, O blessed Lord Jesus, my shield, my Savior, my righteousness, my holiness, my Redeemer and my king.

Be encouraged.

Never doubt that He who bids you, *Be ye reconciled to God*, is ready to reconcile with you.

Lastly and briefly, hear the promise Peter may proclaim: “and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

This gift of the Holy Spirit does not refer to the special gifts we see in the early Christian church.

This is not a promise for speaking in tongues or doing miracles.

Those special gifts were limited to the apostles as they began their mission work.

Instead, this promise points to the blessings of the Holy Spirit each believer will experience.

Earlier, in John 7:37, 38 the Lord Himself referred to this promise Peter now proclaims as well.

Jesus, standing in the temple, cried, *“If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of water.”*

Those rivers picture the influences of the Holy Ghost that all believers in Jesus will experience.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies, comforts, enlightens, gives peace, fills the heart with the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!

Let this promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit encourage sinners to draw near to the blessed Saviour!

Nothing is more important for new life than His presence in our hearts.

Only He can transform our hearts from ungodly to godly, from self-centered to God-centered.

Only He can make us a new creature and empower us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice unto God.

But also, only He can chase away the doubts, the remaining darkness, the misgivings and the fears.
Only He can assure us of the perfect love of God to our soul.
Knowing that perfect love, so free, will cast out all fear.
Only He can witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.
Beloved hearers, without His power experienced, you cannot escape the old habits in thought and deed.
We need the Holy Spirit, not once, not twice but continually.
But take good note of the placement of this promise!
So many sincere seekers often reverse this Pentecostal promise.
In other words, we think *first the Spirit and then Jesus Christ*.
But that's not what Peter said.
In practice the reversal of this promise looks like this.
Realizing how far off you are from a life that glorifies God, we get to work.
With much zeal and desire we try to reform our heart and life.
We try to be more spiritually minded. We try to walk more carefully.
We pick up our Bible more often and try to pray better.
But all that like putting band-aids on an infected wound.
That doesn't do anything to repair the spiritual condition that is the cause of all our troubles.
All we are is a bag of depravity in which no good dwells.
May I ask, "Are you still thinking that you need to be *converted in order to come to Christ?*"
Are you still aiming at a 'new life' apart from coming to the Lord Jesus?
Oh, my friends, it is only when we are united by faith to Jesus Christ, that there will be a new life.
The Gospel of Jesus *believed* is the power of salvation!' (Rom. 1:16)
Once I realize that He is willing to forgive *me* for all the wrong I did ...
Or that He is willing to receive *me* back as I am, poor, guilty, filthy, lost, undone ...
Or that He is willing to be *my* High Priest, laying down His life for *me* ...
Then the power of the Gospel through the Spirit is experienced.
Hear it once more how Jesus emphasized this in John 7:38,
"He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters"
Let it be clear that the life and the fruits of life are only in Jesus Christ and through faith in Him.

What a hopeful and encouraging message this is!

That Pentecost thousands came to Christ, receiving His Word gladly and were baptized!

Will you be known as one that gladly received His Word of hope and salvation?

Let me conclude with a few lines from a poem and finally from Scripture.

One wrote,

"What various ways do men invent, to give the conscience ease.

Some say, "Believe" and some, "Repent," And some say, "Strive to please."

But, brethren, Christ and Christ alone, can rightly do the thing.

Nor ever can the way be known, Till He salvation bring.

These lines capture exactly the Holy Spirit's direction in another sermon of Peter in Acts 5:30-32, in which he preached,

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour,

For to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

And we are His witnesses of these things;

And so is also the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him.

Amen