

“WHAT ARE WE TO DO?”

Acts 2

I want to tell you about an experience I had in which I was “cut to the heart” and which then caused me to ask, “What am I to do?”

Once upon a time I was a teenager.
My friends and I couldn’t drive so we were on foot.

It was late in the summer and the sun had just gone down.
A bunch of high school guys drove by in their “cool” souped-up car.

They had a few things to say to us.
They were not very nice things,
things you wouldn’t say in church,
and things you shouldn’t say at all let alone think.

And we had a few things to say back to them.
They were not very nice things to say either,
things you wouldn’t say in church,
and things you shouldn’t say let alone think.

We had just been at one of my friends and raided their garden.
We had feasted on some fresh strawberries,
chomped on some freshly dug carrots,
and for me the next course was this beautiful vine-ripe tomato.

I just happen to have one in my hand ready to take that first succulent bite when the high school boys in the “cool” car came around the block for about the fifth time, slowed down as they got to us, and began their foul mouth litany .

Then all of a sudden there was a big “whop.”
The tomato in my hand had somehow found the driver’s front door.

The car doors few open and there was this shout,
“You’d better run!!!”

Since I respect my elders and always do what I am told,
I ran, and ran, and ran.

One of my friends evidently didn’t think the guy was talking to him so he didn’t run.
He and eventually another friend got caught.

I found my way home and started to call around
trying to find out what happened to my friends.

As I was on the phone one of my younger brothers became suspicious
and out his great concern for me-told mom.

She asked me what was going on.
I said I think someone threw something at guy's car,
the guy got out and chased us,
and I'm just trying to find out what happen to my friends.

She asked, " Did you throw it?"
I said, "Nope!" (I figured, what she doesn't know won't hurt her.)

The phone rings.
One of my friend's fathers calls.
Mom answer. I could tell the questions by her answers.

The question was, "Is Tommy there?"
Mom 's answer, "Yes, he is here."

The question was, "Do you know the boys are in some trouble?
Some guys are here, a car got hit , etc..."
Mom's answer, "I've heard about that."

The question ws, "Do you know who hit the car?"
Mom's answer, "No, I don't?"
(I figure, so far, so good.)

The question was, "Are you sure Tommy didn't do it?"
Mom "Yes I'm sure, he told me he didn't do it."

Ohhhh!!! I was cut to the heart!

Why , because I was going to get caught? NO!!!
I knew I was busted and it wasn't going to be pretty but
for whatever reason that didn't matter now.
There was more at stake, much more.

I had damaged someone's property, that wasn't good.
I had run out on my friends, that's wasn't good.
but worst, I had betrayed my mother's love, violated her trust.

My mother loved me so much-she would do anything for me.
Knowing the truth would be bad
but knowing I had lied to her would break her heart.

Sorrow and shame just washed over me
and I was overwhelmed with guilt.
In desperation I cried out, “What am I going to do?”

Well, what would you do?
More to the point what have you done with your guilt and shame?

Well, if you don’t know, you’ll get some friendly advise today
from a man named Peter about how to respond to that very question.

Last week we started our sermon series from Acts.
Acts 1 covered the forty days from the resurrection of Jesus to his ascension.

Pastor Eldon reminded us that Jesus spend that time teaching, preaching,
and eating with his disciples to strengthen them in their faith.

Then Jesus told his disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait.
They did, at this time, all 120 of them.

And there on the Day of Pentecost the church’s birthday,
the Spirit of God was poured out, on, and in the disciples
and they began to share freely and fearlessly the Good News of Jesus Christ.

As they spoke, some got the message, others thought they were drunk.
Peter steps up and steps in to straighten them out.

He says they’re not drunk on wine but filled with the Spirit of God.
He then goes on to preach.
He explains what is going on
using the Scriptures from the prophet Joel, Psalm 16, and Psalm 110.

Then he proclaims the Gospel by reviewing the life of Jesus;
his earthly ministry, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension.

He has just spoken of the reality of the risen Christ
and the promise of the Holy Spirit and then drops the bombshell.
Acts 2.36, ***“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this;
God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Savior.”***

Every word here is important.
But, don’t miss these three, “...***whom you crucified...***”

Some of these folks were actually there on the day of crucifixion.
The rest of them just as you and I are culpable because of our sin.

Their response, Verse 37,

***“When they heard this they were cut (pierced) to the heart,
and said to Peter and the other disciples, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”***

It was a defining moment, they were cut to the heart.
They realized that they had betrayed God’s love
and broken God’s heart.

They realized God had given them his Son.
Jesus was God’s son who had come to them to teach and preach,
to hug and hold...to laugh and cry...to love and forgive.

Jesus was the one who had come to them to cast out their demons,
cure their ills, calm their storms, and create life out of their deaths.

Jesus was the one who came who loved them,
love them so much-he would do anything for them.

Even though he knew all about them, he would still love them
Even though they were unlovable, he would still love them
Even though they didn’t think he would love them, he would still loved them
and would still do anything for them-even die for them.

Isaiah 49.15-16 says it this way,

***“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child she has borne? (tongue in cheek)
Though she may forget, (like that is going to happen) I will not forget you!
See, I have engraved(carved, branded, tattooed) you on the palm of my hands.”***

These people Peter was preaching to somehow that truth.
Sorrow and shame washed over them.
and they were overwhelmed with guilt.

So in desperation they cried out, ***“what are we to do?”***

And Peter tells them.
You know Peter has the answer,
Good old Peter always had the answer.

And on the day of Pentecost it was the right answer, a hope-filled answer,
Verse 38, ***“Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, everyone of you,
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.
And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”***

As any preacher he keeps going, verse 40 and following,
***“With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them,
...and those who accepted his message were baptized
and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”***

Repent! They were to repent.
Remember repentance is much more than being sorry.
Repentance is a military term that means about face, a
Repentance is much more than just confessing sin,
Repentance is a change of heart, a change in direction.

These people had to change their thinking about themselves and about God.

And they did.
They realized they couldn't save themselves,
they were sinners in need of a Savior.

They recognized their self-righteous morality wouldn't be enough.
It didn't matter whether they were on the religious right
and emphasized a strict obedience to the law thus earning God's favor,
or on the religious left and emphasized doing good works,
thus deserving God's favor.

Paul would say it this way later in Ephesians 2.8-9,
***“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-
and this is not from yourself, it is a gift of God-
not by works, so that no one can boast.”***

They recognized that they needed Jesus was God's Son, God in the flesh,
and that he had died on a cross as their Savior.

They embraced this new thinking, believed it, and received it.
They had to do that to experience forgiveness for their sin
and to receive the promised indwelling of God's Spirit.

And so must we.
Do we understand that we have our part in crucifying Jesus.

We have our own definition of the Gospel and who it is for.
Sometimes we don't feel we deserve God's love and forgiveness.
And sometimes the in the center of the Gospel we place ourselves,
our goodness, our education, our talents, our wealth, our success, our disciplines

We've forgotten that every bullet shot from every gun,
every blast from bomb or tongue,

every blade stuck from sword or knife,
every relationship in strife,

every lie told, every soul ever sold, every dollar ever stold,
every wicked thought, or every heresy taught,

every marriage torn, every peek at porn, and every act of scorn,
beats and bruises his body and breaks his heart.

Isaiah 53.4-5 (MSG) says it this way,

***“It was our pains he carried, ...all the things wrong with us.
But it was our sins that did it to him, that ripped and crushed him our sins.
He took the punishment...”***

Now what are we to do?

Like those that have gone before us, if we haven't,
we're to turn back to God, give Jesus your sin and trust that it dies with Jesus.

A point of clarification.

When Peter said to be baptized he didn't mean
that baptism was a means of forgiveness.
In other words baptism doesn't save.

He meant that they should be baptized as public expression of having received forgiveness.
Baptism is simply a picture, an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace.

A ring is an outward and visible sign of someone married to someone else.
You don't need the ring to be married.

The words and water at baptisms give people the opportunity to say publically
that they have already believed and received God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ
that want to live a Christian life, want to lead a changed life, under the lordship of Christ.

We sometimes get this backward don't we.

We have baptisms without understanding it involves repentance.

Or often times we have baptisms and go whew!!!

We've in!!! We've made it!!! We're done!!!

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Baptism is also suppose to symbolize a beginning, a new beginning,
or a birth, a birth into a family, a birth into God's family.

So now you ask, “What are we to do?”

I have some suggestions for you.

Be an active part of the church,
get involved and continue to be involved in the church.

The church is God's design, God's genius for taking care of people
and being the conscience of the community.

We're called out, we're to be set apart,
to be the conscience of the culture, to model the character of God, and to teach his ways.

That means they will come into some conflict with the culture.
How will they know what to believe and how to behave?

Verse 42 starts to tell us,

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching,

The apostle's teaching was based on the scriptures.
They had Bible Study, that they might learn and grow in the truths of God.
We have a nice little list of Bible Studies and Sunday School Classes.

***“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching...”
and to fellowship...”***

The Greek word for fellowship is koinonia. Paul loves that word.
It means community and counters the value of individualism and isolation.

It is countercultural in that it calls people into authentic community.
People are together and grow together in intimacy and interdependent on one another,
and therein find their true identity.
Get in a growth group.

***“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching,
and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread...”***

This refers to the ritual of Communion.
It brings our focus back on God.
The ritual reminds us who we are, who Jesus is, what he has done, and we are to do.

Be intentional about receiving communion.

***“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching,
and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...”***

Prayer is an expression of our relationship with God.
We admit there is someone greater than ourselves and that we're not self-sufficient.
We thank God we're part of something bigger than ourselves and we admit our needs.

Pray and attend the Prayer Meetings

**Verse 43, “Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe;
and many signs and wonders were taking place through the apostles.”**

If the Spirit of God truly indwells in us, then some things ought to change in our lives and those around us. There will be the mysterious.

Look for and appreciate the creation, creatures of creation, and changes wrought by God.

Verse 44-45, “And all those who believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need”.

The value of sharing confronts our self natures and meets the needs of others. Ask for help if you need help. Look for and take opportunities to help others.

Verses 46-47, **“Day by Day continuing with one mind in the temple... and the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were saved.”**
Worship, they worshipped day by day, together.
Continue to be faithful in worship.

So, WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

REPENT, BE INVOLVED IN THE CHURCH, AND TRUST GOD.

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