

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Are you convinced yet? Over the past seven weeks, we've gone through the book of Acts, following the apostles as they strived to carry the message of the gospel throughout the world. We saw that gospel producing victories time and time again...and you know why it all happened. All Jesus. The risen Savior acts. You've seen that every single week.

So are you convinced? That he still acts in your life as well? I know you do. Even though Jesus, risen, ascended, but even now still working, still acting, and today, we get down to the way that our Risen Savior Still Acts...through His Holy Spirit!

Our verses this morning pick up in the middle of one of the greatest sermons ever told...in the middle of one of the greatest events in the history of the Christian church. The day was Pentecost, literally means 50 days, the Jews celebrated it as 50 days after the Passover. For us, even greater significance, as in 50 days after Jesus rose back to life. A short ten days after he ascended to his throne in heaven.

But this was the day he had told the disciples to wait for, not that they necessarily knew it at first. They were in Jerusalem, along with thousands of other Jews who had had made the pilgrimage for the special occasion. I don't think they were expecting it, either.

But there was a violent wind, it was the Holy Spirit. It rushed through the city. And when it was gone, flames of fire were resting on each disciple's head. It was then when a huge crowd assembled around the disciples, people from all over the place, different countries, and what they heard was truly amazing. These disciples, from Judah, speaking in different languages, and yet, these disciples, each was able to be understood by a different section of the crowd.

And no matter what language, the message was the same, proclaiming the wonders of God, the saving work of Jesus through his life, death, and resurrection. That was all the Holy Spirit, giving those disciples the ability to speak in those language, and it was the Holy Spirit who gave them the courage to speak as witnesses of Christ. So, when the people questioned whether the disciples were drunk, at 9 in the morning, that's when Peter spoke.

A wonderful sermon. He first acknowledged that these men weren't speaking on their own. They had been filled with the Holy Spirit, just as the Old Testament had prophesied, and just as Jesus has promised would happen to his disciples before he left them.

And then the best part of his sermon, Peter talked about Jesus. This man, had to be familiar to the rest of the crowd. Not just a powerful miracle worker, but he was God. And they killed him. Not that these people physically nailed Jesus to the cross. But they watched as wicked men did. They didn't try to stop. And ultimately, it was their sins, as well as the sins of all people of all time, that put Jesus there.

But the story of Jesus doesn't end on a sad note. Just as King David wrote in one of his psalms, so Peter quoted in his sermon, "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." God raised Jesus back to life. Jesus rose from the dead. Standing in that room were witnesses to that

fact. Peter was one of them. The rest of the disciples were too, as well as hundreds of other believers who had seen Jesus, alive!

Those words, the heart of the gospel, believing in a God who is not dead, but a God who lives! And that God, Jesus, alive, now at his rightful place, exalted at God's right hand, and then today, pouring his Holy Spirit out on Peter and the others, to share this news, "Jesus, who lived, was then crucified, but who now lives again, he is Lord. He is God!"

And oh, how that sermon, how those words made an effect on the people. Our text says they were "cut to the heart." Now, don't try to downplay this reaction from the crowd, thinking that their feelings were merely hurt by Peter's harsh words, only a superficial reaction.

No, the picture is of a dagger or a spear piercing, penetrating to the heart, inflicting a deadly wound. That's what happened spiritually to the people before Peter. The accusation that they had set themselves in opposition to God by rejecting Jesus of Nazareth hit home. They were crushed by the knowledge of their guilt: The one whom God had acknowledged and established as both Lord and Christ they had spurned in unbelief.

Has that happened to you? Being cut to the heart? I can say, with probably 100 percent certainty, that it has. Because Peter's words, they weren't only for those Jews who had gathered on that Pentecost Day. The sins that put Jesus up on the cross, weren't only committed by those Jews who were listening to Peter. Those words are for you and me as well. Those sins, putting Jesus up on the cross, are yours and mine as well.

Of course, there are the big sins, the time I hit someone else out of pure anger and frustration. Those times I've cursed and sworn because something wasn't going exactly the way I wanted to. The times where I've very clearly dropped God down my priority list, "forgetting" to spend time with God regularly. Those were the sins Peter was talking about, the sins that nailed Jesus to the cross.

