

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

"What Should We Do?"

Many times when I was growing up, there were many moments that I needed to receive encouragement from my mother. Now when I speak of encouragement, I speak of the kind that comes when you do something less than brilliant. A lot of times, it would be given when I absentmindedly forgot a homework assignment, or bought something that I really didn't need. Basically I see her with her hands on her hips looking at me saying "Now what are you going to do with that?"

I think mothers often bring up issues like that when we are less than smart as children. I still receive the same treatment. Yet at the same time, when you genuinely mess up unintentionally, the same question can be asked, out of concern and love. The statement "Now what are you going to do with that?" becomes question of how are we going to move forward, how are we going to correct the situation, how do we grow from here.

I was very fortunate growing up, where I had a mother that cared and loved for my brother and I throughout the time that we were being raised. In fact, she still cares for me to this day, along with my grandmothers, aunts, and other important women in my life. I wouldn't be where I am at today if it wasn't for my mother and her support, for the times I was less than smart and the times that I truly needed help.

The same idea of question, often comes up in our faith. We reach a point where we are unsure of what we should do next. We'll think that we are completely lost and we have no direction to move forward. Sometimes this is due to a situation that we are in and we question the wisdom of our actions and decisions. This is something that we have been questioning for some time as Christians, and it even reaches back to the beginning of our movement and faith.

In our reading from Acts today, we reach a point where the disciples are still trying to spread the message of Christ to other people. The story comes on the day of Pentecost, when a crowd had gathered and witnessed the Spirit descending upon those gathered. Peter was called to speak and spoke the Gospel and used the prophets of old to add credibility to the claim of Jesus as the Son of God. Those gathered were bewildered with the situation and were stunned, and simply asked the question, "what should we do?"

Now I think we need to pause here in this moment and try to appreciate the situation. Here we have had the gospel given to a great crowd who had just witnessed the Spirit descending and hearing this story. In some ways, I can hear my say and look at me "What are you going to do with this?" Here we have a moment when people are stuck and question where they should go.

I think this is an important moment for us as a church in ministry. We're getting ready for a time where we will begin to discern what we need to do as a church to spread the Gospel to our neighbors and friends here in our community. We have the gospel story, but what do we do with it?

As a congregation, we are a group of thinkers and a people that ask good questions. We are great at looking at our present situation in this congregation and asking "What should we do?" This question is often asked in the context of the future of the congregation, such as how we are to grow or how we are even to survive when our older members pass on. This is a very real situation and it is wonderful that we need are in a position that we can ask the question and start to figure out what we need to do next. Recognizing our situation is huge and recognizing that something needs to change is key. We can look to the Bible for guidance on our situation and

recognize and take clues and inspiration on what we are to do in order to fulfill our mission to spread the gospel.

After the question was asked of the disciples, "what should we do?" Peter responds boldly. He says to the crowd that they are to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and be prepared to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, for all people can receive the good news of Christ and be a part of the Christian story. Peter gives the message that Christ was giving throughout his ministry on this earth.

I think as a church seeking direction, this statement is profound. As a Christian, even as a life-long Christian, we need to be willing to repent and recognize that sometimes we have not always done the best thing in mind for Christ and for God. It's completely human to mess up, to fall short of the glory of God. But we have Christ as our advocate, our guide, and our redeemer to ensure that what we do we are continually focused on being made new in Christ so that we can serve God in this world.

Like I mentioned, the idea of a church repenting is important. As a long standing institution, we have to recognize that we have made mistakes at times. We have not done things in the interest of glorifying God. Most of the time I would say that it is due to mostly following intentions that were meant for good, but they just didn't pan out.

As a church, we need to recognize our mistakes. We need to recognize that we have not done the will of God. But we can change! We can be made new in Christ. Christ's message of redemption applies to all people, not just churches.

In this process of repenting, we also need to be willing to forgive ourselves. God has forgiven us in Christ, but it is just as important that we forgive ourselves for our mistakes. We need to recognize that the past is the past, and there isn't anything we can do to change that.

What we can do, as a testament to the love given to us by Christ, is to move forward in our mission.

This coming board meeting, I plan on asking the Board to consider the church to enter into a time of discernment of our mission. I am going to ask that we be willing to look at our past, forgive ourselves for our mistakes, remember all the ways that God has blessed the congregation and recognize that God indeed has worked wonders in this congregation. Yet remembering the past won't help us bring more people to Christ.

We need to be prepared to find new ways to reach people in Christ. Some of the committees of the church have already been working on finding new ways to reach people and to reach out to people. For example, our Outreach committee is planning an event in August that will bring folks to the church for a good time together and raise money for mission work. Our worship committee is getting ready to enter into a season of experimentation, finding ways to make our worship experience glorify God and reach out to people so that they can experience the Gospel message of Christ.

These are all responses to seek out God's will for us and to spread the Gospel. After Peter told the crowd to repent and believe, the crowd responded. Three thousand people were added to Christ's fellowship and three thousand people responded to the Gospel of Christ. Three thousand people in response to the Gospel of Christ! This shows us that in one powerful event, the Gospel of Christ can be spread.

I think it is important that we carry through our time of discernment for our mission. We need to get ready for the great things that Christ can do through us in our congregation. I believe great things can happen for Christ just as what happened in our story in Acts. We have an

account early in the Christian story. I believe that for those of us in our story, we can experience great things as well.

I believe that we need to be ready for the journey and be willing to commit ourselves to carrying out the mission of Christ. In the walk to Emmaus, the disciples encountered Christ when they were downtrodden, when they felt lost. Yet Christ appeared to them.

We may be downtrodden for our current situation, for our past, but Christ is with us. Christ then journeyed with the disciples and then celebrated communion with them. We need to be ready for Christ to accompany us on the journey. We don't have to do this journey alone at all.

We are at the beginning of a great story for our church. Like the beginning for those three thousand people in Acts the future is wide open for us. Christ is with us on the journey. We have each other on the journey. The disciples weren't alone, and neither do we need to be alone in the journey. I encourage us to be together with Christ and be prepared for the journey.

In the Spirit that we are given, I encourage us to begin the journey with the concern of a mother asking us what we are going to do. We need to be ready to act for Christ, because that is a response that many mothers, especially ones in this congregation would ask for.

Today as we have communion, think of what we need to keep in mind as we begin discerning our mission to reach out to people. As we receive the elements of life think of how we can spread to the Good News that we know and love to all of those that are in need of the love of Christ. Think of what Christ has done for you, and think of ways to share that goodness with other people.

In the Spirit of the God and the Guide of our lives, let us pray.