

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, May 17th, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant**

**Cut to the Heart, Called to Christ
Seventh Sunday of Easter
Acts 2:37-41**

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also.

The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.
Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.
Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Gracious and eternal God,
our heavenly Father,
we gather before You with hearts full of wonder and mouths filled with praise.
You are the Creator of all things,
the Sustainer of life,
and the Redeemer of our souls.

Your majesty fills the heavens,
and Your mercy reaches down to the lowest of us.
We adore You for Your holiness,

Your wisdom,
and Your unfailing love that pursues us even in our wandering.

Lord Jesus,
risen and exalted,
draw near to us now by the power of Your Holy Spirit.
Open our eyes to behold Your glory,
open our ears to hear Your Word,
and open our hearts to respond in faith and obedience.
Invigorate our worship,
that it may be pleasing in Your sight
and a fitting offering to the One who alone is worthy.

We pray this in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Call to Confession

Our God is a God of light, and in Him, there is no darkness at all. Yet, if we are honest, we know that we often walk in the shadows of our own desires, hiding our faults and nursing our pride. But He is also a God of profound mercy, who invites us not to run away in fear, but to draw near in honesty. Let us approach His throne with confidence, confessing our sins together.

Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have often loved the ways of the world more than Your kingdom.
We have allowed the quiet currents of our culture to shape our hearts,
seeking our own comfort over Your calling.
We have harbored bitterness, excused our own failings,
and forgotten Your commandments.
We are weary of our own wandering.
Forgive us, Lord.
Cleanse us from our unrighteousness,
renew our spirits,
and lead us back to the path of life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news of the gospel: God does not leave us in our guilt. Through the perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, the debt of our

sin has been fully paid. For all who turn to Him in faith, there is no condemnation. You are forgiven, you are washed clean, and you are welcomed as beloved children into the family of God. Peace be with you!

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.**

Hymn: "Your Will Be Done" (V 1, 2, 4)

Your will be done, my God and Father
As in heaven, so on earth
My heart is drawn to self-exalting
Help me seek Your kingdom first
As Jesus walked, so I shall walk
Held by Your same unchanging love
Be still my soul, O lift your voice and pray:
'Father, not my will but Yours be done'

How in that Garden he persisted
I may never fully know
The fearful weight of true obedience
It was held by him alone
What wondrous faith, to bear that cross!
To bear my sin, what wondrous love!
My hope was sure, when there my Saviour prayed:
'Father, not my will but Yours be done'

As we go forth, our God and Father
Lead us daily in the fight
That all the world might see Your glory
And Your Name be lifted high
And in this Name we overcome
For You shall see us safely home
Now as your church, we lift our voice and pray:
'Father, not my will but Yours be done! '

Responsive Reading

Psalm 103:1-14

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!

² **Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,**

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ **who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,**

⁵ who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶ **The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.**

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.

⁸ **The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

⁹ He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.

¹⁰ **He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.**

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

¹² **as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**

¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

¹⁴ **For he knows our frame;
he remembers that we are dust.**

Anthem (Music Ministry): "Here I Am"

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Acts 2:37-41

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?” 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, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ 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.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Sermon

There are moments in this life when a single word, a phrase or a sentence does not just pass through your ears and register in your mind as some interesting idea. Instead, there are time it hits you in the heart, it weighs heavily upon your soul with the force of a divine appointment. It cuts through every layer of defense, every excuse, every distraction, and goes straight to the heart on the matter.

That is exactly what happened on the Day of Pentecost after Peter finished preaching. Luke tells us that the crowd was ‘cut to the heart.’ This was not mild religious curiosity or even an emotional high from a powerful moment. This was spiritual surgery; the Holy Spirit taking the sharp Word of God and piercing the conscience of man with divine precision.

Look back at the context of this day that we have already studied. It had started with spectacular signs: a sound like a mighty rushing wind, divided tongues as of fire, and then the miraculous ability to speak in other languages so that devout Jews from every nation under heaven heard the mighty works of God in their own tongue.

