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Easter 3 • Acts 2:14a, 36–41 • May 4, 2014

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Oswald: Easter 3, Acts 2:14a, 36-41
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Dear preacher, please restore this text to the Easter season! For many hearers this text will seem a “stealing of Pentecost’s thunder” rather than a proclamation of Easter’s good news. There is no better way to correct this skewing of the context of our reading than by preaching on it during Eastertide. It is neither the wondrous sign of the polyglot preaching of the apostles, nor the rushing wind and enlightenment of the Spirit that prompts the people’s response, that stabs their hearts; it is the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Lord and Christ.

The double-edged preaching of Christ—you crucified him but God raised him—has made clear to Peter’s hearers the direness of their situation (though who could possibly comprehend it fully?). They have *demand*ed and *brought about* the death of God’s Messiah and their Lord. If ever there was a time for the deliberative subjunctive: “What shall we do?” *now* was that time. Peter responds with a word for all and each one.

Peter's command to repent is in the second person plural: "you all repent!" It is the whole faithless people of Israel who are here called upon to repent; there is no distinction when it comes to this command. It is given for all. Reference to the "crooked generation" shows that this command to repent goes far beyond those present, and the book of Acts as a whole will show that the whole world stands under this command.

Yet, Peter's next command is in the second person singular: "Be baptized every one of you." Note the same pattern in the epistle: "If you (all) call upon as Father the One who judges impartially in accord with the actions of each (person). . ." This proclamation of the crucified and risen Lord and Christ encompasses all in its call to repentance but addresses each individual personally in its offer of salvation. It encompasses *all* the world in its expansiveness and draws in *each* individual in his or her situation. It is for "all those whom" the Lord our God calls, and, again, the rest of the book will make clear to apostle and reader alike just how many that is.

Peter refers to the world as a "crooked, dishonest, unscrupulous" generation. We may think back only as far as the gospels when we hear these words, but they go back much further. Moses decried the Israel of his time, the Israel who beheld the salvation of the Lord in the exodus from slavery in Egypt, as a crooked generation (Dt 32:5). Now *this* generation has not only seen and rejected the ministry of our Lord, they have seen the exodus that he accomplished in Jerusalem (cf. Lk 9:31)—and still they refuse him.

It is unfortunate that the text ends with the addition of 3,000 souls and does not include the description of this new community's life together. Today's preacher will likely be preaching to an already baptized congregation; vv. 43–46 would allow for greater application of this word to his people. Whether read or assumed, the inclusion of these verses could result in the following outline:

- I. A Word for All
 - A. Jesus is Lord and Christ!
 - 1. Crucified by/for you
 - 2. Raised and vindicated by God
 - B. Repent!
 - 1. It is not too late
 - 2. The invitation is for all
- I. A Word for Each One
 - A. Be baptized!
 - 1. Each person joined to Christ's death and resurrection
 - 2. Forgiveness and the spirit of life given to each one
 - B. Rejoice!
 - 1. The Lord saves from this crooked generation
 - 2. The people of God are reborn, raised to a new life of devotion to their Lord and "fervent love toward one another"

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