

Scripture Reading:

Acts 2: 36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

"I Believe in the Communion of the Saints"

In verse 43 Luke tells us that, "fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles."

- This reminds us that Jesus promised the disciples His Church would be built on the foundation of the Apostles with Himself as the Chief Cornerstone.

When Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, Jesus said upon that rock He would build His Church and when we see the New Jerusalem descending in Revelation 21, the twelve foundations have the names of the twelve Apostles! We will return to the subject of miracles after the season of Advent, but we need to remember it is the Spirit who has come bringing power to the Church, the Bride of Jesus. So far in this second part of his orderly account, Luke has shown us how Jesus ascended to the Father's right hand and sent us the Promised Comforter. Peter has preached the first great sermon of the Book of Acts and three thousand souls have been saved.

- Having saved His people from their sins, Jesus has now established His Church!

We noted last week the important order that is reflected in the Apostles Creed where we confess:

- I believe in the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Catholic Church, in the Communion of the Saints

The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son and He will do so through the Church, the New Jerusalem. Last week we considered "One Holy Catholic Church" and now we turn to "the communion of Saints."

- Both are clearly taught here at the end of Acts Chapter two!

- In fact, we can see here the covenant renewal we celebrate in worship each Lord's Day

-- The great noise gathered, or called the people together

-- They were cut to the heart when they heard that God had made Jesus, who they crucified, both Lord & Christ, which led to their humble repentance

-- Peter goes on to give them more teaching and instruction from God's word

-- They celebrated the Lord's Supper, the breaking of bread and offered their prayers to God
-- And finally, as we shall see this week they are commissioned, sent forth to live the Christian life and witness to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria and the rest of the world, as they were commanded to by Jesus

➤ Before verse 43, Luke showed a focus on four things which these New Saints did corporately:

- 1) They continued in the Apostle's doctrine
- 2) There was the Fellowship of the Saints as they gathered for corporate worship
- 3) There was the breaking of bread: They partook of the sacrament of the Supper, remembering & celebrating the propitious death of Jesus until He comes.
- 4) And they lifted up corporate prayers of confession and petition.
 - After verse 43 Luke informs us about their activities as scattered Saints which in many ways is similar to the first list.
 - It should not surprise us to see the unity and diversity of the Trinity in the life of the Church!
 - We give praise to God, lift up our prayers, eat meals, enjoy rich fellowship whether we are the Church gathered or scattered.

After verse 43, Luke tells us four things about the Church scattered:

- They were of one accord
- They had all things in common meeting each other's needs
- They praised God by eating their food with gladness and simplicity of heart!
- They had favor with the people

AS they went forth, obeying a whole lot of simple commands... God "added to the church daily those who were being saved."

➤ As we consider in more detail the simple things they did, may we strive to be those who hear and do the words of Jesus

Now, I was pretty tough on us last week on the issue of Church unity because it is an area that needs much attention today and that we in the reformed camp struggle with. This week we come to areas we are more passionate about and where I can honestly say we have made some progress here at Church of the King: So just a couple of quick warnings:

- 1) We must beware of becoming proud of what we have done
- 2) We must remember that even though we have come a long way or that we may look good compared to some others...

➤ We still have a LONG way to go in our journey toward being a bride presentable for God's Son!

Luke first says AGAIN that they were of one accord:

➤ The Church united as we studied last week and confess each week in the Apostle's Creed

The unity of the Church is not just present when we are gathered but when we are scattered as well.

We must learn to seek unity not only at an organizational level with churches, but in our everyday lives when we interact with other Christians... The world is watching!

The next item on Luke's list is what many asked about last week, and has everyone wondering:

- Will I be declaring that we must all become socialists!

Luke tells us that the Saints were not only together or united in purpose, but that they "had all things in common" and that they "sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." Now some would argue that another simple way to say this is...

- "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need"

The only problem is that this is a phrase popularized by Carl Marx, the founder of communism in 1875.

- Is communism what Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is teaching us here in this passage?
- The simple answer is NO but we need to make sure that we know how to give an answer when challenged on this.

What Luke is teaching is that all the Saints have all things in common, including their possessions:

- As we learned last week, the Spirit has come to build the One Holy Catholic Church.

However, we know from the full revelation of Scripture that this does not mean that there are no individuals, no marriages, no families nor any private property. Jesus CLEARLY taught that all of these must be in subjection to Him as Lord, but he did not abolish any of these relationships or institutions...

It is the Bible which declares that man is made in the image of God and has real worth, but as we learned in Luke 17:33, "Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it."

In that same Book of beginnings, we learned about the institution of marriage and then Paul tells us that it is how we are to show the world the mystery of the Gospel... God tells us that children are a blessing and sacred trust and yet Jesus also said in Luke 14:26... "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple."

This is another one of those places where context is important... A verse that has been abused by many cult leaders who divide families or take people away from their families, under the guise of serving Jesus. All things belong to Jesus: Our lives, our marriages, our children and yes, even our money & possessions!

- IF we are a Spirit filled and Spirit led church then all of these things will be available "as anyone has need!"
- This passage does not violate our worth as individuals, the importance of our families nor the right of private property
- It simply reminds us that they ALL come under the Lordship of Jesus
- It puts God at the center of all things, which is exactly the opposite of what Carl Marx and his atheistic communists teach

-- Under their teaching, individuals are expendable for the good of the state, as the loss of over one hundred million people in the 20th Century now testifies to

-- Marriages and families exist only to provide more workers and they must submit their children to government education and indoctrination... A practice we have sadly followed in this country.

