

Repent, Believe in the Risen Jesus

Acts 2:14a, 32-41

April 19, 2026 (Eas. 3-A)

St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd:

“God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of it. 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. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

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

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. The promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:14a,32-41 NIV)

In the name of Jesus, the risen Lord and Messiah, dear friends:

“Houston, we have a problem.” In April, 1970, an oxygen tank exploded on the Apollo 13 spacecraft. The crew contacted Mission Control in Houston, and together the crew up in space and the Mission Control down in Houston worked it out to get everyone on board back home safely. You may remember the 1994 movie Apollo 13 that dramatized the heroic rescue. Thankfully, the recent Artemis launch, from liftoff to splashdown, went without a hitch.

“Jerusalem, we have a problem.” It was Pentecost Sunday, seven weeks after Jesus rose. Ten days earlier the risen Lord had ascended into heaven, and on Pentecost Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on the group of believers, 120 of them. When the crowd in Jerusalem heard this commotion, the sound of rushing wind and the disciples speaking in various languages, they rushed to the scene, confused, and some mocking them, “Oh, they’ve just had too much wine.” Peter and the eleven apostles stood up, and Peter spoke boldly, pointing out that what they were witnessing was the fulfillment of Scripture: God was pouring out his Holy Spirit in the latter days. Then Peter went on to talk about Jesus: This man that you had crucified, put to death on a cross just weeks before, God raised him from the dead. “God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

The message hit its mark. The people in Jerusalem “were cut to the heart.” Peter’s words struck like a knife, jabbing their hearts. Many of these people remembered how they had cried out for Jesus’ crucifixion—and now they realized they put to death the Lord’s Messiah. How sorry they felt!

“St. Paul’s, we have a problem.” The problem is called sin. We weren’t there 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem, yelling out for Christ to be crucified. But our sins, our failures to do what God tells us in his Ten Commandments, are what caused the Lord of life to be put to death. When the law is preached, when our sins are pointed out, that law also crushes us and stabs us in the heart. “What shall we do?”, the crowd cried out, and we cry out. What a problem has come because of our sins!

Peter didn’t leave the crowd hanging. He directed them to Jesus, the very one they had crucified. He told them, and he tells us all of us: **Repent, Believe in the Risen Jesus!**

In his message, Peter gave them gospel as well as law. You crucified Jesus, Peter told them, but God raised him from the dead. “We are all witnesses of it,” Peter informed them. Jesus is no longer in his grave! They had also witnessed how God exalted him “to the right hand of God” when Jesus

ascended up to heaven, fulfilling the prophecy David spoke in Psalm 110: “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” And now, as the crowd in Jerusalem were witnessing, God was sending his Holy Spirit. That’s what enabled Peter to speak so boldly to the crowd. This was the good news: Jesus is the Lord, he is the Messiah who died, who rose, and who is now exalted on high.

So when the crowd asked Peter what they should do, Peter answered: “Repent!” He told them to be truly sorry for their sin, but don’t stop there. Repentance is a change of heart and mind. It’s turning from sin and turning to the Lord for forgiveness that he freely offers. What Peter was telling them here was to believe. Believe this good news I just told you that this Jesus who died rose from the dead. There’s nothing for you to do to earn his love; just accept it by faith, that you are forgiven!

Peter spoke more, and Luke’s book of Acts just summarizes with this thought: “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” That could also be translated, “Be saved.” God is the one who does the saving through Jesus. The gospel is the means by which God saves us: “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Ro. 10:17).

Keep listening to that gospel message! The Holy Spirit works through the gospel to give us faith in Christ. When you’re at church, you’ll hear a message that cuts you to the heart. Sometimes the preacher talks about certain sins that maybe you don’t have a big problem with—but sometimes that message will strike home. When your heart gets pricked, don’t get angry at the preacher, thinking, “Why’s he picking on me?” The law prepares us for the gospel message. Then we can appreciate all the more, “Jesus did die and rose for a sinner like me. Let me follow him, gladly!”

Peter added one more thought to “Repent, believe in the risen Jesus!” He told them, “Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ.” Not long before this Jesus had instituted baptism as a means of grace, telling his followers to go and make disciples by “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19). The Holy Spirit also uses baptism as his tool to make disciples, to bring people into God’s family by faith.

They were to be baptized “for the forgiveness of sins,” and they would “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” These are the great blessings of baptism. The baptized person receives the washing away of sin, even as water is sprinkled or poured on the body. And the Holy Spirit is poured out on the baptized person, “born of water and the Spirit,” in Jesus’ words (Jn. 3:5).

Who’s baptism for? Peter makes it clear: “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Notice that children are included, and there’s no limit as far as age. Nowhere is it said in Scripture, “You must be this old in order to get baptized.” Baptism is for everyone!

Repent, believe the good news, Jesus is risen! Jerusalem, there’s no more problem! The gospel and baptism had blessed effects: “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” What a tremendous blessing! For us at St. Paul’s, we don’t baptize in the thousands, but we were blessed to baptize two children last month. One by one they get added to our number, and we rejoice to see them brought into God’s family!

St. Paul’s, there’s no more problem. Jesus solved it! He died and rose for you, your sins are taken away through the gospel and baptism. **Repent, believe in the risen Jesus!** Amen.