

Sunday, June 9, 2019 – Pentecost Sunday
“What Shall We Do?”

Acts 2: 36-47

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Process Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

With the events of this day, known as Pentecost, God’s plan was complete. It has been 50 days since we celebrated Easter. For forty days we have watched as Jesus showed himself to this disciples convincing them that He was not dead, but alive. Ten days ago, on a Thursday we remembered watching with the disciples as Jesus ascended back into heaven.

His last words instructed them to go back to Jerusalem and wait until the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to send, came. I’m not sure they knew what to expect until it happened. Then suddenly the promise was fulfilled and eleven cowering, common working class men, who had been hiding out in fear for their lives began boldly and courageously telling the story about Jesus.

Have you ever felt like all the good stuff happened 2000 years ago and we’re stuck here watching religious reruns?

In a movie from about 20 years ago called Pay It Forward a 7th grade social studies teacher gives his students a yearlong project to work on: Think of an idea that could change the world and act on it. One boy comes up with the idea of “paying it forward.” It was pretty simple. You do something to truly help three other people telling them you do not want them to pay it back, but to pay it forward by helping three more people. The boy in the movie tries, and thinks he has failed, but has no idea how far reaching his initial three acts of kindness reached.

Pentecost is like that. It starts with God who has the only idea that will change the world has acted. He gave it to the disciples. From them thousands of millions have believed and you are sitting here today.

It was a dangerous thing to do, coming here today. Dangerous, that is, if you wanted to stay the same. This is Pentecost and the Holy Spirit is still coming and if you are not careful He will get into your ears and make his way to your heart and your mind.

He starts where He always starts, where He must start if he is to have His way with us. The verse just before our text: Peter said, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." The Holy Spirit hooked Himself to Peter's words and slammed into the hardened hearts of the people who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate another OT festival – Pentecost.

It had not quite been two months – 50 days to be exact – since much of this same crowd had been there for the feast of Passover. Not quite two months since much of this same crowd had screamed – "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Peter's message hit hard. Your God, the Messiah, came to you in human flesh just as He said would and you people not only didn't recognize Him, you rejected, condemned and murdered Him.

Miraculously, instead of running them out of town, or stoning them to death, the crowd at Pentecost was changed. The text says "they were cut to the heart" and asked Peter "what shall we do?"

Now be careful, because He is getting closer to you. When was the last time you had that hurt, that ache in your soul that wished somehow things could be different than they are? I suppose there's all kinds of little things that make us ask, "what shall we do?" The sound of screeching tires just before the car you pulled out in front of hits you. The person on the phone in the service department telling you that the reason your new refrigerator isn't working is because you put too much food in it.

Maybe there are a few things a little deeper than that – angry words thrown like spears at someone you really do love – being too busy to notice how much your family misses you – being disappointed by someone you trusted – feeling helpless because the country, the schools, and even the church seem hopelessly mired in problems without solutions.

But when was the last time you stood face to face with the God who wants nothing more than to hold you in His arms, fill you with determination, confidence, courage, and strength, empower you for life like you've never imagined – but you were not willing to be held? Instead you slapped Him in the face, spit on Him, jumped out of His hands and ran as fast as you could. Perhaps you protest and say “not me,” but I'll call your bluff because I've been there, done that, and you, like me are a sinner.

I wish you could see how your disrespectful little attitude toward your mom and dad wounds God. I wish you could see how your fear of not having enough, your hoarding and worrying and fretting hits God in the stomach. I wish you could see how your sleepy-headedness here in church, your unwillingness to sing and really get into worship pays God all the respect of the grunt a kid gives you when you ask how they're doing. You can... I can... if you will look at the cross. That's how your life and mine makes God feel – betrayed, beaten, mocked, and crucified. What shall we do? “Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”

Repentance is the first thing the Holy Spirit does once He gets inside of you. Repentance is wishing there was some way you could go back and undo the things you have done. Repentance is the pain of living in a sin-sick world looking for relief. Repentance is seeing the tears in God's eyes for you and wanting to change. It is the Holy Spirit begging you to look up and see God's love.

And in that instant He floods your soul with the most soothing, healing water that ever flowed. In the water of your Baptism the Holy Spirit comes to connect you to Jesus. He washes you off and puts on a new set of clothes. He carries you to the cross and sits you on God's lap.

Today is your Pentecost. What happened in our text keeps happening to all of us. If you have never been baptized what is stopping you? The promise is for you and your children – the Bible says. And if you have been baptized, remember and be renewed in what God has been doing every day since your baptism. None of you are here by accident today. God has been

creatively working to use every facet of your life to get you here, to hear this message and believe it. He is calling you by name. You are His delight.

Peter urged the people to answer God's call: "With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourself from this corrupt generation.'" How can it be said any better than that? Stop chasing the world and receive the gift of faith and live the life God is giving you – the best life – eternal life. Three thousand were added to their number that day. The Holy Spirit's work in you will dumbfound you. A lot of times you can't see it until later.

The first response of faith, the very first act of those whom the Holy Spirit touches is worship. He produces in us the desire to come together, to listen and grow in our understanding of Him, to receive the Lord's Supper and pray. So it was on the first Pentecost – "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer." So it is with us.

Pentecost continues in us. The Holy Spirit turns us inside out. He satisfies our need, fills us with His fruit, "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control," so that we can begin to pay it forward – to care about someone besides ourselves – to turn God's affection for us toward another – a spouse, a child, a neighbor, a stranger.

The culmination of Pentecost is a picture of what the church can be – people "with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying" each other. And the Lord added daily to their number – through Pentecost people touched by God reaching out to their friends and family and neighbors and making more disciples, baptizing and teaching them, and they in turn make even more disciples..

That's joyful living with a divine purpose. The Holy Spirit working in you repentance and faith, new life that starts right now and lasts forever, making you part of his plan to change the world, a desire to worship, the ability to care for others – these are things that make life worth living.

What shall we do? Amen.