

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, Wash.  
January 16, 2011**

*Acts 2:37-47*

**Take Time for Your Body**

1. *To grow stronger in faith*
2. *To grow closer together*

**Hymns: 532 – 492– 313 – 770-- 536**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

*Acts 2:37-47 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 Jesus 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 our God will call.”*

*With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*

*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

**Intro:** What do you think is the most amazing thing about the human body? Quite a few answers to that question, aren’t there? In fact, I bet if I asked you to write down your answers, I might be able to read through all of them and not read the

same answer twice. The human body is simply fascinating. There is so much that we know about it; and yet, there is even more that we don’t. One thing that I do know about the human body is that it takes time. It takes 9 months before it is ready for life on its own outside the womb. It takes 20-25 years before it reaches its physical peak. And because it is an intricate machine, it also takes time to maintain. It takes time to eat right. It takes time to work out. It takes time to go to the Dr. and get things checked out. And if the body is not given time, it takes little time for it not to perform as well as it should.

And it is no different when it comes to the most important part of the body, the soul. Just like the other parts of your body, your soul needs time. It needs time to develop and grow. It requires time to maintain and strengthen. As we talked about last week, time is a very precious thing. We don’t like to waste time. And as we set aside time to work on our body; we want a plan so that the time is well used. Isn’t that what often holds people back when they know they should work out? “I’m just not sure what I should do.” “I’d love to begin, but where do I possibly start?” It is a logical question to ask as you seek to strengthen your faith as well, “What should we do?”

1. As we look at the words from the book of Acts, we see that many people in Jerusalem were asking that same question. Acts 2:37 tells us, **“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’** The Apostle Peter’s sermon had a deep impact on those who heard it. It had pierced right through the excuses and denials that sin built up and hurt them. Time was of the essence. They couldn’t put off their condition any longer. They needed to know immediately what they could do to make their relationship with God all better.

A. Peter gave them a free 3-step plan. It began with a familiar message. As Noah preached from the door of the ark, his message was not, “Something good is going to happen to you.” The prophet Jeremiah was not thrown into a pit by an angry mob for preaching, “I’m okay, you’re okay.” John the Baptist was not beheaded for proclaiming, “Smile! God loves you!” Each sounded the same,

strong, clear message that Peter spoke to these people, **“Repent!”**

While that message might be familiar and sound uncomplicated, repentance is often a tough pill for many to swallow. It means that a person has to swallow his pride and admit that he has messed up in countless ways, shameful ways, hidden ways. There is nothing that man can hide when he comes before the Lord. Specifically for the people that Peter was speaking to in Acts, it meant that they had to admit that they had put Jesus, the Son of God, to death. That couldn't have been an easy realization to come to for those people. They had to admit that they had killed the Messiah who they had been awaiting for thousands of years.

And admitting our own grievous failings can often be difficult. Think about those sins that you keep buried deep inside, those sins that you don't want anyone to know about. They are foolish. They are embarrassing. They are damning. But admitting our weakness is the first step to finding strength.

**B.** Peter continued by telling the people to, **“Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ!”** There was a very real solution to take away the guilt of the sin that those people just admitted; and ironically, it came through the same person that they had put to death. Be washed with the water and the Word. Be clothed with the perfect life of Christ. Be connected with his atoning death on the cross. Find assurance in the fact that because he rose, those who trust in him will also rise. Baptism was done for a very specific purpose and it came with a very real result. It was not just a symbolic washing. It was **“for the forgiveness of sins.”**

And part of our spiritual strengthening is to remember our baptisms often. Remember that your sins are forgiven. Remember that you are clothed with Christ. What a tremendous amount of strength that assurance can give to us as we go through life's ups and downs.

**C.** And the final piece of advice that Peter gave is a little more subtle. After telling the people to do two things, he added, **“And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”** Peter told the people that they would receive a tremendous gift from God. They would have the Holy Spirit enter their hearts. He would create faith to rely on Christ's work. He

would stir up a trust in all of God's promises. He would give them a desire to change from their old sinful way of life.

