

TRANSFORMED PEOPLE**Acts 2:37-47****(Read Acts 2:37-47)**

Intro: Why is a butterfly my background graphic? Well, notice there is the cocoon right next to the Monarch and it has just emerged from it. From a cocoon to a majestic monarch butterfly. It's a picture of transformation. That's what we're talking about this morning – transformation – but not of butterflies – which is truly miraculous, but the most magnificent transformation which is transformed people.

When Sheila was born at about 11:30 PM on May 11, 1984, I was beside myself with joy. I finally left Kathy at the hospital at perhaps 1:00 AM and I came home, and I called everybody. I mean everybody! At, like, 1 or 2 AM!!! I called my parents and my brothers and sisters, every one of them, and then Kathy's mother and all Kathy's brothers and sisters, and Dale and Margaret Engle (our pastor here at ABC) and Paul and Lee Keefer (our best friends at the seminary and also they were ABCers). I told them all that we had a beautiful baby girl. It was good news that I could not keep to myself. Then I did the next most important thing, I ordered a pizza. At about 2 AM. Yes, KD Pizza, which was our go-to pizza place back in those days, was still open till about 3:00 AM, I think. And when the pizza was delivered, I told the delivery guy that my wife had just had a baby 2 hours before, and he gave me the pizza for nothing because it was good news for him too. That's what happens, it's a picture of how good news transforms people. Incidentally, EVERYONE was really grateful that Emily was born at 11:30 AM on a Saturday morning so they didn't have to be wakened by a deliriously happy dad.

Albert Winn writes this of Peter's sermon which we covered last week, *"This sermon is not a series of propositions or general truths, such as God is good, man is sinful, or murder is wrong. It is a piece of news! God has entered decisively into human life; God has acted in a new and startling way; God has done something he never did before! Small wonder that this message was called "the gospel" which means "the good news!". The early preachers were like a man who stops his neighbor on the street, shakes him by the shoulders, and cries: "Something wonderful has happened!"*

That's the way it is. Peter couldn't keep it in. The good news had to be shared. And so Peter, as we saw last week, preached a wonderful message and the Holy Spirit who was palpable among these thousands of people, settled into their hearts with sweet conviction. It's a picture of how . . .

When the gospel is preached, hearts are moved

- Peter's audience immediately asked, *"Brothers, what shall we do?"* Acts 2:37
- David Guzik writes *"It has been said that in normal seasons of Christian work, the evangelist seeks the sinner. Yet in times of revival or awakening, things change: The sinner seeks the evangelist. This day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is one of those great seasons of God's work."* We have witnessed this. There have been huge revivals that have happened that have turned the world upside down. Something that doesn't get mentioned in the history books is the great revival that was going on during the same time that the Revolutionary War was happening. The followers of John and Charles Wesley and their friend, George Whitfield, were spreading far and wide and people were getting saved by the thousands. Our own Brethren in Christ Church was founded during this big and we are the descendants of that Great Awakening. There have been numerous revivals prior to that and since then. There have been special movements of the Holy Spirit over more recent decades. In fact, exactly three years ago today at Asbury University a revival began that went on for weeks. The people who were there, and the others who flocked in, were changed. Like these people in Jerusalem they were cut to the heart.
- As we heard a bit ago from commentator Albert Winn, a dynamic message is not necessary, what is necessary is the Holy Spirit. Yes, when the gospel is preached hearts are moved, that's what transforms people and as that happened, the people asked . . .

What shall we do?

- I can imagine Peter's joy at this question. I'm a preacher and when someone is especially moved by something that I preach, there is a special kind of joy that comes from knowing that I have been a vessel for the Lord.

- I'm sure Peter was stoked as he heard this question. And, notice, that he doesn't say, with sarcasm. "*Duh! Turn to Jesus.*" Because it wasn't a stupid question. It was a powerful, powerful request for a path forward. So he told them . . .

REPENT!

- The other day we had a request from our snow day inmates, otherwise known as Fiona and Grady, to take them to lunch. And, of course, they chose Burger King, and as we talked over our fast-food, Grady was saying that he wanted to help me with my sermon. So Fiona took her burger wrapper and my pen and started jotting down some notes. I told them that my sermon was about repentance. And Nana proceeded to explain that repentance is changing one's direction. Fiona jotted that down and I will treasure that burger wrapper forever.
- Kathy's definition was perfect, especially for an 8 year old and a 5 year old. But I want to share with you a really wonderful definition that David Guzik has in his commentary. He writes "*To repent does not mean to feel sorry, but it means to change one's mind or direction. They, (and Guzik is referring to the people that Peter was preaching to who he had just reminded that they were responsible for Jesus's death on the cross) They had thought a certain way about Jesus before, considering him worthy of crucifixion. Now they must turn their thinking around, embracing Jesus as Lord and Messiah. . . . Repent sounds like such a harsh word in the mouth of many preachers and in the ears of many listeners, but it is an essential aspect of the Gospel.*"
- He goes on to say "*Repentance must never be thought of as something we must do before we can come back to God. Repentance describes what coming to God is. You can't turn towards God without turning from the things he's against. In this sense, repent is a word of great hope. It says you don't have to continue the way you've been going, you can turn to God.*"
- And once you've repented, Peter adds . . .