Some of the people were amazed, some perplexed, and others mocked the apostles, saying they were drunk on new wine.

The extraordinary signs got their attention, of that there is no doubt. But it was the bold, clear preaching of the gospel that did the work, that is what cut them to the heart.

This same pattern holds true in the world today. God can use many things to draw our attention — world events, a sudden health scare, a family crisis, the birth of a child, the loss of a job, a quiet conversation over coffee, or even the stillness of a long winter

evening. These are often the ways that God makes his way into our lives, making us wonder about him.

But what He has sovereignly ordained and promised to use for the awakening of sinners is the faithful preaching of Christ crucified and risen, Christ offered freely to sinners, Christ commanding repentance and faith, and Christ worthy to be trusted with our whole lives.

Remember that all of this happened at Pentecost — Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks.

Jerusalem was packed with devout worshipers from across the known world — covenant people, temple people, Scripture-saturated people who had come for a holy festival with real expectations in their hearts.

They did not come expecting to be told what we learned about last week, that their own hands had helped crucify God's promised Messiah and that their sin now stood fully exposed before the risen Lord.

Yet that is exactly what Peter declared with boldness and clarity.

Peter, a Jew, is preaching to his fellow Jews.

We need to remember when we look at this that this passage is not given so we can point fingers at "those people back then." The point is made to bring every single one of us, under the searching light of the cross.

The Christian confession is never merely 'They were guilty.'

It is always, 'My sin required the cross.'

Every generation that rejects God's Christ is a 'crooked generation.' And every generation desperately needs the Savior the cross provides.

In these verses we are looking at today, we see the clear signs of true conversion: deep conviction, a desperate response, the clear promise of the Gospel, an urgent warning, and visible fruit in a new community.

Let's walk through it carefully and prayerfully, asking the same Holy Spirit who worked so powerfully on Pentecost to work among us,

Act 2:37

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?”

The Greek word used here is powerful, ‘katenýgēsan’

It means to be pierced, struck through, wounded inwardly with deep distress and pain. This is not a gentle nudge or a passing feeling of guilt. This is the sharp pain of a conscience that has suddenly been awakened by truth in the presence of the living God.

Peter had named reality without flinching.

He declared that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified, God had raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of the Father, and made both Lord and Christ. The Holy Spirit took those facts and drove them home like a surgeon’s scalpel to the soul.

Scripture calls the Word ‘the sword of the Spirit’

Hebrews 2:12 states.

Hebrews 2:12

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

There is a beautiful irony happening here with Peter.

Remember the garden? The place where Jesus was arrested. Peter once drew a literal sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Jesus had to undo what Peter had done.

But here, now, filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter wields a far better blade. He cuts hearts open, not to hurt, harm or destroy, but so that God’s grace can enter and heal. God’s wounding always serves God’s purpose; the Great Physician opens what is infected in our lives so that real healing can begin.

So, do not despise the moment of conviction.

I’ve sat with people from all walks of life, those carrying heavy responsibilities, working demanding jobs, raising families in uncertain times, laboring until they’re exhausted, and those quietly carrying regrets in their later years.

Too often we treat our deepest convictions like unwelcome intruders. We numb them with endless scrolling, overwork, entertainment, substances, or constant busyness. Our culture provides endless escape or anesthesia for the soul, anything to avoid sitting quietly with ourselves and facing the truth of what truly matters.

Yet those uncomfortable convictions are frequently mercy in disguise—ready to do the hard work.

It hurts, yes, but it tells you the nerve is still alive. The most dangerous spiritual condition is a heart that feels nothing at all, a sealed conscience. If the Spirit is pricking your conscience right now, maybe about how you've spoken to your spouse in the weariness of everyday life, maybe about how you've been raising your kids, maybe about the secret sins you've been hiding, or maybe about the sins and patterns of life that you cannot seem to break, that is not necessarily evidence of God's anger. It may be the kindness of God leading you to repentance.

