

**FROM DUST TO DIAMONDS – IN 40 DAYS  
YOU ARE DIAMOND  
ACTS 5:12-42**

**By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn**

**M.I. THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY WE ARE TRANSFORMED FROM DUST TO DIAMONDS, AND THAT IS AS WE ARE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, GIFTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND DRIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

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Here we are at the end of our 40-day journey in which we have looked for Jesus to transform our lives from dust to diamonds, as we have given ourselves to the task of allowing God's purposes to drive us. In one sense, this is the end of our journey. However, as is always the case with life in Christ, it is the beginning of another journey. From here, we would like to learn to live as diamonds. In this morning's message, I would like to point out how it is that we came to be diamond. In other words, how is it that from mere dust, God transformed us into a diamond?

One of the things I want us to keep in mind is that we were created to be flawless diamonds. That means that we must go all the way with our purposes. One of the things I want to draw our attention to this morning is that our attitudes are just as important as our actions. In other words, if I am doing a lot of religious things with the wrong attitude, it counts for nothing.

Let me give you an example. You remember the church that I used to pastor. The one that was so tough. (How tough was it?) It was so tough that you were never sure if people were really going in the right direction or not. One lady in the church had nursed a grudge against me for years. However, one morning in an evangelistic Sunday message, she came forward and gave her life to Christ. She got up to the microphone to give a testimony of her conversion. She said, "I am so glad my life has been transformed. Pastor, I used to hate you so much, I vowed I'd never go to your funeral. ... But now, I'd be happy to go to it at any time."

**THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY WE ARE TRANSFORMED FROM DUST TO DIAMONDS, AND THAT IS AS WE ARE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, GIFTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND DRIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.** God is the One Who makes us and molds us into people He can work in and work through.

On Good Friday, we reminded ourselves that we are created as dust. And as we examined the life of Peter, we used that as an occasion to examine our own lives. In particular, we looked at the event where Peter denied Jesus three times. At dinner, Peter swore to Jesus that he would follow Him anywhere, even if it meant dying. But after Jesus was arrested, and things started to really go bad for Jesus, Peter lost heart. When people in the crowd singled out Peter as one of Jesus' disciples, Peter denied even knowing Jesus.

That's where we left Peter on Friday evening. We said that we deny Christ when we let fear, anger, bitterness, pride, arrogance, and rebellion stand in the way of our fulfilling our purposes as believers. When we operate on our own strength, we will simply remain useless dust. As we said 6 weeks ago on Ash Wednesday, we are empty, useless containers.

However, this morning, we read about a different Peter. He is bold, fearless, and powerful in word and deed. What happened to Peter in these 4 months? For one, Jesus rose from the dead. Peter saw Jesus die a horrible, humiliating painful death, but he also saw the resurrected Jesus, back from the dead, triumphant over death, and he saw Jesus ascend back up into heaven, so his faith in Jesus was restored. In addition, Jesus publicly forgave Peter for denying Him, and Jesus restored Peter to a position of leadership. The

Bible makes it clear that Jesus desires to do that for each person. It doesn't matter how badly we have messed up our lives, Jesus is waiting to forgive us and restore us to a right relationship with Him. Jesus rose from the dead and He conquered sin and death on our behalf. We have the power to overcome fear. We have the power to forgive and let go of all anger and bitterness. We have the truth to let go of pride and arrogance, which leads to rebellion. If we are believers, then we have the same power living in us that raised Jesus from the dead.

