

What shall we do?

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- [0 : 00] Dear Heavenly Father, we give you thanks that we're able to come together as your church this Wednesday lunchtime. And Father, we thank you for each other.
- We thank you, Father, that it's pleased you to call us to yourself, each of us individually, and all of us corporately as your church here on Buchanan Street, your family.
- And we pray, Father, that you'd forgive our sin. It's ever before us. Please forgive us for those things that we've done wrong, willful disobedience or sins of omission, avoiding things that we ought to have done.
- And Father, we pray that you would give us repentant hearts so that our whole lives would better portray your dear Son, Jesus.
- Father, we pray that you'd be with everyone from St. George's Tron Church in these difficult days.
- [1 : 15] That you'd guide them and that you'd enable them to conduct themselves for your glory in all that they do. We pray for the situation in the Near East, thinking of Gaza and Israel.
- And we just pray that you'd give leaders there and leaders from the States and from Egypt wisdom in these difficult days. We pray for your purposes, Father.
- They're mysterious to us and generally unknown. But nonetheless, your plans and purposes are unfolding, even through this havoc and bloodshed.
- So we lift the church over there to you and pray that you would bless it and use it for your glory. And now, Father, as we come to your word, we pray that you would guide our thinking through your spirit and that you would make our time together useful for your purposes in our lives.
- And we lift our prayer to you confident because we ask in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Well, you might like to turn up Acts chapter 2.
- [2 : 33] It's on page 910. Acts chapter 2. And to save my voice, I'll just read a short passage.
- I'll read from verse 22 to verse 24. 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 delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.
- Now, you might remember last week we were looking at the first part of this passage. And in particular, we looked at Acts chapter 1 and verse 8.
- [3 : 47] And we saw that that gives the context for the whole of the book of Acts. So Acts chapter 1, verse 8. It's really the theme of Acts. You might just want to look at that.
- Jesus says, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

And then in chapter 2, God's Spirit indeed came, didn't it? And it fell on the apostles in chapter 2. And suddenly, they're communicating in different languages.

And we had that question, didn't we, in verse 12. They asked, what does this mean? And then some said, well, they're over the drink drive limit.

Verse 12. They've had too much to drink. That's verse 13, wasn't it, that? And then in verse 14, Peter stands up.

[4 : 48] And he starts to preach and gives God's explanation, which takes us right through, friends, to verse 41. And so last week, we were thinking about the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy and how Pentecost was ordained by God.

And we finished with verse 21. And Peter's saying, get ready for judgment day. Call on the name of the Lord and you'll be saved. And now, this lunchtime, we move from Peter explaining the actual event of Pentecost to Peter explaining Jesus' ministry.

His ministry on earth, his death and his resurrection. So Peter is emboldened by God's Spirit and is proclaiming the gospel.

And it's like Acts chapter 1, verse 8, coming alive. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses. And that's what Peter is doing.

And our first point is, who's in control? Before I was a Christian, I used to think I was in control. I thought I could manage my life.

[6 : 06] I was so arrogant. I used to sort of put down lists of goals in my life to try and achieve. And at the end, it didn't have that proviso, God willing.

I was far from God. It took a traumatic event in my life for the Lord to knock some sense into me. I suppose it's like, well, C.S. Lewis says suffering is God's smelling salts.

Doesn't he? It wakes us up to God. And you and I, we can sometimes kid ourselves, can't we, that we're in control. But then something happens. And the stack of cards, it comes falling down.

We realize that we don't even know what tomorrow will bring. Am I right? We don't, do we? You and I, we make our plans, but we really don't know what tomorrow will bring.

And Peter stood up and he's teaching who is in control. Have a look with me at verse 23, chapter 2 and verse 23.

[7 : 11] This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. So who's in control? 23a. God.

23b. 23b. 23b. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. Who thinks they're in control? It's the men of Israel, isn't it?

It's the Jewish people. Verse 24. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

And so God is in total control of all things. The Jews, they killed Jesus.

23b. But 23a, it was all part of God's plan and purpose. And in verse 24, God raised Jesus up victoriously.

[8 : 13] Peter sounds a little bit like Joseph, doesn't he, speaking to his brothers in Genesis. You meant it for harm, but God meant it for good. Peter says, you killed Jesus, but it was all planned by God.

And we just need to look, don't we, friends, at something like Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53, just to see that all this is in the pipeline.

It was all promised and foretold in the Old Testament. So God is in total control. And friends, is God in any less control today in 2012?

No, he's not, is he? And so, yes, Christians are persecuted around the world, but God is in control. Your life, right at the moment, it might be difficult just now.