When the Word offends you or cuts deep, it is always aiming to rescue you, not ruin you. The immediate response of the crowd is telling: 'Brothers, what shall we do?'

This is far more than intellectual curiosity. This is the birth cry of repentance.

It is the question that rises unbidden when God begins a real work in a soul: What now? How do I fix this? Is there any hope for someone like me?

Notice what they did not say.

They didn't say, 'Peter, that was a fascinating lecture.'
They didn't say, 'You've given us something to think about — let's agree to disagree.'

Their conscience had been awakened. They realized the problem was not merely 'out there' in Jerusalem or in the Romans, their real problem was in them.

It is also striking that they called the apostles 'Brothers.' Only moments before, some had mocked them as drunk. Now they appeal to them as family.

That is what God does in seasons of awakening. The sinner begins to seek the messenger of mercy.

Acts 2:38

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, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"

'Repent...'

That is the Gospel's first word to a conscience-stricken sinner.

Not 'Try harder.'

Not 'Clean yourself up first.'

Not 'Do better next time.'

Simply, 'Repent.'

The Greek word '*metanoēō*' it means a change of mind that leads to a change of direction, in other words a complete reorientation of the entire life.

Peter was telling them: Reverse your verdict on Jesus. You saw Him as worthy of rejection and crucifixion. Now receive Him as Lord and Christ. Repentance is a fully decisive surrender of one's self to God.

We need to be very clear about what repentance is and what it is not.

Repentance is not mere regret or remorse.

There is a worldly sorrow that is self-centered, sorry you got caught, sorry about the consequences.

Gospel repentance is God-centered.

It agrees with God about the true nature of sin and hates it because it offends a Holy God.

Repentance is also not a payment you offer God to earn forgiveness. It is the empty-handed posture of receiving mercy. 'Lord, I have been wrong about You, wrong about myself, and wrong about life. I am coming under Your rule.'

Repentance is both commanded and enabled.

It is our responsibility, yet it is a gift made possible only by God's mercy.

This guards us from the dangers of legalism on one side and on the other cheap easy-believism.

Some of you may think you need to clean up your life before you can come to Christ. But repentance is 'coming as you are', the guilty you, the ashamed you, the weary mechanic, the anxious parent juggling work and family, the struggling teenager, the retired person carrying regrets from years gone by.

You don't come because you've fixed yourself. You come because Christ has already done what you never could.

Peter continues: 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins...'

In that first-century Jewish context, baptism carried enormous weight.

It was normally for Gentile outsiders. For these hearers to submit to baptism was a profound act of humility, it was like publicly declaring that : 'I am not clean as I stand. I need washing. I need to be identified with this crucified and risen Messiah.'

Baptism was to be 'in the name of Jesus Christ' which was an act of public allegiance. It was to be a visible, embodied identification with Jesus.

In the world today some treat baptism as secondary or optional.

Acts chapter 2 does not allow that. Baptism is not the cause of our forgiveness, salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Instead baptism, is the sign and seal of that forgiveness. It marks a person as belonging to Jesus. Because Christ commanded it, we dare not treat it lightly.

Peter then attaches two magnificent promises: 'for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'

Forgiveness addresses our past. It is full release from condemnation. Peter offered it to people whose consciences were screaming that their crime was unforgivable.

That is the glory of the Gospel. No matter how heavy your guilt feels, from things done long ago in your youth, or patterns you cannot seem to break in mid-life, or regrets that haunt your retirement years. God's forgiveness is real, offered, and sufficient in Christ. There is no probation period.

The second gift is the Holy Spirit Himself. God does not just pardon you and send you back to fight alone. He gives you Himself, to dwell in you, seal you, empower you for obedience, comfort you in sorrow, and produce fruit in your life.

