This is week 7 in our Family Tree series… and this week we are looking at the first of three of our spiritual ancestors that we find in the New Testament. Up until now, everyone we have talked about lived during the days before Jesus… well, longer than days before Jesus, to be honest… they all lived centuries before Jesus. But our ancestor we’ll be talking about today not only lived during the time period of the life of Jesus, he lived with Jesus for at least three years. Today we are talking about a time of transition in the life of one of the most famous and respected Biblical characters of all: Peter. As you may know, Peter’s name was not Peter… that was his nickname… given to him by none other than Jesus himself. His given name was Simon and as I am also sure, many of you know ‘Peter’ meant ‘rock.’ And while some people try to convince us that Jesus gave him this nickname because of Simon’s rock-like, unmovable, stay-the-course character, we can almost be 100% certain that his character had nothing to do with it; he was called ‘the rock’ by Jesus simply because he was a big fellow. We could be wrong about this, but I am pretty sure that was the case… But with this said, just because Peter was a big, strong looking guy who’d spent 3 years closely following Jesus as one of the 3 insiders who had the greatest access to Jesus, by the way, that didn’t mean that this member of our spiritual family had it all together… in fact, the one telling moment in Peter’s life that proved that he didn’t have it all together came on the night of Jesus’ arrest. On that night, when Jesus needed his friends to stand with him more than ever, this big, strong rock-of-a-man swore 3 times to 2 servant girls and a group of these servant girl’s friends that he had never even known Jesus. Peter, could see that Jesus was in terrible trouble and it seems he was afraid of what might happen to him were he to be associated with Jesus. He didn’t want to fall into that kind of mess himself. Many of you probably know that Peter did come to his senses when he realized how terribly he had abandoned Jesus, but I can’t help but imagine that this moment haunted Peter for the rest of his days… now, we know that Jesus reinstated him as one of his apostles… but it still had to be a source of sadness for Peter… he’d seen the cost and it looked like it was too much. But soon there came another moment in Peter’s life, a second moment where he was given an opportunity to tell the world that he was fully in with being associated with Jesus. We read about this moment in the 2nd Chapter of Acts and while we don’t have the time today to go into much detail, I want to read a bit of this moment and show you where I see Peter becoming a new man… a man unafraid of doing exactly what he knew Jesus would have wanted him to do: stand for him and with him! Let’s turn to Acts 2 verse 1 together and I will show you what I am talking about! Page ???? Welcome!

*On the day of Pentecost* (which was a Jewish holiday for celebrating the first days of the wheat harvest and the giving of the Law to Moses) *all the believers were meeting together in one place.* (There were about 120 believers gathered that day)***2****Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting.****3****Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them.****4****And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.* (And we will see next why it was important that these 120 believers could speak in other languages) ***5****At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem.* (As well as Jews from all over the empire who had come to celebrate the Passover and Pentecost) ***6****When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.* ***7****They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee,* (Galilean’s were generally considered to be uneducated yokels by the genteel folk who lived in sophisticated Jerusalem)***8****and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! (*And then what we get is a long list of places that people were from… and this list represents a huge swath of the entire Roman and beyond world) 11*And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!”****12****They stood there amazed and perplexed. “What can this mean?” they asked each other.* ***13****But others in the crowd ridiculed them, saying, “They’re just drunk, that’s all!”*

(And then here comes Peter’s transitional moment!) ***14****Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd* *“Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem!* (Peter wasn’t alone, but he was stepping out into the unknown with no way to know how any of this was going to turn out. But one thing was clear: he was no longer ashamed of his association with Jesus! Not a bit and he didn’t seem to care at all what kind of trouble he could possibly get into!) *Make no mistake about this.****15****These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that.****16****No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:* And then Peter proceeds to preach a sermon that, in essence, says this: ‘God publicly endorsed Jesus by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him and he should have been welcomed as the Messiah, not put to death on a cross! and then he says this, ‘*God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this.****33****Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God’s right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today… Verse 36**“So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!”* I don’t think it’s possible to fully say how powerful that statement would have sounded in that moment! And then, once Peter really had their attention he went on to strongly urge everyone gathered that day to repent and follow Jesus. And about 3,000 people did! And the church was born… Peter had no idea what was coming, he had no idea where stepping up in this way would lead him… but he knew he had to step up and take the bull by the horns by shouting out that Jesus was both Lord and Messiah!

I don’t want to be too bold here, but Peter’s ‘This has to be done’ attitude, his ‘This is what we’ve been commanded to do so we will do it even if we have no way of knowing how it will turn out’ stance, was the same attitude we had back about 11 years ago when we realized that we had to do something… we knew there were just too many people who needed help… and we also knew that the help they needed was exactly the kind of thing that Jesus wants to see happening in his world. We didn’t know if it would be successful… we didn’t know what it would become or cost or anything! But I can say without any doubt that our stepping out led to one of the great moments, if not the greatest moment of transition in the life of Grace Church. And it all happened when the people of Grace Church said together, ‘We have to do this!’ And now 10 years later look at where it has taken us!

I want to say straight up that I take no credit for any of this. I do get to talk this way because I was in the room from the first inklings of the care center to the fulfillment of Marcus’ initial dreams. And to me it has all seemed like a Pentecost-type experience in that God has been pouring out of his Spirit on a good number of Grace people here in Noblesville and the result has been that the Parthians, Medes and the Cappadocian’s in our midst were soon experiencing the kind of care that God clearly longs to see happening through those who are followers of his son. Peter went from being unwilling to associate himself with Jesus to being the primary spokesman, the rock of Jesus’ church. We went from just talking about God’s desire for justice and healing and repairing the world’s brokenness to together putting rubber on that road… and it’s been humbling to see what God has done and it is exciting waiting in anticipation of all that God will continue to do through this community if we simply stay willing, when we hear the Lord asking, ‘Who should I send? that we will continue to say, ‘Here we are! Send us!’