

Speaking to the soul



Listening to God

Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied: "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:37-38

A sermon is worth nothing if it doesn't lead to action. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost powerfully described the reason for Jesus' death. In words that would have shocked much of his audience, he pointed out that they had been responsible for it. It was their sin that had driven Jesus to the cross just five weeks before. Having heard this, the people were deeply challenged and knew that they needed to take action.

Peter's response is interesting because of the way it speaks of the covenant partnership that God wants with us. There was something that the people needed to do, and then a response that God would make. Firstly, they needed to repent. They needed to recognise that they had done wrong and head in a new direction, and this would be powerfully symbolised by baptism. This would show their clear intention to live a new life. The result would be the forgiveness of their sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God loves to bless us, but he will only do so when we make it clear that we mean business with him. He will never impose his blessings on us if we don't want them, but when we recognise that we have messed up and are ready to turn around, he will bless us in the way that he longs to. On that amazing Day of Pentecost, 3,000 people were added to the

Church. They could all have congratulated Peter on a wonderful sermon, gone home and forgotten all about it, but they didn't. They took action, and the world has never been the same since.

QUESTION

When were you last pierced to the heart by something that God said to you, and how did you respond?

PRAYER

Lord, help me to listen carefully to what you say to me, and make me ready to respond decisively to your words. Amen

Photograph - St Mark's Parish Church, Lisburn

