

COLLOQUIES with Pastor Brian

What Shall We Do?

The sermon title for this Sunday's worship is "What Shall We Do?" and it was chosen before the whole Coronaviral LockDown. It was chosen as a direct quote from Sunday's scripture, which originates in the book of Acts chapter two, verse 37. It reads, "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?'"

I love this verse. It comes from the most pivotal passages of scripture for my life and ministry. But let's break it down first, and then I'll explain why this text seems so important.

Our scripture comes after Jesus has ascended to heaven and the Apostles, now with a new sense of mission and purpose, begin sharing their experience of Jesus 'Good News' with others. They have experienced discipleship, they have experienced loss and death, and then they have experienced new life - resurrection if you will - but not just for Jesus. They, too, have a new perspective, new energy, a new way of living. And, they are motivated to share it with those around them.

They don't hide anymore either. Instead of crouching in closed and locked rooms or sheltering in place, they are moving to the busiest areas of their community and making contact with all they can, sharing the good news.

And what news it is. Peter tells the entire story of the bible then, in a nutshell, explains how God's act of saving humanity involves Jesus... but tells the Jews gathered they actually killed him.

To tell the truth, that last part is kind of a leap because you might need to do some work to convince me that I took part in killing someone I never met. I DO understand when interacting with brown-skinned Americans how I have at times participated in systems of injustice, economic inequalities and full out European inculturation that harmed them. All I have to do is travel to the Native American reservation and I could listen about how situations I benefit from created situations that put others at risk. Even as I'm typing, a pandemic created by the accidental spread of viruses with others rages outside. So maybe it isn't a stretch to imagine how our actions can harm others, however unwittingly.

Whatever the case, what is amazing to me is that these listening Jews, upon hearing Peter's expository heavy proclamation are moved to cry out for help. When was the last time you shared a message with someone that they said, "You're right. What can I do?"

Peter leads the listeners in the basic act of Christian discipleship. They are exhorted to repent, be baptized into the new life and identity, and then to actively take the gifts of the Holy Spirit into themselves to continue the work of transformation. This work includes (in verse 42) devoting "themselves



to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

And this is the basic formula for a life of discipleship. I feel deeply in my bones these marks of discipleship are still just as important 2000 years later as they ever were and am blessed these last 20 years to find others who get this; who understand the call to repent, accept a new calling, and devote ourselves to living differently.

Some things are still a bit different. Instead of hiding in the 'upper room' or 'locked rooms' such as the disciples did for fear of death, we good church people have been hiding in church buildings each Sunday morning, being too shy or polite or vulnerable to risk sharing our good news. Now, a new day has dawned and through an "act of God" (unknown event), we are forced out of our buildings and instead meet to worship on the highway of new commerce and trade - the internet.

Some of the numbers we are seeing on YouTube, Facebook and others suggest that more people are listening now than ever before. And my open question to myself and you is this: "What am I asking them to believe?" Do I/we believe Jesus died because we killed him AND that we are now offered a way to REPENT/TURN FROM/LIVE DIFFERENTLY than we have in the past and let the Holy Spirit work in us? What is to keep us from still learning, fellowshiping, breaking meals together and praying?

This is a real question, and it demands real answers. Please, if you have heard anything from me in the past that made you wonder, wonder about this. What does God ask of us in light of the second chapter of Acts and the CoronaVirus year 2020? What Shall WE do?

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Peace in Christ, my family of God. — Brother Brian