

Well, anyone who follows or understands the “seasons” of the church, are probably very surprised with the Bible reading that I’ve chosen for today.

Acts 2, is traditionally the passage that gets read at **Pentecost** (Whitsunday), which occurs 50 days **after** Easter Sunday...

Pentecost was originally a Jewish harvest festival, but it was also the day that the Holy Spirit came upon the church...

Crowds of people, from all over the known world, were gathered at Jerusalem (for the harvest festival of Pentecost), when the Holy Spirit came upon the church...

But I’ve chosen today’s reading, because it records one of the most powerful sermons (on the Resurrection) ever given.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter (a bloke who, **before** he was filled with the Holy Spirit, was cowering behind locked doors / denied) stood up before His Jewish people, and:

- proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and
- he urged them to repent and to be baptised... and
- on that day, 3000 people were added to the Christian church.

Peter risks a confrontation. He levels an accusation at them: “You lot killed Jesus... Do you have any idea, what you’ve done???” The Holy Spirit (Whom you can see, working through us at the moment), was sent by Jesus who lives...

Righto, so let's follow Peter's message:

1.

Firstly, they should've **known** that Jesus of Nazareth was a man of God. How? Well, God attested to the fact, by His **mighty works and wonders and signs** that Jesus did before their very eyes, and in their very presence.

But Jesus offended them, and they killed Him.

2.

But the second thing Peter reveals, is the betrayal of Jesus /arrest / execution, was **according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God**. It wasn't some kind of horrendous accident. It wasn't that those Jews were any worse than anybody else... It was all part of God's plan.

3.

Thirdly, another part of God's plan, was that God raised Jesus up... And I love this phrase here:

V²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

And the Greek word ὀδῖνας (ōdinas) (used for "pangs") for "Pangs of death" – when that word gets used in the Bible, **usually** it's about "birth-pains"... And isn't that a wonderful description here, for what death was for Christ, and for what death is for us... We go through the pain of death, but for those who are in Christ, it's like birth-pains – being **born** to eternal life.

And Peter's giving an image that the pangs of death were like bonds. **Death** was a bond trying to hold Jesus... But it was not possible for those bonds of death to hold Jesus....

During the week, every time I read that it was not possible for him to be held by death, my mind went straight to that song [Geoff Bullock] "Death could not hold Him down, for He is risen".

But why? Why was it impossible for Death to hold Jesus down? Well, it was impossible, because God had spoken through the prophets, and decreed that He would be raised.

Peter took the crowd to Psalm 16. Psalm 16 had been written by David, but it was obviously not about David. And Peter makes the case that "David was Prophesying in that Psalm" – When David wrote that Psalm, he was writing about Jesus.

Alright, so David had written:

For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One see corruption.

But Peter makes the case: But this David bloke, is **long** dead. We even know where his **grave** is... David can't be talking about himself when he said this. He was prophesying – He was talking about Jesus.

V³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that **he** was not abandoned to Hades, nor did **his** flesh see corruption.

So, it was foretold. It was God's decree that Jesus would be raised.

4.

Fourthly, Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God...
Humanity tried to crush Him and end His life completely...
But the end result is, "Jesus is exalted".

5.

Fifthly, Jesus sends His Holy Spirit, so that He can be with us today... That was what captured everybody's attention there in Acts 2 – the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the signs and wonders that accompanies this...

6.

And this all comes now, to the pinnacle of Peter's message:
V³⁶ 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, how do you reckon you'd feel, if you were in **their** shoes? Can you imagine it: "Oh no!!! What... Have... we... done???"

Imagine the retribution... "Umm, We've just crucified the Son of God"... "Oopps"...

I mean, when it comes to rulers, it's pretty important (don't you think?), that when you pick a side, you pick a winner...

What would the consequences for that be???

*Even in governing our country today... When somebody challenges for the top job (PM),,, (which seems to be a regular occurrence lately) (6PM's / 11years)... But when somebody makes a challenge, if you're in the party-room, it's pretty important to choose the winning side... Because if you don't, **you** lose... Even good ministers (people who have served their nation well), if they didn't choose the winning contender, their spot in cabinet is gone... The winning PM only wants his loyal supporters, and anyone who didn't support him, is demoted...*

And of course, it was even **more** brutal in Jesus' day... If you didn't pick the winning side, and you supported the loser, the new king would probably have your head... Literally...

Imagine how they must've been feeling... "Oh bother... We crucified the Christ"...

"We rejected Him. We killed Him. But God has exalted Him, and He is Lord... What's going to happen to us, now???"

7.

V³⁷ 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?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptised 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.

All hope, was not lost... Yes, they had rejected the messiah. But there was still hope for them.

And the message for them, is the same as the message for us. Peter said V³⁹ 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."

Alright, that's us... Many people today, **reject** Jesus... Let's face facts: Disciples of Jesus (followers), are well and truly in the minority.

