

Good morning! A few weeks ago, Pam and I had lunch with some friends who are fairly new to our area. These folks are retired business owners from another state and they are not Christians. During our time with them, our conversation turned to events in the news: the upcoming Presidential elections, the recent shootings in Dallas, the significance of the elections and their potential effects on the Supreme Court. We live in a time of great political, economic, and racial uncertainty, don't we? We are so divided, how can we ever expect to resolve these deep separating issues? Maybe we can't! This morning, let's look together at a passage that can help us to have hope, even when all hope of human success seems gone:

But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. **Acts 3:18-19**

The great Ern Baxter said, in his wonderful little book Beginnings of Christian Life that "The essential principal of sin is selfishness." Because our hearts are deceitfully wicked, even our holiest thoughts are corrupted with sin. As a result, it is impossible for us to fully resolve the problems that are plaguing our nation. The root of our sin is selfishness, and one way this selfishness manifests itself is racial hatred. It was true in the Bible and it remains true today. Another way our selfishness manifests itself is economic injustice. Again, this was true in the Bible and is still true today. What about the Church? What is our role in all of this? Well, churches are contaminated by the same corruptions that corrupt the world. In a country divided by race, no group is more obviously divided, both racially and economically, than the Church of Jesus Christ. OK Dave, so what's the answer? Is there any hope for us? Yes! In today's passage we read that the answer is repentance. Let's read it together: "*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*" "Do you want times of refreshing? Repentance is the answer--- but repentance must begin within our churches with pastors and church leaders. After all, how can we help the world find unity when we are so divided ourselves? Church leaders must lead the way. Repentance isn't just what we think and feel---repentance means that we change what we do. We must stop doing wrong and start doing right. We must seek ways to be at peace with each other, to help one another, to support each other. Repentance can---in fact, *must*--- be costly. Change can be uncomfortable. Let me encourage you this morning to begin to penitently consider how you can repent and change your behavior. What can *you* do?