

**Monday**

Read Acts 2:1-41

I'm sure many of the people in the crowd that Peter has been talking to in our passage in Acts today felt like what Peter was talking about was not their problem and that they certainly were not to blame. And what was the problem? The execution of Jesus.

Peter got up in front of a giant crowd and said that the day of the Lord was at hand because the Holy Spirit had come upon the disciples and that a new era had arrived. Then, in clear, unambiguous terms, he tells his fellow Israelites that they experienced the life and ministry of Jesus, a man attested to them by God with deeds of powers, wonders, and signs that God did through him among these people. But instead of acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, Peter says that they – the people in the crowd – handed Jesus over to the authorities and had him executed by crucifixion.

Let's think about that for a minute. Peter is directly blaming the people in this crowd for handing Jesus over to the Roman Empire and blame them for Jesus' execution. How fair is that, really? Many of these people are from out of town. They might not have even been in the area six weeks ago when all of this happened. Some in the crowd had probably never seen Jesus. And I would imagine that not all of these thousands of people were actively demanding that Jesus be executed. There was a crowd demanding Jesus' execution, but the Gospels don't even imply that it was a crowd of many thousands. Is it really fair of Peter to cast blame for Jesus' execution on these specific people? Is it?

**Tuesday**

Read Acts 2:37-41

Peter is calling for repentance. Repentance is about a turning in the direction of your life. Your life is going in one direction, you repent – you turn, and you move in the direction of God. Repentance is not merely feeling bad or guilty, you must be ready to do the work of turning yourself towards God. Cain and Judas both felt bad and were upset but in their despair they did not turn their lives over to God.

When you think about coming before God, do you come before God to feel bad, feel guilty, or despair (all of which are fine), or do you come before God to repent because you feel bad, guilty, or despair?

**Wednesday**

Read Luke 13:1-5

A lot of the analogies we use for talking about repentance fall short of the full meaning of repentance; they are helpful but don't paint the whole picture. We often think of ourselves on the highway of life. At some point we make a wrong turn and either have to make a series of turns to get on the right path; totally turn around, backtrack, and make a different choice; or stubbornly persist on our current path and figure it'll work out. It's a nice illustration but it makes it seem like the whole of your life came down to one bad decision that you have to make up for and then you'll be on the right path and just fine.

Instead, Peter is saying, along with Jesus and the rest of scripture, that our lives are foundationally oriented in the wrong direction. It is not about making a different choice at a fork in the road, it is about accepting that we rebel against everything holy and righteous: God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and their design for the world: justice, grace, love, and peace. And in repenting we are admitting that we need to turn away from ourselves, our ways of thinking and doing things, and all evil, and turn to God in Jesus Christ and have faith that Jesus is the Son of God who is Lord of this world and the only one who can save us.

**Thursday**

Read James 2:14-26

That work is setting things right, not figuring out the 10,000 reasons why things aren't your fault. The blame for the coronavirus pandemic cannot be laid solely at your feet, but you have a holy responsibility to work for God's healing to be done in response to it. The blame for the economy cannot be laid solely at your feet, but you have a holy responsibility to alleviate suffering in God's name. The blame for racism, discrimination, and hate in all its forms and manifestations cannot be laid solely at your feet, but you have a holy responsibility to work to ensure that all people – who all bear the image of God – receive love, justice, and mercy.

**Friday**

In preparation for worship, please read and reflect upon Acts 2:42-47.