

Scripture reading:

Acts 4: “31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. 32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. 36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

Acts 5: “1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.”

"Being of One Mind and One Soul"

“Body life” is a phrase used today to describe the life of the Church. Christians from all walks of life and cultures desire to have a Biblical Church, one that is doctrinally sound and alive.

- **Sometimes the focus is on the doctrine part so much so that there is little or no life in the Church, resulting in something Dr. Schaeffer referred to as dead orthodoxy.**
- **Sometimes the focus is on the life of the Church to the exclusion of doctrine and soon it is difficult to distinguish life in the Church from life outside in the world.**

If we truly desire to have a Biblical balance here at Church of the King, we must learn the lessons the Spirit would teach us from these accounts here in the Book of Acts.

- **For the second time the Spirit is describing the life of the early church in these opening chapters.**

We had the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, a powerful sermon from Peter and then a description of life in the new Church. In Chapter four, we have seen a great miracle, another powerful sermon & defense before the council and now another description of life in the new and growing Church.

- **It should become obvious from these passages that being witnesses for the resurrection of Jesus requires both words AND living!**
- **It requires faith & obedience**
- **It requires doctrine & life!**

When Luke describes these Saints as being one in heart and soul it should rightly remind us of when the young lawyer asked Jesus,

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

**37 “Jesus said to him, ‘‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment.
39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’’’**

The new Saints were of one mind and soul regarding doctrine and life. They rightly worshipped the one true God and witnessed His power to save in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead... Right doctrine!

- **They also practiced right living, being of one mind and soul in life as well.**
- **They loved the Lord their God with all of their hearts and souls and it rightly carried over into loving their neighbors as themselves.**

We learn from the events following this first trial that we are to be a praying people, a united caring people and an obedient people. IF we are functioning as the Bride of Jesus, it should shake things up, we should be of one heart and soul and we should fear our awesome God!

- **Remember, the early Saints were commanded to be the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus there in Jerusalem.**
- **We learn that this witness comes with words and life!**

These Saints are the example we should strive to follow... Remembering, of course, they were not perfect, as we shall see next week and at other times as we move through the Book of Acts: They are redeemed sinners just like us!

- **But, we see in their lives principles that we are commanded to follow and that is what we will consider this morning**

First I think it should be a little convicting for us just to hear that they were of one heart and one soul... Luke is referring to the new Church in Jerusalem which now has at least 5,000 men plus women & children. Is Christ’s Church in Sacramento of one mind and soul today?

- **Sadly it is not and part of the problem is that we have focused on many minors while ignoring the majors!**
- **Put simply, the Book of Acts calls us to proclaim the power of the resurrection of Jesus and to live as a resurrected people!**

IF we abide by this we will see things shaken up; we will see much mercy extended; and we will see God’s loving hand of discipline in our midst.

IF we do not we will see much more of what the Church has experienced for the past few hundred years.

-- We have fought many battles over the mode and timing of baptism, arguing and dividing over the issue

-- We have fought many battles over what happens here at the Lord’s Table instead of remembering that it should call us together in unity as the Body of Christ.

We have battled over music, robes, hats, whether churches should be large or small, look like sanctuaries or theaters and even whether we should have Sunday schools for the children!

Now all of these things are certainly important in some ways, and often more important to some than to others, but all too often we have forgotten the admonition the Apostle Paul gave to the Ephesians in chapter four of his epistle:

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.”

When we encounter those in the Body of Christ who disagree with us on any of these minor issues it would be good for us to remember that Paul says there is ONE Lord, ONE faith and ONE baptism

- **AND that Paul said each of us has been ‘given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.’**

When we are tempted to say to a fellow believer, ‘I can’t believe that you can think like that’ just remember we may actually be saying, ‘I can’t believe that Jesus only gave you that much grace.’

For those of us a little older in the faith, we must also humbly admit that often we were the arrogant “know-it-all” who was putting down a Saint who had actually been given more grace than us at that time!

So I am not misunderstood, this does not mean we do not stand against error: Paul did say there is one Lord, one faith and one baptism, so obviously there are false lords, false faiths & false baptisms...

- **We will get to those discussions in other parts of Acts.**

In our text we see some practical examples of what it means to be of one heart and one soul and we simply must not use the excuse that we are defending the truth to ignore them.

The first thing that should strike us is how practical the steps are...

- **And I mean VERY practical!**

What we are seeing here in the young church is the fruit we talked about from the Lord’s parable of the sower

- **Just as it is pretty easy to see fruit on a tree, we can see the fruit of the Spirit in the Church...**

Luke tells us that these Saints who were of one heart and one soul, *[which is a great fruit itself!]* ... they did not say that any of the things they possessed were their own, but they had all things in common!

We are going to be looking at what this meant in practice this week and next, BUT we should begin by admitting it is very practical and convicting!

- **Do any of us here this morning have things that we would claim as our own?**

Be honest...

- **How about your house?**
- **How about your bank account?**
- **Your IRA?**

Sometimes it is tougher to consider the smaller or more personal things

- **How about grandmother’s china?**
- **For the kids, how about your favorite doll or Lego set?**
- **Ladies, how about your wedding ring?**
- **Men, how about your car or your favorite tools?**

Now I ran through this list because the verse does not say they had some things in common!

- Luke tells us NO ONE said that ANY of the things they possessed was his or her own!

So does this mean that all the ladies should put their rings in a bowl up front here at the end of the service and all switch around from week to week having them all in common? Of course it does not!

So what then are the practical implications of having all things in common? Put simply, it is remembering that nothing is really ours: All we have belongs to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings... Jesus!