If you feel powerless against sin, addiction, bitterness, fear, or old patterns that seem impossible to break, hear this: the Holy Spirit is given. Christianity is not about powering through another difficult season on sheer willpower alone. It is a Spirit-indwelt life.

Acts 2:39

³⁹ 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.”

This is wonderful news for families right here in our community. God loves to work through households and generations. Parents and grandparents, this is both encouragement and commission: Pray for your children. Teach them the Scriptures around the dinner table. Bring them faithfully to the means of grace in this church. Model what it looks like to love Jesus in everyday life; in how you speak, how you work, how you forgive, and how you trust God through uncertain seasons. Do not presume upon the promise, but do not despair either.

The promise also reaches ‘all who are far off’, this means those what are distant morally, spiritually, geographically, or emotionally.

No one is beyond the reach of this Gospel. The lonely widow, the overwhelmed young family, the man who hasn’t darkened the door of a church in twenty years, the promise is for them too.

And there is depth: ‘everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ The Gospel is preached widely, but God calls effectually. This gives great hope to our evangelism and rock-solid ground for assurance. Our hope rests not on the fragility of our own resolve but on the faithfulness of the God who calls sinners to Himself.

With many other words Peter continued to exhort them:

Acts 2:40

⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”

‘A crooked generation’ is a generation that is bent away from God. Much like the world today, a generation that is warped in what it loves, twisted in its values, and distorted in what it calls ‘normal.’

And here’s the important thing for us to be aware of: crookedness rarely arrives with a trumpet blast. Instead, it seeps in through repetition. Through assumptions. Through what we laugh at. Through what we excuse. Through what we see but ignore. And most of all through what we normalize.

So what does that mean for us, everyday people who go to work, raise kids, pay bills, volunteer, care for aging parents, coach, farm, commute, run shops, sit in waiting rooms, shovel snow, and try to keep life together?

It means the culture around you will quietly shape and teach you its own values — often without you realizing it.

It teaches you that your comfort and happiness is the highest good, so avoid hard lesson and obedience to God.

It teaches you that your anger is virtue, so keep a file of grievances, and remember those wrongs that others have done.

It teaches you that your worth is your output, so if you slow down, you feel useless.

It teaches you that your past is your identity, so you can never be new.

It teaches you that God is optional, he just a hobby, not Lord.

Peter says something different!

Be saved from this. Not just from individual sins, but from the entire pattern of life that bends away from God.

Coming to Christ means stepping out of your current life and into another.

It affects how we speak to our spouses when we're tired after a long day, how we parent our kids in a culture that pulls them in every direction, how we do business honestly even when no one is watching, how we use our time, what we refuse to excuse, and how we love our neighbors.

This is not call to withdraw into our own Christian communities away from the world, it is a call to live in it as Salt and Light without being shaped by its distortion.

Acts 2:41

⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

They received the word, not merely heard it, but welcomed it as true and necessary. They were baptized, and they were added. Christ does not save us to be isolated individuals. He saves us into a body, a family, a church. This is why we gather as a church; to encourage one another, to bear burdens together, to worship, to grow in grace, and to be the visible people of God in our community.

Also notice the beautiful reversal that takes place here.

At Sinai, after Israel's rebellion with the golden calf, about three thousand people died. Here, when the Spirit comes and the Gospel is preached, about three thousand live. Where the Law exposed death, the Gospel brings life through Jesus Christ.

So how are we to respond to this Scripture?

If you have been cut to the heart today, do not harden yourself. Do not numb the conviction with more noise, distraction, or busyness. That piercing may be mercy at work in you. Welcome it.

If you find yourself asking, “What should I do?” hear this clearly: Turn. Turn from your old verdict on what matters most in this world and from your former way of life. Come under the loving authority of the One who made you.

Repentance is not striving in your own strength — it is Spirit-enabled surrender.

The promise is wide — it is for you, for your children, and for all who are far off. It is deep, grounded in God’s faithful call. Forgiveness is offered. New life and power are given. Be rescued from this crooked generation.