God is in control. Not 50% in control. Not 92% in control. God is 100% in control.

[9 : 21] World events. Personal situations. Our own churches. The worldwide church. God is in total control.

Is that good news just now? It is, isn't it? It must be good news. And don't forget, we're on the winning side. Verse 24. God raised Jesus up victoriously.

And so, if you're trusting in Jesus, God will raise you as well. We're on the winning side. It's a done deal. John chapter 5, verse 24.

Ephesians chapter 1, etc., etc. We've already crossed from death to life. Ultimately, we win, don't we, with Christ. We're victorious in him.

And so, it's a story, friends, of the book of Acts. The church is persecuted, but it just keeps on growing. And in 2012, God's glorious plans and purposes are unfolding every day before us.

[10 : 27] In your life and in mine. Your church and mine. Sometimes it doesn't feel like that to me. And I sometimes feel a bit down in the dumps.

I don't know about you. But what I have to ask myself, I have to ask myself, is this true? Is it true?

And the answer is always emphatically, yes. It is true. And so, you and I, we need to learn how to trust less our fluctuating feelings and more God's word.

We need to have our noses in the Bible and be learning all the time more about God. So, that was our first point.

Who's in control? And the answer is God. God is in total control. Now, one thing that's important to remember is that God is in total control.

[11 : 37] Listen, often despite appearances, despite our thoughts. And Peter is saying that. He's saying, look at the cross.

God is in control. Just look at the cross. God is in control. Now, our second point. Our second point is who killed Jesus?

Who killed Jesus? And in this point, I'd like us to think about the crucifixion. The Jews, in verse 23, they thought they were in control, didn't they?

They hated Jesus' authority over them. They decided to kill him, to plot against him, even though the only explanation for Jesus' power was that he was from God.

We will see that in verse 22. Look, 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 in a cave that no one could verify.

[12 : 41] No. That God did through him in your midst. Do you see? It's in the public domain. As you yourselves know.

You can't deny it, is what Peter's saying to these Israelites listening to him. It's embedded in your own experience. And so they're deluding themselves, friends, aren't they?

They're deluding themselves. They knew that Jesus was from God, and yet they want him out of their lives. They want him dead. And perhaps there's someone here this lunchtime.

You know that Jesus is God. But in this certain area of your life, you don't want him tampering. You want him out of the way. And so the Jews, they thought that by killing Jesus, it would be the end.

That their reign and status would go on unhindered. You know the Pharisees, the religious elite, they'd go strutting around, taking the best seats, standing on street corners.

[13 : 50] They looked impeccable on the outside. And yet, on the inside, they want Jesus dead. Whitewashed tombs.

And verse 23, God permits them, God wills them to do what they want to do. And it's all part of God's unfolding plans and purposes.

Look again at verse 23. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

You crucified and killed him, says Peter, verse 23. Friends, that must have been an unforgettable experience for everybody who was present. Roman capital punishment.

It's not chemicals injected into your arm. It's not a firing squad. It's not like being hung, as in India today. This was agony.

[14 : 56] It was barbaric. It was drawn out. The trial, the mocking, the beatings, the procession, the stripping naked, the humiliation.

The nailing, bang, bang, bang, bang, as each nail was hammered into his flesh. For dogs encompass me.

A company of evildoers encircles me. They have pierced my hands and feet. Hands that flung stars into space to crawl nails.

Surrendered. The mocking voices of the religious. He saved others, but he can't save himself. This wasn't a firing squad, was it, friends?

It was Roman crucifixion. Drawn out. Hour upon hour. Of agony. Hanging there. For all to gloat over.

[15 : 57] And this horrible atmosphere of dying. It must have sort of just hung there in the air like some macabre fog enveloping everybody who was there.

And I guess you'd somehow feel that you were participating in it all. You were part of it all. And the sun withdrew its light. And Peter says, you crucified and killed him by the hands of lawless men.

And didn't we just? Friends. Our sin. Our sin did it. Didn't it? Our sin. My sin and your sin, if you're a Christian.

It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished. It was an Easter morning. In Reims. Near Paris.

In 1945. And a black American soldier. Rose to sing. Were you there? When they crucified.

[17 : 06] My Lord. And Tom Allen. From New Milnes. In Ayrshire. Was there. He was serving in the RAF at the time.

And he listened. Were you there? When they crucified. My Lord. On that day. In Reims. As a soldier was singing.

I realised for the first time. Really for the first time. Not as a theory. But on the pulses of my life. What the cross was about. And what the Christian faith was about. I realised for the first time.

That day. That Christ had died for me. Were you there? How could I be there? This happened 2000 years ago.

