

Acts 2:42-47

It's been a tough week with the ice storm, but God is good. Can we celebrate that?

Galatians 6:10 – it starts with us, and moves out from there.

I love what one of our members said to me: “**The church is the healthiest when we’re busy doing ministry like Jesus did.**”

I love you all – the love, concern, offers of help, compassion for others – it’s truly been amazing to see.

You’ve all been the church in action – which is what we’re going to talk about this morning – and have the opportunity to hear about from some of you.

So as we begin – we’re going to get a glimpse of the early church – and what it was that made it great.

Let’s read Acts 2:42-47. (Bob Shutt – come read)

Here is the earliest description of the church that the scriptures record:

I think it was Mark Twain that said:

Sometimes we don’t need new information – we just need to be reminded of what we already know.

And so at how Luke describes the earliest community of the church:

Look at 42-45

1. They had everything in “common” – that means they were of one mind, one heart, one mission. (The church

is never about uniformity, but unity - bringing our individual gifts and talents to the body, but dedicated to a common, compelling vision to bring God’s Kingdom to the world).

They shared with one another.

I’ve watched you share this week - generators, fuel, food, hot meals. In this church, I’ve witnessed plumbers and electricians helping their neighbors.

The early church was a church that shared with one another as they had needs.

And then Luke begins describing a community that experiences the supernatural.

2. Verse 43 – there were “signs and wonders.” God was doing amazing things among them – signs, wonders and power.

We need to pray for miracles. Like the Feeding of the 5000.

Like the opening of the jail cell by an angel when Peter was locked inside. (There was just no other way for that door to break open than by the power of God.)

And so we ask God to work among us where the only answer is a miracle. There’s just no other way.

Jesus said in Matthew 19 – with man things are impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Then – notice their faith practices:

1. Verse 42 - They were devoted to the Apostles' teaching. That's our model.

The early church was a learning church. They were devoted to the Word of God.

At Gracepoint, we stand on the Word of God.

We're not just giving opinions, but centering everything we do on the Word of God.

2. They prioritized fellowship – not only were they a learning church, but they were a loving church - 46

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.

There was honesty and transparency in their midst, a sincere, genuine love for one another.

They were real about their faith – they would not sit in circle and say, “I’m fine, “I’m okay.” No – they were real and honest about their lives and their struggles, and they loved one another with a sincere love.

I think they were very specific about their needs and their prayers. There were no unspoken prayer requests in this church – their needs, their struggles were spoken to one another.

They broke bread together – and they did that every day. They loved to be together, to eat together (something we love too).

And they did it with GLAD and SINCERE hearts. It brought them great joy to eat and fellowship together.

I read this: one of the things people who have never really experienced church most love to hear is this phrase: “Supper’s ready.”

And then -

3. There was a spirit of generosity and giving among them – “they gave to anyone who had needs.”

They chose to be contributors instead of consumers. The didn't form a committee or a foundation to do their benevolent work – they just gave!

Giving wasn't somebody else's job – it was each members job and everyone's joy to give.

They understood that real life is not in what you get but in what you give.

And they recognized that giving wasn't someone else's job, it was the job of each Christ follower to give and to share.

They took giving seriously – much like what the Apostle Paul would later inspire:

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

They gave purposely, prayerfully and thoughtfully.

4. The participated regularly in communion

⁴²They devoted themselves . . . to the breaking of bread. Jesus was always at the center of all they did.

Some things we need to remember:

- 1) When we take the bread we are remembering that by his wounds we are healed.
- 2) When we share in the cup, we remember that our salvation found in the blood, the setting us free of guilt and shame, and free from all that the devil tries to throw at us.

Not too long ago, I asked some of our members to share what they think of when they partake of communion:

“There are many things that communion means to me, but I’ll break it down into something personal: Jesus began by giving thanks. Communion is a time for me to give thanks for the greatest gift ever given – the birth, the death, the burial, and the resurrection of my Lord Jesus Christ. For me, communion is a time of pure thanksgiving. If Jesus could be thankful, even in such a difficult moment, then it leads me to be thankful in my daily walk and in every season of my life.”

