

# Passage

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## *Realise, Resolve, Respond*

Sunday 26 April 2020

### **Driving along**

Back when holidays were allowed, Jess and I visited Mallorca and went driving in the mountains.

┌ Here is one of the roads we drove along.

The locals made it even worse. Apparently we were driving too slowly, so they decided to lean on their horns and overtake round blind corners.

I'd like you to imagine *you* are driving along a mountain road –

# Realise

Peter and the disciples were locked in a room, when suddenly there was a sound like rushing wind and what looked like tongues of fire rested on them – the Holy Spirit had come, as Jesus promised.

They rushed outside, people thought they were drunk, and then Peter told them about Jesus. He ended with these words:

‘Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.’

When the people heard this, they were **cut to the heart**.

*Acts 2.36-37a (NIV)*

They *realised* what they had done, they *realised* that they were in trouble – deep trouble, because they had rejected and killed the very person God had sent to save them.

Picture yourself in your car, driving along the mountain road, oblivious to the fact that you are veering towards the edge.

Suddenly, you *realise* what’s about to happen... How do you feel?

Do you know that sinking feeling, as it dawns on you that you’ve done something wrong, or you’re in trouble?

## Respond

Realising the danger is all well and good – but we will still veer off the cliff edge, unless we *respond* by actually turning the steering wheel.

**‘What shall we do?’** the people asked Peter (37). He replied:

‘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.’

*Acts 2.38 (NIV)*

**‘Repent’** means ‘turn’ – only instead of turning a steering wheel to stop a car veering over a cliff edge, it means turning *away* from sin and self, and turning *towards* Jesus, his life and his love.

Peter **pleaded** and **warned** the people (40) – he was desperate for them to *respond*, because he knew they needed to.

# Receive

Luke tells us that **those who accepted his message were baptised** (41) – quite a lot, around 3,000 people, but it was not *all* of them.

Those who did respond *received*: forgiveness from God, and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now, we may not reject Jesus in quite the same way they did: no doubt some of them had shouted ‘Crucify him!’ a few weeks earlier.

But we reject Jesus when we put ourselves, our desires first. We reject Jesus when we value something or someone more than him. We reject Jesus when we don’t worship him as he deserves.

We *all* reject Jesus – and so we *all* need to go through the same process *they* did:

1. We all need to be **cut to the heart**, to *realise* the depth, the depravity, and the danger of our sin.
2. And we all need to *respond* to God by turning away from sin and self, and by turning towards Jesus, his life and his love.
3. Only then can we *receive* the forgiveness God is ready and willing to pour out on us.

And we all need to do this *every day*.

# Continual repentance and forgiveness

A wonderful friend of mine died on Holy Saturday, and he is now safe with Jesus, healed and made whole again.

When he preached he had a refrain that he used again and again, which has embedded itself deep in my heart: ‘continual repentance and forgiveness’.

That is the daily cycle of a disciple of Jesus:

- *realising* we need to repent;
- *actually responding* by turning away from sin and self and towards Jesus’ life and love;
- *receiving* forgiveness and life through the Holy Spirit

Daily, continual repentance and forgiveness. This isn’t wallowing in self pity, this is how Christians *breathe*.

Do you know how to breathe?

If you would like to learn, echo the words of this prayer, out loud or in your heart.

Let us pray.