But the man who first sang those words. Had gone right to the heart. Of Christian truth. And had in this simple spiritual. Reminded us of the fact.

[18 : 05] That we're all involved. In the death. Of Christ. And Tom Allen was convicted by God there. On the spot.

And he later became a minister. In the Church of Scotland. And he was called. To serve here. At St. George's Tron. And the Tron today. I suppose it's built on the legacy. Of Tom Allen.

Were you there? When they crucified my Lord. And so the Jews and the Romans. They were there. They collaborated. And Christian or not.

Our hands. Have Jesus' blood. On them. There's something corporate. About the death. Of the Son of God. Something that all humanity.

Is responsible for. We want him out of the way. And that's what sin is. Yet while we were still sinners. Christ died.

[19 : 01] For us. And verse 24. Can you see? God raised him up. Loosing the pangs of death. Because it was not possible.

For him to be held by it. Verse 32. This Jesus God raised. Christ. And that we are all witnesses. And by this time.

The people are convicted. They realize friends. As Peter's speaking. What they've gone and done. And it doesn't get more evil. Friends. Does it? Than crucifying. Your creator.

It does not get worse. Than that. The one who breathed life. Into Adam. And thereby all of us. We're all culpable.

The sin of Christians. Killed him. The corporate Jewish people. Killed him. Men of Israel. Verse 22. The world.

[20 : 00] Lawless men. Verse 23. Killed him. So that was our second point. Who killed Jesus? And the answer is we did. And thirdly.

What shall we do? And this is the response now. We're thinking about. In our final point. Peter speaks about the resurrection. From Psalm 16. And Psalm 110.

And he concludes his case. And in verse 37. We get the reaction. Just look down friends. Verse 37. 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? Have you ever been cut to the heart like that? Just think of these people.

They look at the apostles standing there. Before them. They look at Peter. And everything sort of comes cascading together. In their thinking. And they realize. They suddenly realize. We've gone and crucified the Messiah.

[21 : 03] And they're terrified. Well wouldn't you be? They look at the apostles. Eye to eye. Brothers. What shall we do?

And when he comes. He will convict the world. Of sin. Righteousness. And judgment. Said Jesus. About his spirit. When he would send it.

Brothers. What shall we do? And you will be my witnesses. In Jerusalem. Judea. Samaria. And to the ends. Of the world. And this friends.

This. This here. Is the spirit's primary ministry. And it is right through. Until in 2012. Explaining God's word.

And people being convicted. Brothers. What shall we do? And if Peter had replied. Will you be stoned right now? That would be just. Wouldn't it? Am I right?

[22 : 02] It would be. Wouldn't it? But Peter knows. Doesn't he? Peter knows. God's mercy. Come to your senses. He says. Verse 38.

Can you see verse 38? 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. Isn't that a. A wonderful. Gracious message. They slaughtered. The Messiah. And it can all be washed away. And forgiven.

Isn't that remarkable friends. And more than that. Look at the end of verse 38. And you like us. Will receive the gift. Of the Holy Spirit. I cannot tell.

How he. Whom angels worship. Should set his love. Upon. The sons. Of men. Isn't God gracious friends. To you.

[22 : 56] And to me. And Peter's words. They come tumbling. Through the centuries. Don't they? And they arrive with us. As we look at this passage. In 2012.

Looking for my watch. Don't they? Verse 39. Just have a look there. Verse 39. Can you see? For the promise is for you.

And for your children. And for all who are far off. That's us. Everyone. Whom the Lord. Our God. Calls to himself. And with many other words. He bore witness.

And continued to exhort them. Saying. Save yourselves. From this crooked. Generation. And it's like Peter friends. He shouts. Doesn't he?

Through the ages. To 2012. Save yourselves. From this crooked. Generation. And we live in a world. Don't we? It's like. It's like people on the Titanic.

[23 : 52] A lot on board. They didn't realize. It was going under. And that's the world we live in. And so you and I. We need to be out engaging. Don't we? With this world. With God's help. Through his spirit.

And his word. Save yourselves. From this crooked. Generation. Shall we pray? 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 promises for you. And for your children. And for all who are far off. Of everyone. Whom the Lord our God. Calls to himself.

Dear Heavenly Father. We thank you. For your spirit. That in your mercy. He convicts us. And also in your mercy. He sends us out.

[24 : 53] And empowers us. So that others. Are convicted. And they come to meet with your son. Jesus. And so our prayer father.

Is that you would. Give each one of us. That Acts chapter 1. Verse 8. Courage. We pray that you would embolden us.

And send us afresh. Into our lost world. With this great message. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. And his grace. To us. And we ask in his name.

Amen.