Through communion, we’re ALL welcome at the table to share in the supper of our Lord.

Another put it this way: It is one of the most important acts we engage in as Christians to pull ourselves out of our hectic, insignificant earthly lives and focus on the majesty of the God we serve who gave us everything.

5. “They devoted themselves to . . . prayer.” Why?

Because prayer unleashes the power of God – right? (I really believe what prepared many of us for snowmageddon, was the 21 Days of Prayer we’ve been in all through the month of January. And that prayer has upheld you, and allowed to be calm in the face of adversity, and use that calm strength to help your families and your neighbors.

They were devoted to prayer.

And then –

6. They were filled with “glad and sincere hearts” – verse 47.

Why? Because they put their trust in God.

Listen - Trust is the connection of believing in God’s promises for our lives.

Psalm 28:7

**The Lord is my strength and my shield;
my heart trusts in him, and he helps me.
My heart leaps for joy,
and with my song I praise him.**

He can be trusted!

I read this: “When you’re not sure how the story ends, trust the author who’s holding the pen!”

I’ve learned that I can trust him, even when I can’t trace him.

I may not know what he's doing, but I know that his plans for me are good.

Often times we can let other things be the source of our joy – our jobs, or money, our popularity – if other things become the source of your joy, that means your joy will rise and fall at the place of it!

That's why for some of us, if our football team loses, IF WE EXPERIENCE AN ICE STORM - our joy goes out the window.

That's why we have to put our trust in our God, because here's the thing – real joy isn't what happens to you – but joy is based on who's living on the inside of you. And our joy has a name – and his name is Jesus.

And my Bible says that sin can't stop him, death can't defeat him, the grave can't hold him – he's the King of heaven, he's the king of glory – and he's the king of kings, and as long as I have Jesus, I've got my joy!!!!

And the joy that Jesus gives our can't be taken by the world we live in – not even what mother nature throws at us.

Our trust is in our God – power or no power, water or no water.

Because when the world is so uncertain, He's steadfast – the same God today, and forevermore.

They never forgot where the source of their strength.

They trusted in the promises of God.

And what was the result? Verse 47

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Verse 41 says 3000 were added to their number that day. (That only happens when we are a loving, grace-filled, sincere family that is patient, willing to forgive, longsuffering and kind).

So I've just got to close with this:

Acts 1:8 - God's vision for the church was a vision lived out and witnessed at three levels (Acts 1:8):

- Here – Jerusalem
- Near – in all Judea & Samaria
- Far – to the ends of the earth

I want to give you an assignment today:

Psalm 2:8, NKJV

*Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.*

There's a lot going on among the nations, right? God says, "Ask me for those nations you watch in the news."

Don't think there is no hope.

Don't be silent. God says, "I command the people of God to ask for those nations."

So I can ask for things locally, neighborhood, church, apartment complex, even for God to move across my state and nation. To move as we plant new churches.

And you know what they were singing? "Glory to God."

We've got to believe the mandate from God to touch every heart and nation.

And it starts with prayer.

We want God to touch Savannah, TN – we want God to touch people in our country – the Cajuns, New Yorkers – but also the Japanese, the Burmese, the Koreans, the Laoceans (some of the hardest people in the world to reach with the Gospel because they are such a primitive country).

So:

1. **Pray big, not small!** Sometimes we just pray too small. And God says, “I want to move through the whole world.” We need to pray Big. “Lord, I have a burden for Peru.”
2. **Pray it with confidence.** It’s His Will that every people group come to know Jesus.
3. **Let’s pray** beyond ourselves! **Pray for the world.**

I read somewhere recently – “**The most beautiful part of the church is when the church leaves the building.**” (We couldn’t even get to the building last Sunday). But you’ve been the church this week.