

**Why Discipleship, Repentance and Baptism Matter  
5/28/2017**

We have been kind of hovering around  
Acts, chapter 2 this Spring,  
That has been intentional.

Here are the first believers,  
after the first sermon preached  
after Jesus was raised from the dead.

After their baptism,  
they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching,  
to the Fellowship, to the breaking of bread  
and to the prayers.

We have focused on each of these activities  
that they devoted themselves to, to see why they did,  
and how WE would benefit from a similar a devotion.

Last Sunday we talked about how grace matters,  
and how our understanding of God's grace  
should prompt us to a similar extension of grace to others.

God's grace... SOOO important.  
But how does God instruct us, through Peter,  
in that critically important 1<sup>st</sup> sermon,  
to respond to the grace of God?

First things matter-

1. First kiss, first dance, first anniversary...
2. First house, first kid, first mini-van...
3. First job, first REAL job,  
first time you had to pay taxes...

It's all new, breaking into new territory,  
requiring new skill sets, adapting, stepping up.

Later, you've figured things out, the routine,  
 what is expected of you.  
 But first things are important.

So- first sermon after Jesus' Ascension.

Let's read it, and sense the drama unfolding.

### Acts 2

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

<sup>5</sup> Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup> Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup> Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup> (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" <sup>12</sup>

Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another,

"What does this mean?"

<sup>13</sup> Some, however, made fun of them and said,

"They have had too much wine."

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you;

listen carefully to what I say.

<sup>15</sup> These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! <sup>16</sup> No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

- <sup>17</sup> “ ‘In the last days, God says,  
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams.  
<sup>18</sup> Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.  
<sup>19</sup> I will show wonders in the heaven above  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood and fire and billows of smoke.  
<sup>20</sup> The sun will be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood  
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the  
Lord.  
<sup>21</sup> And everyone who  
calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’

<sup>22</sup> “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. <sup>23</sup> This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. <sup>25</sup> David said about him:

“ ‘I saw the Lord always before me.  
Because he is at my right hand,  
I will not be shaken.

<sup>26</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
 my body also will live in hope,  
<sup>27</sup> because you will not abandon me to the grave,  
 nor will you let your Holy One see decay.  
<sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the paths of life;  
 you will fill me with joy in your presence.’ (Ps. 16:8-11)

<sup>29</sup> “Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.  
<sup>30</sup> But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. <sup>31</sup> Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. <sup>32</sup> God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. <sup>33</sup> Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. <sup>34</sup> For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord:  
 “Sit at my right hand  
<sup>35</sup> until I make your enemies  
 a footstool for your feet.” ’

<sup>36</sup> “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Before you appreciate grace,  
 you need to understand personal responsibility,  
 and also what your status is.

Nobody undergoes chemo or radiation  
 if they don’t think they have cancer... true?  
 And no one thinks they need a redeemer  
 if they are already “just fine” with God.

And apparently for the first time,  
 these Jews from around the world realized  
 the role they played in rejecting their own Messiah.

And at what point do we Americans and Virginians  
 and all the other identities WE assume,  
 when do WE realize that we have rejected our own Savior?

<sup>37</sup> When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart  
 and said to Peter and the other apostles,  
 “Brothers, what shall we do?”

They “get it.” They feel the conviction.  
 How do you get right with God  
 when you’ve so clearly messed up?

You ever been cut to the heart?  
 It’s one of the feelings I hate the most, to be wrong,  
 to have done wrong, and to KNOW I’ve done wrong.

How do you fix it?  
 How do you make it right, when the stakes are so high?

Here’s how Peter answers THEIR question,  
 and how Peter answers OUR question.

Now we need to remember that not too long before this,  
 back in Galilee, on a mountain top,  
 Jesus had just given  
 Peter and the other apostles the Great Commission-  
Matt. 28:18-20

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
<sup>19</sup> Therefore (As you) go, (and) make disciples of all nations,  
 baptizing them in the name of the Father  
 and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey  
 everything I have commanded you.  
 And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So how does Peter answer the question  
 these convicted Jews ask him on the day of Pentecost?

Jesus had just commanded them to make disciples,  
 baptizing them in the name of the Father,  
 Son and Holy Spirit.

So what does Peter say next?

<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you,  
 in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.  
 And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise  
 is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all  
 whom the Lord our God will call.”

Peter commands these Jews to repent,  
 and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ  
 for the forgiveness of their sins.

Discipleship matters to Jesus.  
Us living life HIS way, instead of OUR way,  
 it makes all the difference in the world.

And so the first step, is repenting-  
 turning off of our way and back towards God's way.

Acts 3:19 will tell us to repent and turn BACK to God,  
 which means we were heading some other way.

Not, “Ask Jesus into your heart,”  
 not “It's all good, just love Jesus.”

No, Jesus commanded the apostles to make disciples,  
 and he commands US to make disciples,  
 to challenge people to make a decision  
 to live a radically different kind of life-

1. Not as disciples of our culture,
2. Not to be politically correct,
3. Not to be cool, cutting edge, or popular.

He calls us to repent.

And that is to be followed with  
 a baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.

1. Baptism was done to Gentiles  
 who wanted to become Jewish proselytes.
2. John had baptized also with a baptism of repentance,  
 but that was to prepare the way  
 for the one coming after him, that is, for Jesus.
3. Rabbis, teachers,  
 didn't baptize people in their own name;  
 it just wasn't done.

So maybe Jesus was NOT just another teacher or rabbi.  
 Jesus claimed to be the Son of God,  
 possessing all authority in Heaven and on earth.

And as Peter's sermon  
 reflected his eyewitness testimony  
 to that fact to THAT audience,  
his testimony still stands, 2,000 years later.

His will, His way... based on HIS resurrection.

(But wait, there's more...)

<sup>40</sup> With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

<sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

There is a clear indication

that there was more said and taught-

“With many other words he warned and pleaded with them,  
‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ ”

Warning and pleading are strong terms...

But whatever additional was said,

those who received his message were baptized,

and 3,000 were added to their number THAT day.

1. That’s a lot of baptisms.

2. They were considered “added to their number”

AFTER they were baptized, not before.

3. Their baptism was for forgiveness of sins,

not because their sins had already been forgiven.

You see,

the earliest Christians took the words of Jesus seriously.

If we are going to say, “As you wish,” to Jesus,

THIS is what Jesus wishes.

Jesus wants transformed lives,

lives that reflect God’s power working through them.

And for that to happen, there must be not just conversions,

but commitments to discipleship.

There must be repentance,

and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ,

for the forgiveness of sins.

And then there must be the devotion to what comes next-

1. The apostles' teaching,
2. The fellowship,
3. The breaking of bread, and to the prayers.
4. There must be the hospitality and generosity  
of the early church,

But first things must come first.

1. Discipleship matters.
2. Repentance matters.
3. Baptism- in the name of Jesus Christ,  
for the forgiveness of sins...matters.

It's my birthday.

I'll say what I want to say, what I believe is true,  
consistent with God's Word.

Jesus wants committed disciples.

**ARE** you one, are you willing to **BECOME** one?

Let's pray together.