Peter's announcement of that gift was a subtle encouragement to use it. He knew that the devil would still be at these people; but they now had the Holy Spirit to combat the devil. After spending so many years as slaves to sin, they could now resist him with the Spirit's help. After having an inability to do good since they were conceived in their mother's wombs, they now could bloom with fruits of faith. Peter wanted them to use that wonderful gift and that advice couldn't be more applicable for us today. Everything that Peter spoke to those people, he also speaks to you. Use the gift of the Holy Spirit to change all those habits that weaken you as a child of God and live a healthier spiritual lifestyle.

Building this strength is important for each one of us because we simply don't know when God might choose to end our times of grace. That is why Peter spoke with such urgency to these people. He pleaded with them. He pleads with you. Take time to grow stronger in your faith.

And as we take time for ourselves, we also must be reminded that in God's eyes, each one of us is really one part of the whole body of Christ. That large body is something that we call the Holy Christian Church, the invisible church. It is a body made up of all true believers everywhere. And as we just spent some time thinking about our own spiritual strength, we also will want to spend some time thinking about those other parts of the body. It is important to think about the part of the body sitting down the pew from you. It is important to think about the part of the body that sits where you do in the other service. It is important to think about the part of the body that is listening to God's Word in a church in CA.

**II:** Why is that important? Well, let's say that you are a little toe. You could spend a great deal of time making sure that you are the strongest little toe that you can be. But what happens if the other parts of your body are weak? What happens if your eyes are not strong? As that little toe, you might get stubbed by that rock that your eyes couldn't see. What happens if your legs are weak? Though

you as a little toe are ready to run and balance and jump, you sit there because your legs just can't get the job done.

As a little toe, there is a great need to know that the rest of your body is ready to go. You want to know that it is developing. You want to know that it is being fed as it should. You want to know that it is being strengthened. As a part of the body, you have a deep care and concern for every other part of your body, knowing that if just one part is weak or dead, it will have an impact on you.

**A.** For that reason, each member of the body is going to spend time with the other parts of that body, first of all to hold those other parts of the body accountable. We see that is what the early Christians did as they **“devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”** They wanted to grow together in God's Word. They were devoted to this special togetherness that there was for believers. They celebrated the Lord's Supper, being strengthened through Christ's body and blood. They took time to pray for God's blessings on each and every member of that body. What a blessing to get together and see all the parts of the body being worked out and strengthened together!

**B.** As one part of the whole, we also want to get together with the other parts of the body so that we can know if they need our help. This is similar to the old theory that if a person goes blind, their other senses will improve in order for the body to function, that is how we want to operate as the body of Christ. We are told that when there were physical needs in the early Christian church, those who had helped those who were struggling. **“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.”** The very simple truth of the matter is that in order to know if someone needs help, time needs to be spent together. As we spend time with one another, we will know each other better. We will notice when things aren't going well for a member of the body. We will not be embarrassed or timid to ask other parts of the body to help us out. It will just be natural, able parts helping out in times of trouble for the good of the entire body.

**C.** And as each member of the body is strengthened and brought together, time can be spent working together. As the body becomes healthy, no longer do we have to spend all of our time making sure that we are okay. We can focus on using our body to accomplish things. All of our time won't have to be spent in meetings and discussions about what area of our church needs the most help. All of our resources won't have to go to figuring out which bill to pay. When we spend time and energy strengthening the body, the reality is that the body will not have to spend as much time focused on itself. Rather, it can work. It can spread the Gospel. It can try new things. It can be bold in what it attempts b/c it is strong.

Most importantly, when it is strong, it can be confident that good results will come. We heard what happened as the church in Jerusalem spent time with one another, **“The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”** Isn't that our goal? Isn't that ultimately why we come together at Holy Trinity? Isn't that why we join together in the Wisconsin Synod? We come together so that the body can be strong and so that it can work. As we come together, what we strive for will be accomplished. It will happen as time is taken for your body. Take time to grow stronger in your faith! Take time to grow closer together! Amen.