

ACTS 2 V 42-47 – The fellowship of the Believers

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Have you come across those black and white mirror images that are often used on IQ tests? At first, there appears to be only one image, a vase, but then from another viewpoint you are able to see two different images, the faces. They had been there all along, but it may take a while to become visible.

That is a little like what happened to the followers of Jesus from shortly after his death and resurrection to their vastly different behavior after the Day of Pentecost. At first all we see is that they are huddled in a locked “Upper room” full of fear. Yet as we continue to look, we discover that only fifty days later they have been transformed into courageous witnesses, boldly worshipping Jesus all of the time. They really did try to have their lives reflect Jesus.

They became solid in their commitment to faith and solid in their commitment to one another. There was a determined discipline to their worship. The Bible uses the word “devoted.” This was more than just a mental agreement. They actually tried to conform their lives to Jesus' teaching.

There was special warmth of feeling and spontaneous expressions of love, following the giving of the Spirit. The early Christians were willing to do anything in order to keep this new fellowship healthy and intact.

There were now so many of them that they could no longer gather in one location. They instead divided up and met in one another's homes, eating with glad and sincere hearts with generosity. Meaningful worship and meaningful meals are critical to any attempt at renewal, and one doesn't work well without the other. Never trust a Christian fellowship where Christians regularly worship together but don't like to eat together, or where they eat together but neglect worship.

They were also involved in private and public prayer. All of this is done in a Spirit of Gladness as they acknowledged God in all areas of their lives. They did not have a separate compartment for the religious aspect of their lives. Their faith permeated every aspect of their lives as they acknowledged God in everything

People saw the power which flowed through the lives of these Christians. And as the believers were exuberant in their praise to God, they saw many others turn to Jesus as Saviours.

The Church grew and flourished as a result of the outpouring of God's Spirit. The Church still has an important role to play today.

These believers won people to Jesus and to the Church because of their conduct and devotion to one another in the cause of Jesus, and these people were not just sitting, waiting for the return of Jesus. They had hope for today, faith for today, and a life of discipleship that was a journey, not just an end.

This passage shows what happens when the love of God that is in the Lord Jesus Christ transforms individuals, families, and an entire community. This is a picture of the Church at its best.

We started this morning wondering why some believed stayed as followers of Jesus, and why others would join them. The only answer is that their lives were dramatically changed by their association with Jesus or by hearing his message. They really believed that he was resurrected. There is no other reason that those frightened, scared followers who huddled away in that "Upper Room" would emerge as such brave witnesses that they were willing to die for their beliefs.

That leads to the question as to where we stand. Do we truly believe that Jesus was resurrected and is alive today by his Spirit? If so, are we living in such a way that other people are being drawn to Jesus as well? It will be what we do while we are away from the Church that truly shows that we are a community and are bound together in love. We can ask, then, "Is my joyful praise drawing others to Jesus?" If not, what changes am I willing to make in my life, to become a better representative of his?

In these difficult times we find ourselves in, its wonderful to see how people are drawn to want to help friends, neighbours, strangers. To want to thank those who put themselves at risk to look after us. As Christians this is what were supposed to do, but to see the strength of feeling there is throughout the whole country is wonderful. It may be a struggle at this time of safe distancing to come together as the body of Christ to reach out on mass, however it does not stop us doing our bit where ever we are. Christ fed 5000, but he also spoke to one Samaritan woman at a well. We can all pray and find out what God wants us to do just where we are.

Keep safe, and keep praying.