

Untitled (26)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 June 2021

Preacher: David Bena

[0:00] And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

! Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing to have happen to Church of the Holy Trinity?! The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Now, if this continued Sunday after Sunday, we would soon have a growing problem. We'd have to get another parking lot, first of all. We'd have to go to more services.

But we could live with pain as we show that God is multiplying His congregation. Well, we're in a series on the Acts chapter 2 church.

Are we an Acts 2 church? Perish. As we gaze upon the early church here in Acts, what do we learn that could be used by the Holy Spirit in our lives to be a thriving parish?

[1:10] We're going to be using the epistle lesson that was read, Acts chapter 2, verses 43 through 47. I think that's page 1082, correct?

Yes. Page 1082 in your pew Bible. Now, this is a build-out from what we spoke about last week, Acts 2.42.

The early congregation committed themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.

Basically, what we know today is Anglican worship. They committed themselves to it. Now, 43 through 47, actually beyond 47, gives you a description of what happened as they lived this out. Those were heady days in that early Christian faith. Although they were persecuted for their belief, miraculous healings were happening. They were caring for one another, both in prayer and in substance.

[2:24] They were worshiping together in the temple with excitement, and they were meeting in each other's homes. They were witnessing to those who did not believe about Jesus, and they were coming to know Jesus.

They were seeing fruit. What a wonderful thing. So let's dig into verse 43. First of all, awe.

Some years ago, this phrase, word, awesome, took over the nation. You're awesome. You know the Greek word for that?

Phobos, from which comes phobia, as in claustrophobia. What's happening is our secular society has taken the negative context of awe and made it undue fear, when actually it means holy respect. And that's what came upon these, every soul, a deep, holy respect for our almighty God. We try to measure that holy respect when we worship together.

[3:49] Once again, in Christian society today, Jesus is my buddy, or he's my butler. I mean, what is he?

He's somebody that makes me happy. Jesus is almighty God, the creator of the universe. It's okay to be close to God.

He wants us to be, but we have a holy respect for him. How many of you have electricity in your home? Oh yeah, okay, now. I love electricity.

It does great things for me. But you know what? If my lamp is not working, I pull out the plug before I work on the lamp, right? Because I have a deep respect for electricity.

And so with God, before I start tinkering, I remember who this God is and his awesome power. So awe came upon every soul and many signs and wonders.

[4:50] Okay, here's this deal, signs and wonders. Miracles. Day-to-day miracles. Sometimes they're just coincidences, but as we learned, they're God incidences.

God puts meetings together. They recognize that. Signs and wonders through the apostles. So the apostles, and today that translates to bishops and also to clergy, they are to model what following Jesus is about.

Everybody is supposed to follow Jesus. The clergy model that. That's why it's such a terrible thing when a clergy falls. It sends terrible ripples through the whole congregation.

Through the apostles, signs and wonders happened. And pretty soon, signs and wonders were happening with all the brethren, with all the faithful.

The apostles just modeled it. How about us? Are we living Acts 1-8? Jesus says, But you will have power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

[6:12] And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, to the ends of the world. That's the power of the Holy Spirit.

We're called upon, and we see signs and wonders when that happens. That's what happened in the early church. Now let's find out what else happened. verses 44 and 45.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need.

Wait a minute. Are we supposed to be a commune? Are we supposed to be at kibbutz like they have in Israel?

Where we give everything up and we live in this community and, you know, all are equal. Some are a little more equal than others. What is this? What is this they're talking about here?

[7:12] Well, they're not talking about communes. The early church did not become a commune. Did not become a kibbutz. But what really was happening is the Greek word koinonia, which is deep community, deep caring, fellowship, a willingness to sacrifice for each other.

That's what they did. There was no extravagant welfare system back then. People helped one another. They cared.

We're not called, you're not called, and I'm not called to sell everything we own and lay it at the feet of the apostles. We are called to be generous.

To be generous with our resources. In one of my parishes, it's not on this planet, it's another parish, you don't know this man.

One of our parishioners had one of those mortgages that hits a point and it blooms. What were those called? A balloon mortgage.

[8:26] Thank you. That's important to have a deacon with you because he explains things. Okay. And he got to the balloon and his hours were cut back.

He was going to lose his house. Well, unbeknownst to me, one of the other members said quietly, you know, I've been saving this money up to restore my Mustang.

His mortgage is better than my Mustang. He quietly gave that money to the other parishioner. Wow. Generosity of spirit and generosity of resources.

And an interesting thing about that, freedom comes to us when we stop clutching what we own. That's why the concept of tithing is so important.

Tithing teaches us that God is God and we are not. That's pretty good teaching. When we give generously, we are freed from addiction to possessions.

[9:35] That's what happened in this early community. They didn't become a commune. They just shared freely with each other. And then finally, more good news, verses 46 and 47.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Come over for dinner. Let's meet somewhere for lunch.

Touching words. It means we're in community with one another. Does your Father love you? If you know He loves you, how do you show it to the world?

This early community lived a communion of persons. They worshipped in the temple together. They met together in each other's homes.

[10:44] They spent time together. We were at a family camp one time and the camp leader who had done this before, obviously, and knew it was going to work, He went to each kid and said, Does your daddy love you?

And of course, they were obliged to say yes because they were little kids. And He said, How do you know? And the first little kid started, My daddy reads to me.

The next one. He spends a lot of time, takes me to the park. And it went around and what it equaled to is they knew love because of what their daddy did.

spent time with them. Now, when I was a little boy, my father was involved in the World War II defense establishment and then the post-war defense establishment.

I didn't see a lot of him. But when I did see him, he was a kind man. He was able to relate how God loves his children.

[11:47] That's what we're called to do with one another. Does our daddy God love us? Without taking advantage of him and making him our butler, we're called just to let him show us his love by spending time with us.

He can only do that when we allow ourselves for him to spend time with us. And so what happened is as they lived together, unbelievers noticed.

The witness they provided to the outside community was both natural and supernatural. And the pattern repeated itself.

Those four spiritual laws that I've asked us every one to memorize. One, God has a wonderful plan for your life. He loves you. Two, you have excluded yourself from the plan through your sin.

Three, God, loving you, very much wants you back in his wonderful plan. And he becomes Jesus, lives among us, dies for us, defeats death, is raised, ascended, and sends the Holy Spirit.

[13:04] Why? To get us back in the plan. And four, we come back into the plan by simply receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior. There was an argument back in the 16th century between those who considered themselves Calvinists and later those who considered themselves Armenians.

Does God have it all planned or do you make your decision and then come into... You know what? This is not the 16th century. We don't need to argue about that stuff.

In fact, I've done the Scripture studies. They're both right. They're both right. Stop fighting about it. Let's accept Jesus Christ into our lives as Lord and Savior.

Be part of us. Join our family. So as we move to the conclusion, is this Acts chapter 2 church descriptive of us?

I think so. We need the courage to live it. We are living it. Are you intimidated by this sermon?

[14:28] Does it seem a little Pollyanna to you? Well, I'm kind of a Pollyanna person. But it starts and it grows.

You read about the mustard seed? I've got a bottle of mustard seeds somewhere in the basement. Those seeds are about that big. If I were to put them into a garden, which I probably will never get around to doing because I'll never find them in the basement, but if I did, they would blossom.

That's the way it works in our faith community. Start small. Watch it blossom. Open ourselves to God and to one another. I finish by reminding us of the Marine barracks mirror.

Marines would go out ready to go on liberty. There was a big floor to ceiling mirror where they'd have to walk out and the sign was, you are a Marine.

Do you look like it? You are a Holy Trinity Christian. Do you look like it? In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

[15:46] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.