Identify publicly with Christ. Be baptized. Join His people in a local church. Be added to His family here and now.

Because the risen Lord Jesus is Lord of all. He offers full forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The call is not to perform for Him, but to surrender to Him. The promise is not that you will become strong in yourself, but that God will give you Himself, His Spirit, to carry to completion what He begins in you.

Two thousand years ago the question was asked ‘What shall we do?’ and the answer has not changed, no matter what the world may tell you.

Turn. Receive the Word. Come to Christ. Identify with Him publicly. Be added to His people.

May the same Spirit who cut hearts open at Pentecost cut through ours today — not to destroy, but to heal, to save, and to send us out as Salt and Light in our homes, our workplaces, our schools, and our communities.

Let us pray

Almighty God, heavenly Father,

You have promised to hear and answer the requests we make to You in the name of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

We ask that You would be pleased to grant us all that is necessary for the glory of Your name and for our salvation.

Grant that the seed of Your Word sown among us may take deep root in our hearts

and bring forth fruit in due season,
 to the glory of Your name and the edification of Your Church.
 Strengthen us by Your Holy Spirit,
 that we may continue steadfast in the confession of our faith and in all holy obedience.
 And since it has pleased You to gather us together in this place,
 let Your blessing rest upon us and upon all Your people throughout the world.
 We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

John Calvin

Invitation to Offering

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn #410: "Joyful, Joyful We Adore You"

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
 God of glory, Lord of love;
 Hearts unfold like flowers before you,
 Opening to the sun above.
 Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
 Drive the dark of doubt away;
 Giver of immortal gladness,
 Fill us with the light of day!

All your works with joy surround you,
 Earth and heaven reflect your rays,
 Stars and angels sing around you,
 Center of unbroken praise.
 Field and forest, vale and mountain,
 Flowery meadow, flashing sea,
 Chanting bird and flowing fountain
 Join to praise you joyfully.

You are giving and forgiving,
 Ever blessing, ever blessed,
 Wellspring of the joy of living,
 Ocean depth of happy rest!
 God Creator, Christ our Saviour,

All are yours who live in love;
Teach us how to love our neighbour,
Lift us to your joy above.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God,
we thank You for the gift of worship—
for calling us out of isolation into the life of Your people,
for meeting us with truth and mercy,
and for sustaining us with hope.

We pray now for Your church:
make us a community marked by humility, courage, and love.
Guard us from division, renew us in unity,
and teach us to serve with joy rather than pride.
Give wisdom to those who lead, patience to those who labor quietly,
and comfort to those who carry unseen burdens.

We pray for the world You so love:
for places torn by conflict, for those who live in fear,
for the hungry and the overlooked,
for refugees and neighbors without stable shelter,
for all whose daily life feels heavy and uncertain.
Strengthen those who work for peace and justice;
give integrity and compassion to leaders and decision-makers;
and teach us to do our part with faithful hearts.

We pray for all who are sick, recovering, grieving, or exhausted—
for those awaiting diagnosis or treatment,
for caregivers who pour themselves out,
for those facing loneliness, depression, or anxiety,
and for any who feel far from hope.
Bring healing where there is illness,
steadiness where there is fear,
and comfort where there is sorrow.

And as we soon turn to fellowship with one another,
we ask Your blessing on the conversation and companionship that follows.
Make our welcome sincere, our listening generous, our laughter wholesome,
and our encouragement real.

Bless the food and drink that will be shared;
use simple hospitality to strengthen friendships,
to draw newcomers into belonging,
and to build up the love that reflects Your own.

Send us out, O God, with faith that is practical,
with love that is visible,
and with hope that endures—
for the glory of Your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction

Go forth into the world in peace.
Be of good courage.
Hold fast to that which is good.
Render to no one evil for evil.
Strengthen the fainthearted.
Support the weak.
Help the afflicted.
Honor all people.
Love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.
And may the blessing of God Almighty—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—be
upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**