- AND there can be no private ownership of property: It must ALL be under the state's control so they can decide how best to use it. This stands in stark contrast to what we see in the Book of Acts:
- We will see the right of private property defended in the account of Ananias and Sapphira
- We will see repeated calls for the Saints to be generous with their possessions, and we will see NO forced confiscations

So if you are challenged, be ready to explain the full Biblical context. You can also take them directly to verse 45 and show them that it does NOT say they sold ALL their goods, but rather they sold those needed to meet the needs of others.

BUT we must remember that they did sell some goods to meet needs!

- So how are we doing on this front here at Church of the King?
- I would give us a "B+"!

We have been learning to overcome our rugged American individualism and begun to understand how to meet each other's needs. We have been a very generous body and diligent in maintaining a diaconal fund with faithful deacons who have seen to needs as they arise.

- In fact my biggest complaint or criticism would be our refusal to ask for help!

Sometimes it is because of shame, sometimes pride, some ignorance, but one of the most frustrating things for me as your pastor has been to hear tales of woe AFTER the fact...

- Always, it seems, having to say, "why didn't you ask for help or let us know?"

We must remember that the same God who has created us in His image with real worth, organized us in marriages and families and has given us the right to own property...

He is the same God who expects us to meet everyone's needs!

- We will certainly spend more time on the importance of private property & the creation of wealth

Next we come to a second reference to the 'breaking of bread' and this time it is from house to house. Our celebration around the Lord's Table as a people gathered should inspire us and encourage us to continue our rich fellowship around other tables in all our houses. Luke tells us they ate their food with gladness, with simplicity of heart and praising God

- So YES it is important to give thanks when sitting down to a meal, but we must also see that God is praised as we enjoy the meal as well.

There are two challenges here where we must strive to do better... And continue to do better for ALL of our Christians lives: In the age of fast-food and grabbing something on the run, we need to keep our eyes on MEALTIME. I suspect it is tough to eat with gladness and simplicity of heart if we are juggling a cup of coffee and a McMuffin on the freeway. Now there may be times where we have no choice, but if that is the regular routine of our lives, then things need to change.

- Right practices here must begin in our homes...

Our families should have regular meal times and missing them should be the exception NOT the rule.

Regular mealtimes does not mean eight o'clock breakfast, a noon lunch and dinner at six...

Each family situation is going to be different depending on the number and ages of the children, work schedules & other such considerations.

It is the responsibility of each family to determine the best schedule and then to make it a priority!

And things will change over time: *[explain how “dinner changed with the radio program]*

But Luke says that they broke bread from house to house, so having just our individual houses in order is not enough!

Our second challenge as Christians is to be a hospitable people!

➤ This means getting together for meals and sharing our gladness and simplicity of heart

We must practice this hospitality in two very important ways:

-- We share meals with other Saints to learn more about what it means to be of one accord and to praise God

-- We share meals with the unbelievers so they can see the Gospel in our lives!

We are not to have Church life where we meet each others needs and enjoy rich fellowship and food in isolation... We are to live this way in front of a watching world and thus we will have favor with all the people! This does not mean they will all be friends with us, or that they will stop attacking the faith. Remember, the Gospel is the stench of death to those who are being lost, but we can have favor even with those who are hostile to the faith: *[tell the story of meeting young men on a dark street]*

➤ Our desire should be that the unbelieving world would see the love of Jesus in our lives!

As Jesus instructed the Disciples on the night of His betrayal: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

And let me say just a little more about how we eat our food with gladness and simplicity of heart...

Gladness is certainly giving thanks, but it is also just plain old joy! We should enjoy our meals, whether they are simple or fancy, whether large or small *[from our festivals & Sunday fellowship meals down to our family meals or even a meal alone!]*

Simplicity of heart is a little tougher: Just what does this mean?

Well, it certainly means not stressing out about putting on a meal or worrying about what it is that we will be eating or where *[tell the story of the BIG table]*

I think simplicity of heart means just going ahead and enjoying our family meals and being hospitable: Not worrying about who can or can't make it on time or how much room you have... *[tell the story about Mrs. Landingham]*

In all my years of being a Christian I cannot remember a better example of gladness and simplicity of heart. We must also remember the “forgotten ends” when we are being hospitable: The singles and the large families. There is ALWAYS room for one more place at the table, and as Mrs. Landingham demonstrated there is always room for the large families, and they WILL appreciate the invitations!

And finally as we finish our study of the 2nd Chapter of Acts, we must remember the BIG picture:

- **We are not striving to be of one accord simply because it is better than being divided.**
- **We are not to meet the needs of others simply because we feel sorry for them or want to feel good about ourselves**
- **We are not to eat LOTS of food with gladness and simplicity of heart simply because it is more fun**
- **And we are not trying to find favor with all people because it is nice to have more friends**

We are to obey these simple commands under the care, comfort, and power of the Holy Spirit knowing that He has come to glorify the Son and to build His Church...

We know that the Kingdom will grow as we are faithful in these little things, because we have the promise that we see at conclusion of this chapter in our day as well:

“And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved.”

Communion Meditation: Psalm 34:

“1 I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 My soul shall make its boast in the Lord; The humble shall hear of it and be glad. 3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together. 4 I sought the Lord, and He heard me, And delivered me from all my fears. 5 They looked to Him and were radiant, And their faces were not ashamed. 6 This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. 8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! 9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him.”