

Sunday, May 31st
May, 2009 Sermon Series: “Stewardship: I Believe”
“Pentecost and the Church: God Sends”
Acts 2:1-21 (42-47)

Context:

Week 1: Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” who laid down His life and cares for us. Our response is *Worship*. Week 2: Jesus describes Himself as the “True Vine.” Because Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” and the “True Vine” He remains (endures, dwells) in us and makes it possible for us to remain (to endure, dwell) in Him. One way we remain in Jesus is to *study* His word, the Bible. Week 3: Jesus said that He chose us before we chose Him and because He loves us we can, and must, love others; this is Christian *fellowship*. Last week, Jesus prays that we will be protected and sanctified so that we can be people of *service* to Jesus and others. Today, Pentecost Sunday, the Holy Spirit empowers the church for *mission*.

Relevant Scriptures:

The Promise: *Acts 1: 8-9 (Jesus) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

The Fulfillment: *Acts 2:2-4 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

The Result: *Acts 2:37-38 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”³⁸Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The Means: *Acts 2:42-45 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.⁴³Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.⁴⁴All the believers were together and had everything in common.⁴⁵Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*

Implications:

The Church: “The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered...As Paul says: One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, etc. Eph. 4, 5, 6.” (*Augsburg Confession: Article VII*)

Acts 2:46-47 *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,⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Prayer: Thank God for His grace given to you through Christ through the ministry of the church. Thank God for the opportunity to participate in His redemptive mission of the world. Pray that others would surrender to Jesus through the ministries of Red Hill Lutheran Church and School.

□ **Day #1--Monday, June 1st Read:** *Luke 14:27; Philippians 4:4-9; John 8:31-32.*

Our stewardship theme for the month of May concludes with a focus on the church's mission. Christian stewardship is managing what God has given to us and consequently giving back to God. We give to further God's mission in the world. As Christians, we give of ourselves, our time, and our possessions because God has given all of these to us and now we get to return these gifts to advance the mission of His church to God's glory! The church is the place where the members are trained and equipped to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ in their day-to-day lives. The training and equipping in the church is called discipleship; a disciple is one who is learning to live their life as Jesus would live their life. As disciples, we serve and love others who in turn experience the grace of God in their lives and consequently become disciples themselves! This is the missional nature of the church. Discipleship and mission starts with following Jesus.

In the movie, "City Slickers", there is an exchange between the characters played by Billy Crystal and Jack Palance regarding the "meaning of life." In the movie, Jack Palance holds up one finger and says to Billy Crystal, "The meaning of life is this one thing." Billy responds, "The meaning of life is your finger?" "No", says Jack Palance, "the meaning of life is this one thing." What's the 'one thing'? asks Crystal. "That's what you have to figure out," replies Jack Palance. The Bible tells us that the "one thing" that is the meaning of life is Jesus. Jesus asks you to trust him with everything that you are and everything that you have. Every day we have to decide if Jesus is going to be the center or if the center is going to be something else. I know what you're thinking, "Great. I can't do this! How do I do this? How do I know when I'm doing this?" I am glad you asked. This is the spiritual life! You and I are challenged daily to surrender all to Jesus. We are to consistently ask the question, "What would Jesus want me to do in this situation and what would Jesus have me say to this person?" Let's be clear. The goal of the Christian life and being a disciple is not "trying harder" but "training better." What does "training better" mean? It means that we seek to make space for Jesus in our lives so that we can learn to live like him. Jesus came to this world with the invitation and announcement that it is now possible to live in the presence and under the reign of God. It is the kind of life where people can look at us and say, "I didn't know life could look like that!" God's way is the "one thing" that is truly the meaning of life.

Going Forward: What is the "one thing" that I am willing to live for?

Prayer: *Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in your mercy, defend us from all perils and dangers of this day and night; for the love of your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

□ **Day #2--Tuesday, June 2nd Read:** *Psalms 23:1; Revelation 7:17; Exodus 15:3.*

'He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness,' saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are taught to imitate His life and manners, if we would be truly enlightened, and be delivered from all blindness of heart. Let therefore our chief endeavor be to meditate upon the life of Jesus Christ. Whosoever then would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must endeavor to conform his life wholly to the life of Christ...Endeavor therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and turn to the invisible...He is truly great who hath great love...Do what lieth in thy power, and God will assist thy good will. (Thomas A' Kempis: *The Imitation of Christ.*)

Going Forward: The purpose of my life is to live like Jesus lived and to love as He loved. God will give me the ability to do this as I turn to Him and let Him work in my life.

Prayer: *O God, who art truth, make me one with thee in everlasting love. Amen.*

Day #3--Wednesday, June 3rd Read: *Matthew 11:28; John 3:16; Romans 5:8.*

Remember the old “Uncle Sam” poster with Uncle Sam pointing and saying, “Uncle Sam wants you!” Guess what? God wants you! Read that again three times and each time accentuate one of the words: GOD wants me. God WANTS me. God wants ME! Do you believe that? At times in life it’s hard to believe that anyone wants us. Yet this is the message of Jesus: “I want you.” You are not beyond Jesus’ love, healing, or power. The beginning of any spiritual transformation or discipleship is ACCEPTING this truth. God desires you for His family today. This is the reality of grace. Martin Luther said it this way:

Now we have received from God nothing but love and favor, for Christ has pledged and given us his righteousness and everything else he has; he has poured out upon us all his treasures, which no man can measure and no angel can understand or fathom, for God is a glowing furnace of love, reaching even from the earth to the heavens.

God loves you and wants to change you. It’s because of God’s love for you that he wants to see you be renewed, changed, and healed. Christian author and writer, Max Lucado, reminds us of this when he writes, “God accepts us as we are. But He refuses to leave us that way.” Now that is something to celebrate!

Going Forward: God wants me for His family.

Prayer: *God, thank you that you want me. You want to change me and set me free. I turn to you and ask for your love, joy, and presence to begin to change my heart and mind so that I can live for you. Thanks for this day! Amen.*

Day #4--Thursday, June 4th Read: *Act 2:42-43; Matthew 28:19-20.*

Last Sunday, Pentecost Sunday, we observed that the church received the Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s power enabled the early church to begin its mission to the world. In Acts 2:42-47, these verses describe the Christian church in the days after Peter’s “Pentecost speech.”

The early church continued to meet in the Temple for their place of assembly and ministry, but they also met in various homes. The 3,000 new converts would obviously need instruction in God’s Word as well as fellowship with those already followers of Jesus. Here we can see that very early in the church’s life, one of the core purposes was to make disciples. The church fulfilled Jesus’ command to baptize and to teach obedience to everything that Jesus commanded. This disciple-making activity of the early church was twofold. First, the believers continued steadfastly (Greek: *proskarterountes*, “persisting in or continuing in”) in the teaching of the apostles. This teaching would have likely been similar to a sermon and Bible study. Second, there was the fellowship which is further defined as the “breaking of bread and to prayer.” The “breaking of bread” likely refers to regular meals, but at the close of each meal the believers would pause to remember the Lord by observing “the Lord’s Supper” or Holy Communion. The word for “fellowship” means much more than simply “being together;” It means “having in common” and probably refers to the sharing of material goods that was practiced in the early church. (I will elaborate tomorrow, Saturday).

The “wonders” and “awe” of v.43 (Greek: *terata*, “miracles evoking awe”) and “miraculous signs” (Greek: *semia*, “signs,” “miracles pointing to a divine truth”) were the results of the church’s ministry.

The apostles performed many such “signs and wonders” (see Acts 4:30; 5:12; 6:8; 8:6, 13; 14:3; 15:12). In this passage, as well as in the rest of the book of Acts, we can see the “daily-ness” of the Christian faith. The early believers met *daily*, cared *daily*, won souls *daily*, searched the Scriptures *daily* (Acts 17:11), and increased in number *daily* (Acts 16:5). This clearly was not a once-a-week-Christianity. Jesus’ resurrection power was at work in their *daily* lives through the Spirit.

□ **Day #5--Friday, June 5th Read:** *Acts 2:44-47; Acts 4:32-5:11.*

The early church displayed a generous attitude toward possessions (see also Acts 4:32–5:11). What is noteworthy here is that the church gave, not out of compulsion, but in response to any need in the community. The selling of property cited in this passage, and the common possession of the proceeds, may imply that the early church expected the Lord to return soon and establish His kingdom. This may explain why the practice was not continued. The believers “having everything in common” is not what we consider today “socialism,” because it was voluntary. Also their goods were not evenly distributed but were given to meet particular needs as they arose.

One of the subthemes of Acts is joy because a church that is being faithful to Jesus will experience joy! We see this joy in vs. 46 and 47 as well as in Acts 5:41; 8:8, 39; 11:23; 12:14; 13:48, 52; 14:17; 15:3, 31; 16:34; 21:17! The church was unified (Acts 2:44), magnified (Acts 2:47a), and multiplied (Acts 2:47b). The church possessed a winsome testimony among the unsaved, not only because of the miracles done by the Apostles (Acts 2:43), but also because of the way the members of the church cared for each other and served the Lord above all else.

This meeting together in the Temple Courts was a short-lived period; a time when the church could gather in the temple without fear and even enjoyed “*the favor of all the people*.” Soon, the church would begin to experience conflict and opposition. In the next three chapters, Luke (the author of Acts) presents both outside opposition and internal disharmony.

□ **Day #6--Saturday, June 6th Read:** *Matthew 20:28.*

During the month of May you have been asked to commit to serving and following Jesus with your time and resources—both time and financial resources. Red Hill Lutheran Church and School is your church; the place where you receive ministry and the tools necessary to follow Jesus faithfully. Jesus came to this world and was obedient to the Father and the Father’s desire that you come home to Him. God does not want you to wander through life aimlessly, from crisis to crisis and doubt that you are loved and valued by God. The death and resurrection of Jesus reveal the heart of God; A father’s heart that longs for His children to be healed, fulfilled, forgiven, and filled with hope. What does a life look like when it is lived for the glory of God in response to the love of God? It is a life that Worships, Studies, Fellowships, and Serves. As you commit to these foundational disciplines in your life, you will be a person of faith, hope, and love. You will stand with others in this church as a witness to what God can do with ordinary, broken, messed-up people like you—and me! You will grow more and more to be like Jesus until that day when...

^[3] Never again will anything be cursed. The Throne of God and of the Lamb is at the center. His servants will offer God service—worshiping, ^[4] they’ll look on his face, their foreheads mirroring God. ^[5] Never again will there be any night. No one will need lamplight or sunlight. The shining of God, the Master, is all the light anyone needs. And they will rule with him age after age after age... Yes! Come, Master Jesus! ^[21] The grace of the Master Jesus be with all of you. Oh, Yes! Revelation 22:3-5, 21. (The Message Translation)