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Substance of two Sermons preached by our Pastor
At Anniversary Services, May 26. 1980.

Afternoon Lesson. Luke 23. vv. 33-56.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptised everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Acts 2. vv. 37-39.

Immediately as we trust under the influence of the Spirit, we shall refer to two particular Scriptures that form the background to the Text. The first is, as St John records, "And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!" What was the solemn response of the Jews to that proclamation? They said, and this is not an isolated position, for all the human race, fallen in Adam say the same in unregeneracy.- "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." Some of you anticipate what I shall now refer to. It will probably have appeared mysterious to you as to why the Lesson was read concerning the sufferings and death of Christ, when yesterday we celebrated His victory, His ascension to Heaven and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. The mystery will be solved. Keep in your minds the cry of the Jews, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." When they crucified Him, as we read in the Lesson, we have the volume and dimensions unfathomed of the love of God, of the dying love of Christ. In all the brutality and ignominy He suffered the first words He uttered when they crucified Him were, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" and our Text is the result of that.

It is certain a number of those Jews listened to Peter's first powerful, unctuous sermon, and when he came to the close of his discourse he made a definite accusation. He said, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. - whom ye crucified. He is King and Messiah." Think of these three portions of Scripture together, and you

will not be thinking exclusively of the Jews, but of your own unregeneracy, your wicked heart, sinful nature, and the attitude of your carnal mind. O the solemnity of it! "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." Can you contemplate the dimensions of His everlasting love? It is our delight to speak of the dying love of Christ and the words of divine grace, so wonderful, so amazing, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And now Peter preaches powerfully, unctuously, under divine inspiration and with heavenly authority and charges them with His crucifixion. My friends, are we divinely interested in the same? Have you by the sovereign grace of God a sweet hope that when He uttered those precious words of grace, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." that He included you, me, us, our children? You can never know anything more divine, wondrous than the dying love of Christ to rebels, foes, aliens, wretches who fought against Him; full of enmity and malice. They said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Now Peter charges them with His crucifixion. I want to pause to say every one of the Lord's people are brought there. "Sinner, thou hast done the deed." Because this was nearly two thousand years ago and perpetrated by the Jews, Pontius Pilate sentenced Him and the chief priests and rulers concurred in it, we cannot say we are immune; we are Britons. We shall feel they were our representatives. I repeat,

"Sinner, thou hast done the deed;
Thou hast made the Saviour bleed!"

I know He was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," but it was by wicked hands and the enmity of fallen nature, and so now Peter charges them with His crucifixion. "whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," and this opens before^{us} our Text.

An amazing word this is, an outstanding word. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart." Before I come to that I will make a few preliminary observations. I mentioned^{yesterday} concerning the day of Pentecost and the feast of the passover with the Jews thanking God for their emancipation from Egypt, they brought the first-fruits and a sheaf of corn for the priest, and the sheaf was consecrated, dedicated and the Lord's blessing on the harvest sought. Here are the first-fruits of the Christian Church, the outpouring of the Spirit, the powerful, effectual preaching of Peter and the gathering of the first-fruits of His Church,

a great multitude of three thousand. I am not to spend time on this, but you will anticipate my thoughts on this Anniversary day in my own pulpit among my own dear flock and friends. I am thinking of the first-fruits in Dicker land gathered by William Cowper, although the Sanctuary was a small part of the present one. When the Lord sent that dear man of God from London to this area and to purchase the ground and build a Sanctuary, all the precious souls were waiting and a Church was formed and William Cowper gathered in the first-fruits. He had a series of baptisings, - 16, 17 at a time; and for the glory of God baptising his own clerk who had been waiting fifteen years; then the joy of his own dear daughter. So William Cowper gathered the first-fruits in the Sanctuary, and all over the years the Lord has been gathering in precious souls. So this was the observation I wished to make. As Pentecost was the time when the first-fruits of the harvest were brought before the Lord for His blessing and to seek His blessing on the corn harvest, so William Cowper gathered: he was seeking the Lord for the ensuing harvest until the Second Advent. It is my prayer that God will maintain His glorious interest in this holy place until His Second Coming. If you could read the letters and observations of the early Pastors you would know how it was powerfully laid on their hearts to seek the blessing of God on the generations that should follow. How precious this is, my friends. I am aware that in this day of solemn paucity of numbers, when we think of three thousand souls blessed our mind is overwhelmed, but the Lord has His harvest and His dear people, so we have the first-fruits of the harvest.

I will make this observation. St Mark tells us concerning the victory and ascension of the Lord Jesus, "He sat on the right hand of God, - heavenly authority and power. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and by that authority He called His own disciples and made them apostles, and He poured out the Spirit on them. Walking by the sea of Galilee and seeing Simon and Andrew casting their nets into the sea, - you have seen this in harbours, - He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. - You are going on with your fishing, but you will catch souls of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him." It was His divine power: there was no delay; immediately they left all and followed Him. What about it? See the faithfulness of our God and the

