

We bow our hearts in prayer: Lord Jesus, wash us in the precious tide, flowing from Your pierc'd side. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Our text for meditation begins with the last sentence of St. Peter's Pentecost sermon, and continues with the ensuing conversation between Peter and the Pentecost crowd.

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, St. Peter stands boldly before this crowd and preached Christ.

But only 7 weeks previous, he couldn't even stand before a servant girl during Jesus' trial.

So, what was the difference???

... We read as follows in Jesus' name:

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "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. 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."^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. ^(John 17:17)

By the end of this day, we hear of the miraculous catch Jesus made through this fisher of men, that 3,000 people were added to the Christian Church by the power of God's Word & Baptism. That is 3,000 more disciples, people who followed Jesus Christ.

That's a lot of people. Our chapel seems full just with 300 people in it... only $\frac{1}{10}$ of that number.

If one were to summarize the sermon St. Peter preached that day that moved so many, this is what you would find.

**"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth,
a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs
that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know — *this Jesus,*
... you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."** ^{Acts 2:22-23}

... "*This Jesus* God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

**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 yourselves are seeing and hearing.** ^{Acts 2:32-33}

... "**Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain
that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, *this Jesus* whom you crucified."**

Basically, he accuses his hearers of killing Jesus, the One they knew was sent from God, explains that God raised Him from the dead, the proof being the miracle of speaking in tongues as they saw happening among the Apostles, and that this same Jesus is now ruling over heaven and earth.

Their fear, then, is pretty natural.

"If we sought to kill the Christ, and He now rules over everything,
then what will stop Him from seeking vengeance upon us, not only physically, but eternally?"

Their fear was dead on. They had nothing to excuse them. They were helpless. ...

But fortunately, their fear led them then to seek help from the Apostles. "What must we do?"

To which St. Peter had a ready answer. "Repent and be baptized."

And 3,000 were added to the number of disciples.

It sounds so easy, doesn't it? But it isn't.

There is a cost to discipleship. A cost to following Jesus.

So let us consider some of the costs of discipleship recognized in the text.

First, you must confess your sins. That is the first cost.

That doesn't sound so hard, does it? I mean, we do it all the time. Already this morning.

And yet, it is a heavy cost. And while we are used to it, we don't like doing it.

And we especially don't like hearing about the sins we need to confess from others.

How hard was it for the people to hear St. Peter accuse them of killing Jesus?

"I wasn't there! It was the chief priests. They were the guilty ones. It was Pontius Pilate.

It was the centurions. These all did it. Not I!"

How much less do you want to hear that the lust and greed and envy that you have been secretly harboring, and possibly even indulging, is to have put Jesus on that cross?

Your uncharitableness has not served your neighbor in his distress,

not displayed a **tender heart** as we heard in the epistle (1 Peter 3:8-15)

Your desire for self-gratification, has shut your heart to opportunities to serve your Lord in **brotherly love and unity of mind**.

Like Peter, your fear of persecution has shut your mouth to claim Jesus as your master.

See, the cost of discipleship is not just confessing that you are "a sinner,"

but even confessing your sins. All of them, even those you don't know about.

And when some sins are brought to your attention, not to excuse them or try to justify yourself, but to confess them also.

Not that these need to be all recounted individually to a pastor or father confessor,

but that you regret them and, in faith, desire to turn away from them.

Here then, we confess along with the Pentecost crowd, "What shall we do?"

"I am guilty. I cannot deny it. Jesus was crucified for my sin. I have crucified my Lord and Christ."

The **second** cost of discipleship then, is to confess your inability to save yourself.

"What shall we do?" ... I cannot reverse my actions. I cannot make up for what I have done.

I cannot change my sinful nature. I am undone."

It is a great cost because you must be emptied of any thought of self-reliance,

and look completely to Another, and that, One that you cannot see.

The **third** cost of discipleship then, is to submit to the Lord's way of salvation.

It's to respond as Peter did to Jesus in the Gospel, "**But at Your word I will let down the nets.**"

"What shall we do?" the people asked... As if to say "Brothers, You tell us.

You obviously have the answer from the Holy Spirit."

To which we respond,

"Hear, learn of this Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. Who worked all these divine miracles.

Listen how He taught His Apostles to declare your sins forgiven. Believe these words.

Hear. Go to the baptismal font and have your skin moistened with a little plain, ordinary water while these divine words are spoken upon you.

This will wash your sins away and give you the Holy Spirit -- a gift!"

This too is a great cost because not only are you helpless, but God's plan seems too simple.

With all my striving, I cannot save myself, and yet this is all that needs to be done?

Repent and be baptized?

And for those of us who are already baptized, return to your baptism in repentance and faith.

Discipleship comes at a great cost, to your sinful nature.

But, Dear fellow redeemed, with these great costs of discipleship, come great blessings in Baptism.

1. With the confession of every and all sins... comes the complete forgiveness of all sins.

They are all washed away.

This covers not only your lust, and greed... envy... self-indulgence... uncharitableness, and fear it also covers over your original, your inherited sin.

Here too, the Lord opens salvation for children and infants as appropriate recipients of Baptism, for they too have a sinful nature, and they too have a Savior who would wash their sins away.

2. With the confession that you are unable to save yourself, comes Baptism's salvation in Jesus Christ.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?^{Romans6:3}

We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing.^{Romans6:6}

His crucifixion, even at your hands, was for your good, as He took the punishment of your guilt and suffered it on that cross, and shed His divine blood so not a drop is required of you.

3. With your submission to the Lord's way of salvation -- through His Word and Sacraments -- comes the gift of the Holy Spirit, who breathes into you spiritual life

to believe this forgiveness, life, and salvation are yours,

to strengthen you against temptations, and empower you in a godly walk here on earth.

There is a cost to discipleship. You must put your reason into submission to God's Word.

For natural reason asks, "How can water do such great things?" And answers, "It can't."

Yet 3,000 people, cut to the heart did not find peace in a mere picture of forgiveness.

They were not comforted by the promise of some forgiveness that they might yet attain in some future undisclosed, mysterious way.

Peter too knew the power of fear, but also knew the power of God's forgiveness over that fear.

Peter, who had denied this same Jesus Christ the very morning He was crucified.

was not emboldened to preach about a flood of forgiveness that had not first drenched him and brought him peace with this same risen Jesus Christ,

before whom he stood numerous times with great joy and without fear.

The cost of discipleship is a great price, but it is not yours, not really.

It was paid for in full by this Jesus, whom you crucified... paid for in His blood,

with which He washes you through Baptism to cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria