

## **WELCOME 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021 – 1 Pentecost '21 B**

Trinity Sunday - Acts 2:42-47 & 4:31-37

**Welcome!** It's great to be together. As has become our custom there are Group Study & Discussion resources for you to use *over the course of the week*. *As God leads you into the fullness of His word/work in your life he will then introduce you to someone who needs to hear the good news from you. Also... somewhere here today you may feel a nudge - tap - tug. Don't ignore it! That's probably the Holy Spirit prompting you some way. Let's talk about that after worship.*

**As we move into this week...**The **WOW** Factor! Manufacturers build it in. Marketers sell it. And like **moths** to a flame we are unthinkingly drawn toward it. From our **cars** to our **clothes**. From **houses** to **holidays**. How we think about **food** to how we think about **church**.

The Wow...the you beaut...the extraordinary...Sucks. Us. In...almost every time.

*All the* believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, & to fellowship, & to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), & to prayer.

In all ordinary-ness the first followers of Jesus lived as church...

*And each* day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

The Spirit lives in you to make your daily faithfulness a display of Jesus' presence. The Spirit works through you; by your obviously ordinary life in Christ & witness to His love, to add to the Kingdom the lives of those all around you.

Filled with the Spirit of the risen Jesus, the church bears to the world life that never gets old & power that renews, restores, revitalizes & recreates day after day, satisfying hearts & filling lives with joy & peace...in all the ordinary places your life takes you.

We'll explore & experience that together. Let's pray...then we'll get stuck into it.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

*Holy God, like the early believers, make us a people devoted to you in ordinary life in all things that as we live as Christ through our ordinary acts, your grace & love may be evident, your generosity experienced & your kingdom advance in this world. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.*

Let's hear God's Word...

### **FAITH CHAT:**

1. Did you experience something "extraordinary" this week? Why was it "notable?"  
Then what did you do?
2. Where has an ordinary act in your life led to an outcome that surprised you?

Now we'll sing...Glory to our Great Redeemer...

### **BLESSING/SENDING**

*May God bless the world in which you move, and bless your home and bless your friends.*

*May God bless the eyes with which you see, and bless the ears with which you listen.*

*May God bless the way you use your hands, bless the way you employ your tongues...*

*And the blessing of almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
be with us now and always. Amen.*

## 1 Pentecost – '21 B – GETTING OUR ACTS TOGETHER: ORDINARY ACTS

1 year ago... Where were you? I know... I was here. Most of you weren't. In fact... there were only 4 of us. Hamish, Josh, Aine & me. It was Coronavirus season & we were limited in how we could interact w/ each but were trying to keep connected. We were pushing to put our worship on-line so folks could continue to access God's Word & the worship of the church in some way. We were inviting as many folks as we could into our homes... & there was a big debate if all that was really "church."

If your only engagement w/ the community of faith was via the internet & the gov't was telling us we were "non-essential" & we couldn't gather the way we'd always known our gatherings... was that church? Is church in the virtual world really church? Is it church if you have no way of knowing if anyone's actually there? **What is church?** What sets us apart from any other gathering grouping association or assembly? What is the core of the church's earthly existence? What is "church?"

Great questions... 12 months ago I said this: **Scripture** reminds us we are firmly planted **in Christ** not as isolated individuals but as a community... a people... a **gathered body** that **together** lives in the assurance of Christ's resurrection & into the hope only the living Jesus can give. Acts gives us this amazing glimpse into the life of the early church... but more importantly into **OUR LIFE** as church. We just get a glimpse of what they were up to... we don't know the full range of how they lived as a body of disciples in their world... we get a few frames like out of an old-school **film**... but it's an amazing picture & it clearly speaks to us... Acts 2 **BIBLES**

**All the** believers **devoted** themselves to the apostles' teaching, & to fellowship, & to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), & to prayer. First... I love that word **devoted**. Being a part of the Xn family was not a *part-time sometimes when I can fit it in* gig. They arranged their lives around their faith in Jesus & their engagement w/ Christ's people not the other way around. Built their schedule from the inside out not from the world & its demands in. They were devoted – all-in – in the deep end of the pool when it came to their life in Christ. "Devoted" means there is nothing that stands b/t you & that thing surfers when the water is just b/t darn cold & ice. **TO WHAT** were they devoted?

The apostles' teaching... There was no hierarchy among them. The apostles simply had been w/ Jesus longer & walked in the dust of his sandals... they were respected as the benchmark for what was authentic Jesus. You have that same access to the apostles... Scripture/Bible/Word... Not just the simple facts... They **absorbed** the apostles' teaching & asked the Lutheran question: **What** does this mean? How am I going to take this word & make it mine... apply it to my life... *All Scripture is God-breathed & is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting & training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* – 2 Tim 3:16-17 **TAKE IT HOME!**

At the very heart of who we are is God's Word... if something doesn't line up w/ Scripture we stand apart from that... We don't endorse what the Word does not endorse. The Scriptures are the lifeline of the Xn. They point w/o fail to Jesus. They anchor us in his promises & provide the language of the hope we share w/ others. Comfort in distress. Wisdom in confusion. Clarity in strife. Joy in difficulty. Boldness in fear. They were devoted to the apostles' teaching...

But that is not a solitary enterprise done apart from the rest of the community... *apostles' teaching, & to fellowship, & to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper)...* which looked like this: **They** *worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, & shared their meals w/ great joy & generosity* Their fellowship was more than biscuits & coffee for a few minutes after worship... or a festive gathering or community event. They were engaged in each other's lives a lot & often... obviously they had jobs & farms & lives... but they organized their living interactively w/ other believers to eat together & open their homes to each other... & worship was > 1/wk... But more...