- Luke shows that believing and acting on this truth provides a powerful witness and a REAL help for the young Church.

It is important to note that verse 33 tells us again that the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power... Now obviously they continued to preach the Word, but I do not think this is the main focus here because it comes right in the middle of the discussion of having all things in common and meeting all the needs.

In fact verse 33 ends by saying that ‘great grace was upon them all.’ What was the great grace?

- Our gracious God has given them the ability to say that NONE of the things they possessed was really their own!
- Believing that Jesus is Lord means that He is Lord of all, and that includes ALL that we possess.

Jesus told the rich young ruler to go and sell all that he had because He knew it was the one area of life where he was not willing to see Jesus as his Lord.

Jesus told the disciples that to serve Him we must hate, mother and father, brother and sister, husband and wife... Of course we know from the whole council of Scripture that Jesus was not ‘anti-family’...

- The point is that we must be willing to put Jesus before family.

We have seen this blatantly denied in our time... Like the fish in water that does not think about being wet, we have all be affected by this denial. I am sure many of us have used the phrase “blood is thicker than water” not thinking about how that is a direct denial of what Jesus taught.

- The water of baptism trumps any and all blood relationships

The same principal applies to our possessions:

- Jesus is not against private property, in fact it is the Bible that establishes the right of private property!
- We heard in our reading and will study next week the fact that private property rights are AFFIRMED in the context of this very passage!

When Luke says that they had all things in common, he is saying they practiced the Lordship of Jesus... They understood that ANYTHING they possessed was theirs only because of the grace of God and ANY of their possessions were available for the use in His Church when there was need.

- This resulted in some powerful changes and those new practices are now added to the powerful rhetoric of the Apostle’s preaching!
- The Gospel is indeed proclaimed by Word and Deed!

Verse 34 tells us about the result and it is stunning: “Nor was there anyone among them who lacked!”

There has been a lot of talk in our time about ending poverty!

Since the ‘war on poverty’ was declared when I was a young man TRILLIONS of dollars have been spent to end need.

- Not only do we still have poverty, but now many, many ruined lives to go with it.

Communists, socialists and other idealists have tried to apply the practical results of the Gospel that we see here in Acts without the power of the Gospel around the world and the results have led to the loss of tens of millions of lives and much misery for those who survived.

In contrast to the forced redistribution efforts we see in these human imitations, the power of the Gospel brings forth those willing to meet the needs of others...

- Knowing the love and mercy of God they are willing to be loving and merciful with all they have.

We should also note that it was not a proud ‘look at how much I am helping’ response, which we will see was the underlying sin of Ananias and Sapphira next week. Rather what we see here is proper submission to the Lordship of Jesus. There were those who had needs in the body and the Apostles met those needs with the provisions that were brought forward from those who had possessions that could be sold.

This was not a redistribution of wealth so that all would be equal.

This was a meeting of real needs as determined by the Apostles and as the Church continued to grow by other Church leaders, the Deacons.

So how does this work itself out today?

- First and foremost we must join with the early Saints in affirming that Jesus is Lord and the rightful owner of all that we have.

This is why we teach our covenant children the principle of tithing from a young age & practice it as a church

Bringing the tithe on all of our gain to the Lord reminds us that all that we have comes from God’s hand and is ultimately still His possession!

- Faithful tithing means that the leaders of the Church will have the means to meet most needs in the congregation!

Imagine the impact on the social policies of this country if EVERY Christian faithfully tithed to their church and the local churches met the needs of those under their care?

- The next question is what are the needs that must be met?

I think we all would agree that food and clothing are essentials!

God has so richly blessed our land that we often forget about this need.

All of our members should have a place to live! Sometimes that will involve giving up a room or some property that we own for sure.

Healthcare has been the major national discussion for the past few years...

- This is an area where we have provided a lot of help for some families as a young church and is a discussion we need to continue We need to be open and honest about our needs: sharing how we have worked to provide for our families in difficult times.

While we reject having the civil magistrate making healthcare decisions for us, what the government does greatly impacts how we can care for our families.

There are no simple answers to these questions, but they must be addressed if we are to do the work of the Church the Spirit is calling upon us to do!

- **In the Bible the coat was essential as an example of what was needed to survive.**

If it was taken as collateral for a loan it had to be returned at night.

In the old west, a man's horse was essential and in some places a horse thief could face the death penalty: That was how serious it was taken and thus it would have been the responsibility of churches in that time to make sure most families had a horse as an essential need.

The equivalent today is perhaps the automobile and thus we have often met needs in this area as a church.

Prayers are lifted up each week for us as your church leaders and this is a request we always have...

- **That God would give us the wisdom to know what needs must be met and how we should properly meet them as a Church!**

Finally, we must see in verse 35 that distribution was made to meet needs, NOT to make everyone equal.

A young man who has an older car that gets him to and from work cannot look over at our garage and say they have two newer cars, so one of them should be switched for his.

A young family living in small condominium cannot look over at another family living in a large home and say both should be sold so each can have a similar smaller home.

- **Part of understanding that God is Lord and possessor of all that we have is learning to be content with what we have at any given time in our lives!**

We are NOT to be envious of what others have and we are NOT to be too proud to ask for help when we have need.

We are to remember that Jesus is the Lord of all we own and that His Spirit will help us to be proper stewards of what we have been given.

- **Then there will be none lacking among us which will be a powerful witness of the resurrection power that has changed our lives.**

Communion Meditation: Psalm 50:

"7 "Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you; I am God, your God! 8 I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are continually before Me. 9 I will not take a bull from your house, Nor goats out of your folds. 10 for every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know all the birds of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. 12 "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness. 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? 14 Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High. 15 Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.""