

The Great Grace of Unity & Self-Giving Love Acts 4:32-37

Intro:

Acts 4 is controversial in the West, even if you do not feel that it is right now. You may not feel the controversy because of the waters that we swim in everyday. When you live, eat, and sleep individualism, it is hard to see outside of that

- Other cultures do not have as strong of a temptation to view the self outside of a community, but in America/West the community/family that you are a part of does not feel as important as it does elsewhere in the world

Individualism: priority of the self

- The big goals to life are disconnected to a community/family
- The goal is self-fulfillment, which means relationships are utilitarian
 - Means to an end
 - Career, money, personal pleasure, comfort are greater priorities than relationships
 - The lie that we often times buy into is that we are made for performance. Christianity says we are made for Love.

What is happening?

Heart and Soul: can you imagine a community where every person was in a heart and soul type of unity?

- Illustration: When someone says "I am with you heart and soul" what they are saying is they are unity with you about a particular issue as much as they can be. There is something happening on the interior of them - in their heart and soul.
- This is really helpful in understanding what Luke is showing us. This community was united on an interior level. There was a commonality on the interior of them. It was not a good cause to rally around. It was not an idea. It was a deep inward change and hope that they had. God has created them into a new people. A new family where He was at the center.
- It was on a heart and soul level. Not exterior

Self-giving love: Giving of themselves to care for others

No needy persons:

- Does not mean that if someone needed something then it was a "no questions asked" gift. The generosity that marked this community was not an unhealthy kind of enabling. It was calculated
- Those who were struck by the fallenness/brokenness of our world were cared for. Their suffering/poverty was out of their hands for the most part.

Everything in common

Sell houses and fields and give money to church

- This was well before the financial revolution. Land was a significant indicator of wealth and status. It would have meant more than today.
- These early believers were willing to lay their status/wealth/legacy on the line for their fellow brothers/sisters

Acts 4:36-37 - Barnabas as example of self giving love

The heart of

Summary of what God was doing in this community: Family of belonging and duty for one another

****MPS: The Grace of God Empowers us to a life of self-giving Love with Our New Spiritual Family****

Why is this happening? The Grace of God

The Grace of God bestowed on God's people thru preaching & Spirit

Grace: The grace that is mentioned here is 'the divine favour and presence which rests upon the community and which is somehow tangibly manifest'.

God was present among them in a real way. And you know what that looked like?

Relational beauty and Generosity

This was not just a command that they needed to obey from the apostles. This passage shows us that through the regular preaching ministry of the early church, these believers were transformed on a heart level. Heart and Soul.

How do we become this kind of community? Gospel, Prayer, Fasting

Look to God, the fount of self-giving love

- Dwell upon the nature of God
- Personal Testimony: The times where I have moved toward people the strongest have not been because I saw how great another person was and wanted to be in their lives. The times I have felt drawn deeper into relationship with others is when I have some deeper revelation/breakthrough in seeing and understanding who God is and what He is doing in Christ.
- Self-giving love is not natural. We do not naturally wake up and say "how can I give myself away today?"
 - Because we are insecure, we accumulate for ourselves to build a confidence in who we are. The Gospel gives us identity outside of the life we have lived and the things we have accumulated. God gives us in Christ the security we are looking for.
 - Therefore, we are so secure in Him. We have such a beautiful identity and confidence through Christ, we are freed to give

Pray that you would see your brother or sister as Christ see them

I want to acknowledge that often times there are legitimate reasons why we cannot enter in to deep relationship with others. Self Giving relationships

- There may be things that need to be reconciled with others to live in the way this scripture calls us to.
 - Reconciliation is not hopeless. We can expect to experience this in our relationships now
 - Reconciliation is not arbitrary but at the heart of the Gospel. It is worth pursuing
- To those who are hurt by others: Pray that God would give you eyes too see your brother/sister the way Christ sees them
- To those who have offended others: Pray that God would give you a heart that can see your offenses

Fast by doing acts of Justice and mercy

Isaiah 58:6-7

Do you fast? Fasting is a way that we hunger for God

Isaiah says that true fasting is more than just attending a religious service and going through empty tradition and worship

Matthew 6:1-4

Commit to acts of disciplined giving to the poor that is done in secret

This will reveal where your heart is in "self-giving Love"

Do you give to be seen by others or another external reason? Or do you give because of the generous heart of the Father that you have experienced?

Ephesians 1:7-8 - In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

Conclusion - Oikos

Oikos: Household - Greco Roman worldview - bigger than immediate family

Household that included the vast web of relationships that you find yourself in.

This is what the local church should be. You are called into a family. The local church - especially at the size that Sola is - can be your *oikos*. Your "household" if you will.

Open Door Policy: A group of people who have total access to your life, possessions, details of your life.

Intrusiveness describes it, but that feels negative. It is more of a willingness to share that pushes against an individualized culture of today.

Will you receive the invitation to live a life of self-giving love?

Communion

The early church would have no doubt practiced what we call the Lord's Supper today. In the midst of this community in Acts 4 would have been this sacrament that the Lord gave us

Here, in the Lord's Supper, we get to see self-giving Love on display. And as we receive it, there is power to help us locate how God has put us in a family of deeply connected relationships where we experience belonging and duty to give love and receive love in the name of Christ.

Jesus, because of the overflow of trinitarian love, faced gave away His life so that we might receive adoption as Sons and Daughters

What is hindering you from experiencing the transforming power of the grace of God?