

# GREATER THINGS

## Fired by the Spirit of Jesus

Six conversation starters from Easter to Pentecost

### 5. Confession and Repentance with Jesus

#### Video Transcript

Welcome to week five of Greater Things. Our title today is Confession and Repentance with Jesus - that when he sends his spirit, we'll do greater things than him, and the very hallmarks of his ministry, which were often people finding repentance and confession, will be seen even more in our own lives. And we see this on the day of Pentecost.

Next week we'll look at the beginning of that passage from Acts 2 in full, but today we're just going to concentrate on the end of the passage and what one of the key responses was.

Acts 2:37-41

*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied; Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

*The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, for all whom the Lord will call. And with many other words he warned them and he pleaded with them, save yourselves from this corrupt generation. And those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

At the end of this epoch-making speech of Peter on the day of Pentecost, after this deluge of the Holy Spirit, the first question that the listeners had was, "what should we do?" It was like they woke up, their hearts were stirred, and quite simply Peter said, "Repent, be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." A repent is not a word we normally use today, it doesn't make sense, it conjures up an image of a kind of a shouty man on the streets with a big placard. But throughout Christian history, the rediscovery of this word, a retranslation, has been the gateway of flourishing of faith.

It unblocks a category error that seems to break dams holding back rivers of faith. In the 16th century, a German priest, Martin Luther, saw a problem. In Latin, the translation used across Europe, the Greek word metanoia, meaning repent, was effectively translated as do penance, to undergo the church's ritual of penance. Whereas repentance is about a change in our hearts, not doing religion, and Jesus' words were getting lost in translation, no longer speaking to the heart, but telling us to do what the church said. It opened a door to fresh growth in faith in Europe, and the dusty Bible came alive in fresh ways. And I think today the word repentance is lost in the dust again, but it's too an important key to lose. It's often the gateway to the things of God's kingdom, the key to the door, the crack that breaks the dam. And Jesus' opening words in public ministry were, "*the time is now, the kingdom is near, repent, have faith, it's good news*" - Mark 1:15.

Or we might go now instead for, now's your chance, heaven is near, turn around, make a U-turn, reset or reboot. See repentance has this kind of miserable, sinner, hair shirt, depressing feel to it, doesn't it? Like hard work, like dig, dig, dig, digging in ourselves for dirt. But in scripture, repentance is always joyful. Zacchaeus throws a party, the Samaritan woman at the well, runs to tell the whole village, the thief on the cross has a revelation that Jesus has done nothing wrong while he was getting his just desserts. He says, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Authentic joyful repentance becomes because of a revelation from Jesus when the Holy Spirit shines his light and shows a better way of life. We can't do it ourselves.

A ship that's lost at sea and the crew can't rescue themselves, they need a revelation from outside and they suddenly spot the lighthouse and there's joy as the captain turns the ship around, makes a U-turn, so to speak, to sail towards the light, back safe to home.

When Jesus breathed his peace of forgiveness, that was what we looked at in John in week two, that unlocks forgiveness, a fresh start. He breathed the Holy Spirit, received the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone their sins, they are forgiven.

Our culture is used to calling out evil and pointing the finger at others, but it doesn't offer any way to deal with it. And sometimes with really tragic consequence for those who are trapped in vicious cycle(s) of public condemnations. Two examples of this, one was from over 400 years ago.

I'm standing here at Lancaster Castle to a memorial remembering the number of women who were killed here in the early 17th century as witches, the Pendle witches. All the evidence is that their trial was based on very kind of fabricated evidence. They're most likely to be Roman Catholics hiding away and not wanting to give away their faith because of the persecution of Catholics that followed on from the gunpowder plot only a few years earlier. We needed some scapegoats. Why not people a long way from London? Why not some women in Lancashire? I think there's something in that story. And it's interesting how that pointing of the finger, calling out evil without any sense. I think we do need to repent for what happened then and see a new lease of life for that story that has caused so much crushing of people.

A more modern story is Caroline Flack. She was one of my favourite winners when she lifted the Strictly Come Dancing trophy in 2014. And she brought so much joy to our screens. But then a number of years later, she was suddenly on the back of the news because of an incident of domestic violence against her boyfriend. She was shamed on social media, how low had a woman's stooped that she'd physically attack her partner. And she responded with this really moving Instagram post.

She said, for a lot of people being arrested for common assault is an extreme way to have some sort of spiritual awakening. I've been pressing the snooze button on many stresses in my life for my whole life. I've accepted shame and toxic opinions on my life for over 10 years, and yet told myself it's all part of my job, no complaining. But the problem with brushing things under the carpet is they stay there. And one day someone's going to lift the carpet and all you're going to feel is shame and embarrassment. On the 12th of December 2019, I was arrested for common assault on my boyfriend. Within 24 hours, my whole world and future was swept away under my feet. And all the walls I'd taken so long to build around me collapsed. And I'm suddenly on a different kind of stage and everyone is watching. I've always taken responsibility for what happened that night, even on that night. But the truth is it was an accident. I've been having some sort of emotional breakdown for a very long time and I'm not a domestic abuser. I'm sorry to my family for what I've brought upon them and what my friends have had to go through. I'm not thinking about how to get my career back. I'm thinking how to get my life and my family back.

But the shaming on social media continued. There was no way out and she was found dead at her home just a few weeks later, suicide age 40. Her death was tragic and unnecessary. Who hasn't felt trapped in guilt and shame, especially in that secret place of our relationships, in the pressure cooker of lockdown or raising own children? But quite simply repentance is the gateway to his kingdom. It means we can breathe again. No matter how tightly we're cornered, even pinned down on the cross like a thief, turning around to the light of Jesus unlocks his peace from heaven.

And so often we sweep away the darkness into the understairs cupboard. But my experience is by allowing Jesus to bring that into the light, he can unbind and he can set free and he can give us a fresh lease of life. And maybe that's something that you need to be doing today.

In some traditions in our church, there's a wonderful growth of interest in confession, having a confessor. There's lots of tips online of ways to look through say the Beatitudes or the Ten Commandments and see what the Spirit is prompting as you look through those. Where does he want to shine his light? It's the Spirit who convicts of sin in our lives. We don't do ourselves and certainly we don't do it to others.

And so may, as part of this 'Greater Things' series, may the Spirit move in your life. May he bring that darkness to the surface and may you find release through confession, repentance and the amazing power of the blood of Jesus on the cross.

Amen.

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#### Guidance Notes

##### Gathering

Welcome members of the group and ensure they all know each other. Consider inviting members to share briefly how their week has been and any stresses or distractions they may have.

##### Introduction and Prayer

Share a short introduction to today's topic.

Open in prayer, inviting God to speak to us as we read and ponder scripture.

##### Scripture

Read Acts 2:37-41 aloud.

##### Conversation Starter

Play this week's video or have the transcript read aloud.

##### Discussion

Either in your group or alone, reflect on the following questions:

- What stands out to you from the passage we have read?
- What does repentance look like for you?
- Bishop Jill talks about how, in scripture, repentance is always joyful. Has that been your experience?
- How does Jesus call us to confession and repentance in our own lives?
- What freedom does Jesus promise us in confession and repentance?
- How might our lives be different if we had a regular pattern of inviting the Holy Spirit to shine His light on us?
- What does it look like for us to invite Jesus to shine His gentle, convicting light on us?

##### Prayer

Conclude by spending some time as a group in prayer, asking Jesus to call to mind any areas of your life that He wants to shine His light.

Consider using these creative confession and repentance prayer ideas from [24/7 prayer \(click here\)](#)

Consider using the 'Daily Prayer' section of the Fruitful App to pray the service of morning or evening prayer.