#### I. BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES US DIAMOND

And that brings us to our first point: **BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES US DIAMOND.** The other event that took place in Peter's life was that He was filled with the Holy Spirit. Think about this chapter in Peter's life that we read through this morning, and let me add some other facts to it; the disciples were praying one day, and all of a sudden, they were dramatically filled with the Holy Spirit. Peter went out and preached a bold sermon in which thousands of people became Christians, there was no more fear in Peter. He healed a crippled man and was brought up by the religious leaders on heresy charges. When they questioned Peter, the text said that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he gave a powerful defense and he even raised an old lady from the dead. In this morning's passage, Peter was out in public, preaching, teaching, healing, and performing all sorts of miracles. It says that people were just trying to maneuver themselves into a position where Peter's shadow would hit them and they were healed. This Peter is a lot different from the Peter we read about on Good Friday. Again, Peter is arrested and jailed. But miraculously, God springs him from jail. Does Peter go hide out somewhere? No! He immediately goes out and starts

preaching in public again. Again, he is arrested and it says that the religious leaders were so angry they wanted to kill Peter too. They had Jesus killed, and thought that would be the end, but now, here stands an uneducated fisherman, who they feel is a real threat to them. First a carpenter ... and now a fisherman ... where will it all end?

Again, they threaten Peter and say, "Didn't we tell you not to teach this Jesus stuff any more?" Peter says, "Excuse me, but we will go ahead and obey God rather than you."

They are enraged and want to kill him on the spot, but cooler heads prevailed. Instead, they flogged Peter and John and then released them. Now again, in our culture, this is really understated. Flogging is no slap on the wrist. People were beat with rods or whipped with hook infested whips. They were not allowed to kill anyone, so they had to be careful since people often died in flogging. So Peter and John were beaten within an inch of their lives. And how does the new, Holy Spirit filled Peter and John respond? It says that, "the apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus."

Beaten within an inch of their lives, intimidated, and humiliated, they leave rejoicing. Is that the way we face humiliation, rejection, and suffering? They rejoiced because they had an opportunity to fulfill their purpose in life.

However, they only were able to do that because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Think back with me to Ash Wednesday when I gave the example of an expensive bottle of wine. It is the wine that makes the bottle valuable. Once the wine is opened and consumed, the bottle is now just that, an empty bottle. We are containers, and we become valuable when God, The Holy Spirit comes into us. When God works in us and

through us, we become diamond. We receive the Holy Spirit when we surrender to God, confess Jesus as our Lord, ask Him to forgive us for our sins, and ask Him to take control of our lives. When we transfer our citizenship from this world to God's Kingdom, we receive the Holy Spirit. If you haven't done that, I would invite you to just quietly ask God to come into your life and take over. Then please let me know after service so I can pray with you. It's important because: **BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES US DIAMOND.**

## II. THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKE US DIAMOND

Here is another amazing fact. When God comes to live in us, He doesn't come empty handed, He comes with very special housewarming gifts: **THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKE US DIAMOND.** We have talked about one of our purposes being ministers to one another. God has given us special gifts, talents, abilities, passions, and unique personalities, and the purpose is that we might help one another grow stronger in love and unity. God does not expect us to minister to one another based on our own power. We can't do it. That's why so many people fail and burn out in different ministries. God has gifted us and if we are using our gifts, then we ought to be energized as we minister because God's Holy Spirit should be supplying the power. Think about what a beautiful diamond container we become when we humble ourselves and let God's gifts flow out of us. It's like this: Let's say I came to your house for dinner; you say, "John, I have been saving this \$10,000 bottle of wine for a special occasion. I am so happy you came over for dinner, I am going to open it." You open it, pour it into glasses, and we drink it. How do you think I feel at that moment? I feel much loved, very honored, and to say the least, very overwhelmed. That's how people will feel if we pour

out the gifts God has given us on to them. We have all been given special gifts, talents, abilities, and unique personalities by God. These make us valuable, only as we allow them to spill out into the lives of those around us: **THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKE US DIAMOND.**