pleasure and delight of His servants. The Lord said, "I will make you fishers of men." and Peter preaching his first sermon and letting down the net, had the strength of the divine power of the Lord. "I will make you fishers of men." and down goes the net and there were three thousand in it. You see how the Lord fulfils this in the cases of all His dear servants. They are made fishers of men and the word the Lord gave is fulfilled. This is the observation I wished to make to the glory of God; with alacrity, delight, pleasure they left all, and the other two followed Christ. When He sends His dear ministers, and they are blessed men, His servants He upholds with His hand. The word concerning Christ belongs to His servants. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." My friends, no promise of the Lord ever goes unfulfilled: it is part of the manifestation of His divine power. He performs His decrees, fulfils His promises. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." My friends, you see the faithfulness of the Lord. I say to you, we do not expect to have three thousand in the net but one precious soul is wonderful: one for Glory, for Immanuel's Land; just one. His servants are still casting nets. I wonder how many this year will be in the net? Some are already in and they have not tried to get out. How many here will be in it? It is sweet to be caught in the net of the gospel. So let us praise, extol, honour and glorify the Lord for His divine faithfulness to His dear ministers. "I will make you fishers of men." and here it is fulfilled. "And they went forth, and preached every where,"- where God sent them: it rests with the Lord. And these words we have concerning their ministry, "the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." Here it is,- signs following. What a confirmation of the word of God! The Lord works with us. By His grace I seek wisdom to unfold this blessed portion. The Lord give us grace to expound it that He should be glorified, souls blessed and refreshed and in lively expectation.

Peter charged them. I have been pondering in my spirit,- the Lord gave to Peter wondrous grace and wisdom to use a divine, wonderful method in dealing with these souls. What was the method? To bring to their view the cross of Christ, His sufferings, and to accuse them of His crucifixion: to bring them to the Passion and agony of Christ, and as he did, so the Holy Ghost ^{sent} in their souls, within the view of the

sufferings and agony of the Lord Jesus the blood-dipt dart: they were pricked in their hearts. I wonder if I might venture to express this. By the quickening power of the Spirit, viewing the wounds by which He died, they were wounded that they might live. "With His stripes we are healed." You may ponder that. His wounds and agony became life to their souls but wounded them. The Lord wounded the hearts of those who wounded Him. This is something the Lord's dear established people pray for and desire, but when you think of it, by their wounds those were wounded to life, for they were pricked in their heart. I have thought this,- to reverently suggest to the dear friends there is nothing like conviction of sin by the Spirit that has reference in your soul and understanding to the Passion of Christ. You will be better convinced of sin and wounded by being led to Gethsemane and Calvary, because you see your sin in the light of His agony. Hearken to the prophet; "and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." What will penetrate a poor soul more in relation to the conviction of sin than to see sin in the light of the agony of Christ's suffering to put it away? So the arrow should go deep in their heart Peter brought them to the cross, and as the arrow went in and they remembered His agony and their brutal treatment and their cry, they were convicted to the depths of their souls. What a blessing this is! "But when they ^{heard} this, they were pricked in their heart." It is the sovereign, efficacious, initial work of the Holy Spirit: they are pricked. I feel I may say as the sacred side and heart of Christ was pierced by the spear,- and this is the life and salvation of the Church,- so when the Lord brings life to dead sinners He pierces their heart, and nothing will heal their wounds, only the precious blood that flowed from Christ's pierced heart and side. They were pricked. I am sure you are praying that your dear families may know this, but begin with self. We need the Lord continually to convince us of sin. Do you read a chapter or a few verses and you are pricked in your heart? or do you hear a sermon and go away uncomfortable?

"Convince us of our sin,
Then lead to Jesus' blood."

It is the holy initial, and it is something we continually need. It was the sovereign work of the Spirit in quickening the Jews. It is an amazing

consideration: to quicken a soul and to give life the Lord wounds and breaks it. Have you ever thought of that? In quickening the Lord pierces the heart with conviction and the heart is wounded. So we have the beautiful Hymn, "Jesus heals the broken-hearted." and you say, "Dear Lord, favour me that I may be a broken-hearted sinner." Wonderful it is for the Lord to wound our hearts and break^{our} hearts.

The concept of pricked is, the arrow went deep in the heart, penetrated it: it went right home, and the deed is done. Poor sinners are born again; they know they are sinners; they are alive. If you say, "Tell me a proof of it." it is guilt. Guilt is the heaviest load you ever carry: it is the pains of hell and death. That is the proof,- guilt; no excuse; you are the man. "they were pricked in their heart." As we look on Britain to day, and the Churches and the empty Chapels and the children of God's people, we pray that they may be pricked in their heart: that the blessed Spirit may be sent so they are no longer whole. They are sick, wounded, they need Christ. "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." A blessed thing this is. You hope your desire will be brought to fruition; that the Lord will do this for those you love. It is a clean, vital, powerful, efficacious work divine. They were pricked in their heart, a vast number of them. The Lord is able to do it now. I wonder how many wounded hearts are here to day in this sense. Then you have the cry of need, the cry of alarm; for guidance, for light. Do you remember those early days when the Lord wounded you by His Spirit? I could refer to our own apostle,- "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." There is a lot of this goes on with those the Lord has a favour to. The Spirit gives a prick in the conscience. It was hard for the apostle to kick against the pricks,- why? Because the more he kicked the deeper it went. With those who rebel it goes deeper as a goad. That is why it is hard. O for this blessed work of the Spirit in our day, and much more of it. They cried in alarm, in self-despair, for light, wisdom, revelation. They said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Blessed be God.