This'll take a minute... In Acts 3... Peter/John heal a guy outside the Temple who's been crippled for 40 yrs... he goes into the Temple walking/leaping/praising God & **no one** can deny he's healed. P/J tell the gathered amazed crowds it was in the name of Jesus (*whom you killed but God raised from the dead*) that this man is now healed. The religious bigwigs arrest P/J for talking about Jesus & the rez. They shake their fists @ & say "don't you dare talk about the Jesus & rez bizness ever again." But when P/J are released they go straight back to the fellowship & the whole bunch prays: **O Lord,** *hear their threats, & give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. Stretch out your hand w/ healing power; may miraculous signs & wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.* **THEN WHAT?** **After** *this prayer, the meeting place shook, & they were all filled w/ the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God w/ boldness.*

The fellowship functions as the engine room of their lives. There is no distant remote all-controlling hierarchy in some other city. They can't appeal to Adelaide or Rome for help... They are all they have & that devotion translates into the power of God being unleashed all over the place... the rest of that story... All that boldness gets P/J arrested again. More yelling & fist-shaking & this: **"We gave** *you strict orders never again to teach in this man's name! Instead, **you have filled all Jerusalem** w/ your teaching about him, & you want to make us responsible for his death!"* – Acts 5:28. Eventually there's a caning & the apostles rejoice that they can suffer for the name of Jesus & they don't stop proclaiming the risen Jesus & his power over all things. But look again... *you have filled all Jerusalem...*

The growing number of Jesus-followers ALL carried w/in them the bubbling excitement of a living encounter w/ the life of Jesus through his Spirit... They ALL lived w/ an urgency to tell to someone else what Christ has done in reconciling the whole world to the Father... and they lived a unique companionship... The fellowship was the engine room of their lives.

But it was that fellowship... that seemingly ordinary fellowship that living sense of communal care love hospitality generosity wisdom worship & joy that caught the attention of the Romans... About 50 years after this narrative was written, a Greco-Roman philosopher, Aristides of Athens wrote a letter to Emperor Hadrian. Built the wall across England to serve as a defense against the Celtic/Pictish tribes. Aristides has become a Xn & is writing to lay out the differences b/t the various faiths in the Empire & highlight for the Emperor the compelling nature of faith in Jesus. Aristides wants Hadrian to become a Jesus-follower too.

Aristides is a philosopher, but he doesn't use philosophy/human wisdom/intellect as the basis for his appeal to the Emperor... it's the fellowship of believers Listen: "It is the Christians, O Emperor, who have sought & found the truth, for they worship the one true God in uprightness, as is attested by the purity & modesty of their lives. Christians... have the commands of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah himself, etched into their hearts. They keep these commands, looking forward to the resurrection of the dead & the life of the world to come. They do not engage in adultery or sexual immorality, & they do not bear false witness. They do not keep for themselves goods entrusted to them. Neither do they covet that which belongs to others. They honour father & mother, love their neighbors, judge according to justice, & do not do to others anything that they do not wish done to them. They comfort those who injure them, even trying to win them over as their friends. They are eager to do good to their enemies. They are gentle & easy to approach with an appeal. They abstain from unlawful lifestyles & all impurity. They neither neglect the widow nor oppress the orphan. What each one has, they are willing to give freely to care for the one who has nothing. If they see a travelling stranger, they bring him under their roof. They rejoice over him as over a real brother, for they do not call one another brothers after the flesh, but they know they are brothers in the Spirit & in God. If they hear that one of them is imprisoned or oppressed for the sake of Christ, they take care of all his needs. If possible they set him free. If anyone among them is poor or comes into want while they themselves have nothing to spare, they fast two or three days for him. In this way they can supply the poor with the food they need. This, O Emperor, is the rule of life of the Christians, & this is their manner of life."

This is a radically sacrificial life... it wasn't so much WOW as **NOW**... radically sacrificial life lived in the ordinary interaction of love & compassion w/in & through the disciple community in the manner of Christ who gave his life as a ransom for all... *you have filled all Jerusalem & the known world... Wagga Wagga?*

*All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, & to fellowship, & to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), & to prayer. Of course they prayed... you can't live a prayer-less faith in Jesus. How does Jesus say it... "Keep on asking... keep on seeking... keep on knocking... pray & never give up..." The continuous nature of how Jesus invites us to pray... no bullet points or quick check-off list... but an on-going conversation in which we are assured God hears w/ his heart & desires to meet our needs w/ every good thing he can offer. Pray into a promise & for obedience...*

Jesus offers an invitation to come to him & receive life this world cannot give... And in this world the church is the only vehicle God has chosen to share this saving transforming good news of life w/ the world. The church is the only place God has chosen where the love life & grace of Jesus are proclaimed clearly & lived passionately in the ordinary interaction of love & compassion w/in & through the disciple community in the manner of Christ who gave his life as a ransom for all. The Spirit lives in you to make your daily faithfulness a display of Jesus' presence. The Spirit works through you; by your obviously ordinary life in Christ & witness to His love, to add to the Kingdom the lives of those all around you.

### Take it home...

Which ordinary act would you like the Spirit to transform in your life at this time?

- Praying & Reading Scripture devotedly
- Relating to others for Spiritual growth
- Attending worship intentionally
- Imitating the character of Jesus Christ
- Serving in, through and beyond Living Water
- Embodying Christ-like generosity

30 secs... **Go**... I'll pray for us to close...

Lord Jesus come today & set us on fire with your life & your love. Pour out your Spirit in us so that every day this week we might invite others into your abundant joy, your limitless strength & your boundless hope. Fill us Lord with your power... the power which destroy the grave & frees from sin... then drive us to meet the world's deepest need. Amen