### III. WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKE US DIAMOND

Think about this morning's story. Peter was fulfilling all the purposes we have talked about. He was worshipping, he loved God, he was fellowshiping and he was sharing with others. He loved them enough to care about their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. In fact, he was instrumental in appointing the first deacons to make sure people were cared for, he was discipling. He was teaching and preaching and he was ministering. He was healing the sick, casting out demons, and performing all sorts of miracles. He was evangelizing. He was telling unbelievers, even the antagonistic religious leaders about how to find salvation in Jesus. These are all results of God working in and through Peter: **WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKE US DIAMOND.** We were not saved just to come to church week after week, sit here and merely take up space; we are here to fulfill our purposes as individuals and as a body of believers. We are here to demonstrate our love for God. That's worship. We are here to fellowship. That is, we are here to see how we can meet one another's physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. We are here to disciple and be disciplined. That is, we are here to grow up to be mature believers and help others grow up spiritually as well, and we are here to become more like Jesus. We are here to minister to one another, with our gifts, talents, abilities, and resources we are to strengthen this church, and we are here to evangelize. We are committed as individuals and as a church to reaching the lost;

unbelieving family, unbelieving friends, our neighbors, coworkers, classmates, this neighborhood, this city, and the world. The Bible says that God has many good works all planned out for us to do. The point is this; we must set aside our worldly ideas and desires to discover what work God has for us to do. As we find them and do them, we become diamond: **THE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKE US DIAMOND.**

#### IV. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT THAT MAKE US DIAMOND

Please don't forget this: How we do things is as important as what things we do. If I am a proud person trying to help someone else, there is no way that person will feel love. It doesn't matter how many religious things I do, if I am angry or unforgiving, it's all useless. If I'm making up my own rules for life, all the religious things I do are all for nothing. You see, it is: **THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT THAT MAKE US DIAMOND.** Whatever I do, my attitude must be characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. And further, I cannot make those things happen in my life. These characteristics are truly formed in my life by God the same way coal and dust are transformed into diamonds; through extreme heat and pressure. We tend to think of temptations and trials as bad. In reality, they are merely opportunities for us to excel and get stronger. It's easy for us to experience joy when things are going well. Anyone can do that, but only God can produce joy in us when things are going badly. That's how we know if we have the fruit of the Spirit. It is easy to be faithful when things are going our way, but faithfulness is truly a fruit of the Spirit when we can remain true to God even when we are tempted to do otherwise. God forms the fruit of the Spirit in us through heat and pressure. He uses the opposite situation to develop the particular fruit. To develop love in us, He brings unlovely people

into our lives. To develop joy and peace, He allows chaos and trouble into our lives. To develop goodness and faithfulness, He allows temptation into our lives. To be ministered to by a person who is full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control is a real blessing. To be “ministered” to by proud, angry, self-centered people is oppressive. Keep this in mind: **THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES US DIAMOND.**

I don't know about you, but this has been an incredible journey for me. It has been a wonderful adventure. I hope that you have allowed God to transform you from dust to diamonds. Keep this in mind. This is Easter Sunday, the day we have set aside to celebrate God's victory over sin and death through the resurrection of Jesus. And we must also remember that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power that lives in each believer. We were created as containers. We are dust but God's desire is for us to be diamonds: **THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY WE ARE TRANSFORMED FROM DUST TO DIAMOND. AND THAT IS AS WE ARE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, GIFTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND DRIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

I know that as I have looked at God's purpose for my life, I can't help but always feel inadequate. We must always live with the truth that I'm not all I should be, but I'm sure a lot better than I used to be.

Yes, we have completed this 40-day journey to a purpose driven life. However, it is only the beginning of a new and exciting journey. This adventure of living like diamonds is an ongoing journey that will end on this earth only when we die or Jesus

returns, and then, the real exciting eternal journey will start in heaven when we see Jesus face to face.

However, until that day, listen to how Rick Warren describes the journey, **“Remember how far you’ve come, not just how far you have to go. You are not where you want to be, but neither are you where you used to be. Years ago people wore a popular button with the letters PBPGINFWMY. It stood for ‘Please Be Patient, God Is Not Finished With Me Yet.’ God isn’t finished with you, either, so keep on moving forward. Even the snail reached the ark by persevering.”**

Our journey has been from dust to diamonds – in 40 days. Who knows where God will take us from here? I’m excited, and I hope you are too.