And it doesn't stop there. There's the small stuff, too. The white lies I've told that seem pretty harmless or caused only a minimal amount of damage. The times I've said something degrading about a friend, not realizing how much damage I was doing to his reputation. The hatred I've let linger in my heart because I was slighted and I won't let it go. Those sins, they were nails in Jesus' hands and feet as well.

☒ It's words like what Peter spoke in his sermon, it words like these in my sermons, where we realize how far short we fall of God's perfection. We see how many times, even in just one day, we fail to do the right thing, to act as God wants us to act. And then the added weight, that what I've done, was handed off to Jesus, another punishment Jesus had to suffer, which should have been me instead.

And it hurts. It cuts my heart. And I hope it does for you, too. Because brothers and sisters in Christ, that is remorse. Feeling sorrow over sins committed. That is a part of repentance. A part, not all of it. Because even in that remorse, there can dangers. What if all that we felt was remorse? Probably one of two things.

One, it could lead to a hopelessness and despair, focusing so much on my sins, thinking there's no way anything can be done to make up for all the wrong I've done.

Or, the other thing? False comfort from my bitter regrets. Where I've sinned, I feel bad about it, that's good enough to make up for my sin. The self-righteous attitude thinking just having guilt is the way to make good for my sin. Well, to be quite frank, it's not. Because no matter how bad I feel about the sins I've done, the fact of the matter is those sins are still there. Those sins condemn me to hell.

And it's those sins which cause me, and you, to cry out with the rest of the crowd, "What must I do to be saved? And here's the answer, "Repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

"Repent and be baptized." You know, that message is nothing new. That's exactly what John the Baptist preached as he prepared the way for Jesus. That's exactly the same message Jesus proclaimed throughout his ministry.

Because this is what true repentance is. It is a sorrow over sins committed against our God, the feeling and acknowledgement that yes, I have let God down, but it doesn't end there. Repentance also involves the sorrow, confessing our sins before God, and then, trusting in God's mercy and grace and knowing our sins are forgiven, not because we feel bad about them, but forgiven only because Jesus lived, died, and rose. Jesus, who loved us so much he came to earth to be perfect for us, to die on the cross to save us, and then to rise from the dead to guarantee we were saved. Because of Jesus' work of salvation, we are forgiven when we repent. Our sins, no longer burden us or weigh us down.

Now realize it isn't the repentance that saves. Nothing of our own doing. It's God's love that saves. It's the work Jesus did for us through his life, death, and resurrection that saves. But it's through repentance that God chooses to give his forgiveness to us. And the same can be said about baptism as well.

You know what happens in baptism. The pastor, pouring water over the head of an infant, a child, even an adult, speaking these words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And it's through those words, connected with the water, that God comes to us, not us coming to him, and he offers us his saving grace and the forgiveness of our sins, washing away every sin we have ever committed or will commit. All the big sins and small sins. All of them, forgiven.

So, if it's not us doing the work, then why did Peter tell the people to repent and be baptized? Because of the Holy Spirit. Because of the risen Savior. Because at that time, the risen Savior was acting through the Holy Spirit. By the time the people had asked Peter how they could be saved, the Holy Spirit had already done the work, had created the saving faith in their hearts, had worked through that same faith to cut to the heart, to feel that godly sorrow over their sins. And it was the Holy Spirit would work through them to repent and to come to be baptized, three thousand souls, won to Christ's kingdom, that day. And through baptism, the Holy Spirit would work to strengthen their faith in Christ.

And he does the same for us. The Holy Spirit, who is at work in us every day of our lives. He created saving faith in us, many of us when we were baptized, but he's done that in all of us. And every day, he

works repentance in us, so we continually receive the greatest gift from God, forgiveness for every sin we commit.

How comforting it is to know that even though he's in heaven, our risen Savior still continues to act for us down here. How comforting that the great Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is with us every second of every day. Our risen Savior saved us. And now he works through the Holy Spirit to make us more confident of that each day.

So, are you convinced yet? Our risen Savior acts, and he will continue to act until he will bring us home. He uses the Holy Spirit to make us sure of that. Amen.