

Believers Praise God

Acts 2:32-33, 37-47

³² “This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. . . .”

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” ³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

⁴³ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the

proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Theme Statement

Peter proclaims Jesus as Lord, who brings forgiveness and the Holy Spirit and empowers believers to praise and worldwide witness. The good news of Jesus shapes the mission of the church.

Exploring the Word

The unknown author of Luke wrote Acts between the late 60s and early 80s CE. Peter's sermon in Acts serves to strengthen the faith and confidence of the struggling early church. It assures the church that God is at work in its mission. It testifies that God protects, directs, and enables the early church in its witness to Jesus as Lord.

Acts 2:32-33 Jesus is Lord!

“This Jesus” (v. 32) is emphatic. It points out that Jesus is the key to God’s plan of salvation and the church’s mission. Earlier, Peter’s “this man” in Acts 2:23 makes the same point: God acted decisively in the ministry, death, and resurrection of the one whom Israel rejected. “Therefore” in verse 33 leads us to Peter’s application of what God has done. God places Jesus at God’s right hand. Jesus is holy enough to be seated in God’s presence in a position of unique equality, honor, power, and glory. God fulfills the promise of the Holy Spirit in Joel (Acts 2:17). The Spirit makes Jesus present to the faith community to carry on God’s goal of salvation for both Jew and Gentile. Here is

assurance that God’s mission, no matter how difficult, continues to the ends of the earth, as Jesus had promised (1:8).

Acts 2:37-41 “Repent, and be baptized”

The Holy Spirit pierces the hearts of the people, enabling them to hear Peter’s invitation to receive forgiveness and life in the Spirit (vv. 37-38). *Repent* means to change direction, to throw oneself on God’s mercy, and to look to God. God is the only hope of Peter’s listeners. And because of Jesus Christ, Lord and Messiah, there is not only hope but salvation. The all-important gifts of forgiveness and new life come through Jesus and the gift of the Spirit (v. 38). Through baptism all are cleansed and rooted in Christ. This good news has a wide scope (v. 39). God will call both Jew and Gentile to Christ (10:34-48).

Peter continued to “exhort” or encourage his listeners again and again (v. 40). The “save yourselves” is in the Greek passive tense so the meaning is closer to “*Let yourselves be saved from your corruption.*” In a sense he is saying, “For goodness’ sake, the lifeline of Christ is here for you. Hold on!” This emphasizes that forgiveness and the Spirit are pure gifts of grace for the Israelites and for all of us sinners. The response to Peter’s invitation is amazing.

Acts 2:42-47 The life of the community

These verses describe how the community now lives and functions. First, the community is grounded in the central promise of God given in Jesus Christ. Apostolic teaching focuses on Jesus as Lord and on the ethics of the community. Second, *community* means fellowship that makes meaningful connections with and for each other. Third, whether through a meal or the Lord’s Supper (both could be meant here), the community experiences a closeness with each other. Finally, through prayer the community

seeks God's direction and not its own. The community prays because it depends on God and God's word rather than on any individual feeling or intuition.

The Spirit continues to amaze (v. 43) by what is done in Jesus' name (see 3:6-10). Verses 44-47 highlight the unity and depth of mutual sharing in the community. The word *distribute* in verse 45 is in the Greek imperfect tense, indicating that selling and distributing were *ongoing* practices addressing needs as they occurred. This community is not a private club but one that worships with others in the Jewish temple daily. Their joy and generosity spill over into praise of God (vv. 46-47). This is a living, active body of believers ready to learn, to listen to God and one another, to share material goods, and to be out in the wider community.

The Word Today

Martin Luther described the Holy Spirit as “the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the word of God” (Stjerna, *The Large Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther 1529*, p. 360). Our study text in Acts and the chapters that surround it bear witness to this truth. God's gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter's preaching, and the Spirit piercing hearts lead to the repentance and forgiveness of about three thousand people in one day.

Here are some questions to ponder in order to dig into the meaning of our text for today: How do you see Christians being “birthed” by the Holy Spirit in our study text? Do you see this same thing today? How might you describe the Spirit's faith-creating work being done in your family and congregation? No mistake about it, God's Holy Spirit is definitely at work bearing witness to Christ, piercing hearts, forgiving sins, and bringing believers together in

community. Luther called the church “the Spirit's workshop” for a reason.

However, this workshop is not just for in-house use. As an adult I understand better why Dad wanted us kids to leave his shop tools alone. In his shop there was a place for everything and everything in its place. Sometimes we would borrow a tool and either forget to return it or put it back in the wrong place. This made it difficult for Dad to do repairs on the farm when needed. It is very human and practical to want order and control. But the church is different. The church is not this kind of workshop. We don't own the tools. We don't control the builder-owner. The church is the Spirit's workshop, and as such, it can get messy and seemingly out of hand—that is, if we are so blessed. Thank goodness that the Spirit brings in all sorts of people, like a Gentile Roman officer, a greedy tax collector, and a beggar at the door of the temple or church. And thank goodness that the Spirit is at work throughout our world making the good news of forgiveness and new life, given through the Lord Jesus Christ, heard and lived to the ends of the earth.

Questions for Discussion

Beginnings

1. When has God surprised you with an insight or blessing in your daily life or worship life?

Exploring the Word

1. What does Peter mean when he says that Jesus is at the “right hand of God”?
2. How is Peter's sermon reassuring to the Israelites that day of Pentecost? How do Peter's words echo Jesus' words in Luke 24:44-49?

- 3. What does it mean to repent in this story?
- 4. What four practices does the newly repentant and baptized community embrace?
- 5. What is the believing community's attitude toward material things? Describe how their sharing took place.

The Word Today

1. Circle the words and phrases below that help describe the Spirit's faith-creating work in your congregation, and add any that are missing.

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| preaching | coffee fellowship |
| quilting | cleaning/repairing the |
| youth instruction | building |
| Bible study | providing food, clothing, |
| choir | or other services to |
| offering | people in need |
| potluck meal | other: _____ |

2. On the continuum below mark where you would place yourself in completing this sentence: My current experience of the church is that it is like . . .



3. Complete the following sentence: Our study today gives me hope for the church and its mission because . . .

Closing Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, we praise and thank you for the gift of your Spirit. Through the Spirit continue to enlighten, forgive, and renew each of us and your church universal. Give us the faith and courage needed to share your love and forgiveness with our neighbors and the world. In your name we pray. Amen.

Further Study

Acts 1:1-14; Acts 3:12-26

Daily Readings

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| M. Exodus 19:1-8 | F. Acts 2:1-12 |
| T. Exodus 20:1-6 | S. Acts 2:22-36 |
| W. Psalms 133; 134 | S. Acts 2:37-47 |
| T. Revelation 4 | |

Memorization

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.