

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (FOR FEBRUARY 7, 2021)

For Community Groups or Personal Study

As we continue in our study of the 2021 Church we begin exploring what it means to be the "Gathered Church." Why do we gather together on Sundays? What happens when we meet together? What does God intend for us when we gather as His Church?

We have been focusing on unity throughout the past weeks. This morning we turn our attention to what that unity means for both worship and prayer. Unity is essential for those who follow Jesus. Unity is His command ... and so we passionately pursue unity. But unity is not an end in itself. We do not gather together simply to be in close proximity. We are to be united in spirit, in truth, seeking to be of one mind and one purpose. Our purpose when we are His Gathered Church is to seek our Lord and Master, to Worship Him alone, to talk to, and listen to, Him in prayer, to follow where He leads us. Unity with a purpose, lived out as His Gathered Church.

We are working toward a more tangible unity here at Grace. Grace of Christ and Gracia de Cristo no longer co-tenets but one church. How will that affect the way we worship on Sundays? You will not see drastic changes ... but you will notice a new intentionality. Some Sundays we will include both the English and the Spanish words for certain songs and liturgy. We hope English language speakers will take this opportunity to learn some Spanish, and vice versa. Those who previously led in one or the other will now be leading us together. We will worship, pray, and serve side by side, joining hearts and minds as His Gathered Church.

2021.CHURCH: THE GATHERED CHURCH

SERMON PASSAGE: ACTS 2:42-45

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need."

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

This morning's Bible passage comes from the book of Acts. The author of this book also wrote the Gospel of Luke. Read the opening verses of both books to see the connection. The book of Acts provides an account of the early days and years of the Christian movement. The book opens with Jesus offering final words to His closest friends. We discover that the total number of gathered believers was about 120. The chapters that follow describe the rapid growth of the Christian church as it spread from Jerusalem to the far corners of the Roman empire. Churches (initially meeting in homes) sprang up in every city visited by those early Christian leaders. Chapter two records the first church sermon. Thousands responded that day to the power, grace, and invitation of God and became Christians. Our passage this morning records what happened next.

1. Read the entire sermon recorded in Acts chapter 2. Why were so many there to hear Peter's message? Why did so many respond to the message?
2. What were the priorities those new believers focused on?
3. How would you describe that first Christian community?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

4. What do you think was the main message the apostle's taught? (see 1 Corinthians 1:18-25)
5. Luke tells us that they devoted themselves to fellowship. How would you describe Christian fellowship?
6. How did their new faith in Jesus change the way they lived?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

7. List your top priorities for this coming week? Not to create guilt, but as a challenge to all of us ... How much of our time will be spent focusing on the apostle's teaching and fellowship with other Christians?
8. How can we regular include more time for studying the apostle's teachings, for fellowship with other Christians, for meals together and prayer?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a minute or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. In your prayer ask God to help you identify what is most important and then to spend more time on those people and things. Ask God to bring into your life someone, or a group of someone's, you can have regular fellowship with. Ask God to help you be more generous and readier to help others. God will help us!