And when Peter preached, his listeners realised that they were in trouble. There would **have** to be consequences for their rejection of Jesus... But you might say, "Yeah, but they crucified Him – we didn't do that..."

But the crucifixion was but a result of the real issue... What was the real issue at play here? "**Rejection**". They rejected the Christ. They rejected the Lord.

V⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

That sounds very judgmental, doesn't it... They were a religious people. They were there for a religious festival, for goodness sake. And he's calling them a crooked generation??? What do you think he would call our culture???

I want you to know, that the Gospel critiques **every** culture, and it critiques every individual within a culture... *And in our society, there is good, but there is also bad... And increasingly so. Our nation (and our society) have gone against God. Our law-makers, reject God's Law, and our population, largely reject Christ...*

Is it not obvious, that when the very first round of closures happened, "Meeting together to worship the Lord Jesus Christ, was banned. (You Christians can't meet together any more... It's not essential..."

And I probably won't make many friends today, but I'm going to say it anyway: (in **many** ways), "the Aussie way, **ain't** God's way"...

Peter was preaching to a crooked generation, and so am I... And you might feel that's all very judgmental, but it **is** what it is.

What does it mean? (a crooked generation)? In the original Greek, it says τῆς γενεᾶς τῆς σκολιᾶς "*The generation – the crooked*" It almost sounds like "a crooked species",,, and that's not far away from what it means... A generation isn't simply: one level of a family tree" – when the Scriptures are

talking about a crooked generationⁱ, they're talking about the wholesale human rejection of God – it's twisted...

A lot of medical conditions, derive their name from the Greek language. And some of you will know what "scoliosis" is. There's a picture there – it's an "abnormal curvature of the spine" ... Alright, the spine is curved /crooked / twisted. The spine is not what it's supposed to be...

And **that's** what the biblical image of a crooked generation is about... All humanity – **we**, were created to be in an intimate relationship with God... And when we reject God, we are twisting what we are meant to be... That's what it means to be a crooked generation. And in fact, in the New Testament, "crooked generation" or "perverse generation", is used to refer to when people reject Jesus...

And a lot of us, might have a bit of a self-righteous streak to ourselves, and feel, "Well, that's not very fair – **I'm** not a crook – **I'm** not perverse..."

But what we need to understand, is that "the perversion" – and what defines us as being "crooked", is simply the rejection of Christ...

And if we reject Christ, we are just as bad as those who crucified Him...

The remedy???

Repent and be baptised... This isn't just a picture of "Oh gee, I'm sorry.", and continue on our merry way...

To repent, is to completely change our attitude toward Jesus. It is such a radical transformation, that Jesus described it as being "born again"... We stop living for 'self', and begin living for Christ....

And the **seriousness** of this commitment, is tied up in Baptism... Baptism, is the symbol of "Killing the old man, and raising up the new." We're being buried with Christ... And being raised with Christ...

Here's the thing. And this is why I've chosen this reading for today (Resurrection Sunday):

Those who repent, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are baptised:

- leave their old sinful life behind;
- we are now, in an intimate relationship with Jesus (We're not twisted any more. We're not crooked any more – We're now right with God). And He is present with us, through His Holy Spirit...
- And because Jesus is raised, we too will be raised...

So, who are you? Where are you at with Jesus...

Are you a crooked, twisted, perversion of what God intends us to be, because you continue to reject the Christ???

Or have you been made right with God, and you're now in relationship with Him???

Or are you at the stage of those people who the Apostle Peter preached to,, who were cut to the heart, and didn't know what to do, to get right with God...

Well, here's the answer: Repent and be baptised...

They've closed the river for the Easter weekend (and the Covid 19 Pandemic)... But I'm sure we'll still find a way to get you baptised...

We're going to pray right now, and if for you, you're praying this prayer, but you haven't yet been baptised, I urge you to contact me (contact details www.bushdisciples.church),,, and we'll talk about baptism.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,
We want to give you praise,
for this **glorious** Resurrection Sunday.
We acknowledge that You are the Christ.
God attested to You, by Your signs and wonders.

And through Your resurrection,
it was both proof, and promotion.
You are now exalted to "Lord".

Lord Jesus Christ,
We are sorry for our rejection of You.
And Lord, we repent of this.
We repent of all that is perverse and twisted.

And we no longer reject You –
We embrace You, as our Lord.

Holy Spirit,
Be with us. Be near us. Be in us.

And Heavenly Father,
We praise You, not just as “**the** Lord”
But as “**our** Lord” – as “**My** Lord”.

We thank You for Your mercy;
We thank You for Your forgiveness;
We thank You, that You don't give us the judgment we
deserve,
But the precious salvation we could never earn,
Through the Blood of Jesus,

Amen.

ⁱ Marshall, I.H., 1980. *Acts: an introduction and commentary*, Downers Grove, IL:
InterVarsity Press.