Be baptized!

- They were making a clear break. Before, when baptism happened it was when Gentiles converted to Judaism. In baptism they were buried as a Gentile and raised as a Jew. Later, John the Baptist had preached a baptism of repentance; of turning from sin and walking in righteousness. Now Peter is bringing a different kind of baptism. This was the public act that announced that they had been cut to the heart and that they had repented and that their lives had been changed. Baptism makes a clear statement to the world that you are a new person in Jesus Christ. There's hardly anything more public than jumping into the water in the yard in front of the church and allowing a pastor to splash you under the water three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit. You're telling the world, that is, the people standing around you and the people driving by on Mifflin Avenue, the neighbors next door, Gerald and Debbie and Nikki that "*I'm a new creation. I am making a statement. A wonderful thing has happened, since Jesus came into my heart.*"
- And the beautiful thing is . . .

The message is for all!

- Yes, Jerusalem was full of people who were Jewish from all over the known world. Peter tells them *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.*" Acts 2:39. This means Gentiles too. This wasn't just a message for Jews. This message was for all of humanity. It's good news! It's really really good news. A happy hymn from my childhood, in the old red hymnal talks about this and it begins with,
*"Whosoever heareth," shout, shout the sound!
 Spread the blessed tidings all the world around.
 Tell the joyful news wherever man is found:
 "Whosoever will may come."
 "Whosoever will, "whosoever will!"
 Send the proclamation over vale and hill;
 'Tis a loving Father calls the wand'rer home;
 "Whosoever will may come."*

It goes on in an almost rollicking and unapologetically joyful way. And it's biblical! It's taken from the King James Bible, and is found in Revelation 22 which says *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* Revelation 22:17 KJV. Its right there just four or five verses from the end of the Bible. In fact, it's just two verses before the warning that tells us to not add or subtract anything from this word of prophecy (Revelation 22:19). It is a promise that says, whosoever will may come.

- That means there is no one who does not have the option of turning to the Lord. He's not turning anyone away, but you need to turn to him. The message is for all. F. B. Meyer, in his inimitable fashion says it this way. "*There were no exceptions in Peter's great appeal for repentance. "Every one of you!" He declared. "But I drove the nails into his hands." "Every one of you he insists." "But I pierced his side." "Everyone!" Says the apostle again. And from this motley crowd arose the primitive church. Notice that those who had gone deep into sin are not required to serve a long novitiate between forgiveness and the gift of Pentecost. Not only Jews, but far off Gentiles- nay, as many as God shall call by his inward speech and grace are welcome to be to receive the fullness of the Spirit.*" And then Meyer asks, "Have you received it?" And let me ask, have you received it?
- Remember this, whosoever will may come. And then after that Peter says . . .

Turn away from this crooked generation

- This means that we need to just stop getting wrapped up in the things of the world. No, it doesn't mean that we go get in a buggy and ride away to a mountaintop cave and separate ourselves from the world. We need to be the light to a dark world. We have good news that we need to tell people. But if we keep getting wrapped up in the things of this world, the politics and the entertainment and the things that distract us from the Good News, we are surrendering to a corrupt generation. Let's repent of that.
- And now let me tell you, Peter and his friends who were there experienced the nearly ecstatic thrill that comes from seeing the transformation of people. It says here, *There were added that day about 3,000 souls.* Acts 2:41. And it happened without 20 verses of JUST AS I AM! 3,000 believers came into the kingdom of God. 3,000 people were saved and then the church just grew from there. . .

A transformed people transforms the world

- I'll quickly wrap this up because I've already gone too long, but look at the rest of our text – these people were different!!! They were devoted to the apostles teaching and to fellowship. That means they were hungry for the Word and they were devoted to one another.
- They were devoted to God and enjoyed the favor of all! That sounds great, doesn't it?! Well we can have it again. We just need to look like Jesus instead of the corrupt generation we were just talking about. The church that came out of the Day of Pentecost was the model church, but it wasn't the perfect church as some would think. This is because it was still humans. But it was good and it IS good! And notice that final words of our text, *And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.* Acts 2:47. There were more and more added day by day. That's what happened then. It still happens now. Transformed people turn the world upside down. WE need that now Church. Amen.