

**June 16, 2013 – Father's Day**  
**"First Church of Jerusalem"**  
**Acts 2:42-47**

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

A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Today I want to look at this first church of Jerusalem. A church that was, "praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." The early church was making an impression on the watching community and many from the community were coming to faith in Jesus. I want us to be a church like that.

Last week John spoke on the model of the first church. I want to pick up on his theme. John spoke about the coming and filling of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2 after the Holy Spirit was given, Peter gave the sermon of his life. After that sermon the crowd was so stunned, so deeply moved that they asked, "What should we do?"

**Acts 2:38**

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

About 3,000 people believed what Peter was saying and were baptized. 3,000! Talk about a growing church, 3,000 in one day! And, the apostles were not really ready for that, were they? It doesn't seem so. There are no recorded instructions from Jesus of how they were to prepare for this. Jesus knew that 3,000 would be added to His believers in a day, but He never gave the apostles any instruction of how to organize themselves to deal with this. Today we would have books, DVD series, and seminars from a successful pastor tell us how he/she did it and how we need to prepare to do the same. Yet, the only thing Jesus told the apostles was that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, power to be His witnesses. He didn't prepare them, or did He?

I want us to take a look at this first church and what this church show us. And first of course is that, as John shared last week, the early church showed us to:

**Be Filled With The Holy Spirit.**

We want to be a Holy Spirit filled Church. When people are true believers in Jesus Christ, by that I mean: truly and fully committed followers of Jesus; because they have turned from sin to God, and Jesus has forgiven their sin; and they have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, professing full allegiance to Jesus not only symbolically, but actually, they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If we are going to be a praising God church because we are making an impression on the watching community, experiencing many from the community coming to faith in Jesus, we have to have Holy Spirit filled believers.

Did Jesus prepared the apostles, yes He did when He told them to wait until they received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

John gave you an opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit last week. Have you received the Holy Spirit? The early church shows us we need to be filled. Is there a sin that is blocking the filling, confess it and be willing to turn from it. Is there an area of your life that you refuse to surrender, or do you simply not want to give Jesus all of you?

I remember after accepting Jesus realizing I had not given myself completely to Him. I was fearful of surrendering completely to Him (I wasn't sure if I wanted to give full control of my life to God). We want Jesus to be the Savior for our sin, but not the Lord of our life. It wasn't until I made the decision to give all to Him that I was really changed. An important word that we are going to look at today is "devoted." If you are ready to do that, devote yourself totally and completely to Jesus, then ask Him to fill you with the Holy Spirit, ask and you *will* receive.

What else does the early church show us? How did these Spirit filled believers live?

The early church showed us to:

### **Be Devoted to God's Word**

(v42a) All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching

We want to be a church where the Word of God is taught and preached. An earnest desire for a fuller knowledge of God and His will as revealed in the Bible is the basis of a healthy Christian life and thus a healthy church. But the early church shows us something more. By being devoted to the apostles teaching means the believers were putting the teaching they were hearing into practice.

James 1:22

But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.

A true believer is not a Christian on Sundays only between the hours of 10am and 11:30am; but all week long, where ever you are. You must devote yourself to what you

learn here, living it out there in your home, neighborhood, job, school, with friends, relatives, strangers. We must bring the sacred and the secular together.

The world hates hypocrites & loves to point out our hypocrisy. The world uses our hypocrisy as their reason for rejecting Jesus. Meanwhile, Jesus also pointed out the hypocrisy of the religious. He hates hypocrisy too. Don't give the world a reason to reject Jesus. Live your faith. Devote yourself to the Word of God, devote yourself to the teaching you hear by obeying the message. The early believers were eager to learn, hungry, wanted to hear more, and devoted to what they heard, this ought to characterize us all. Ask yourself does this desire for more Christian knowledge mark your life, and does it practically influence your Christian conduct and life? Does your Bible look used?

Heb 5:12 NIV

... though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again.

Don't let this be true of you, if it is then change it. You will never be a strong Christian or a very joyful one until you study and apply God's Word, that is, until you devote yourself to the apostles' teaching - persevering and steadfast in learning and obeying.

The early church showed us to:

### **Be devoted to fellowship**

(v42b) All the believers devoted themselves to...fellowship and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper)

We want to be a church that loves each other deeply. That is what fellowship is; Christians loving each other as Christ loved us. Fellowship is more than shallow conversation over coffee and a bagel. That's a good start, but not enough.

The Greek word, ***koinonia*** (koy-nohn-ee'-ah), means a partnership, and it is what Jesus meant when He prayed that we would be one – united. It means communion or a sharing in common and it is what makes us a loving community.

The early church shared everything in common:

(v44-46) And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity

They shared times of worship together. They not only got together in places of worship, they got together in each other's homes. They shared meals together, they shared the Lord's Supper together (remember there was no church building yet. When they met in

homes before they ate they broke bread, passed it, ate it, poured wine, passed it and drank it, and remembered Jesus).

They shared their lives; and they even shared their possessions, willing to sacrifice for one another. They believed that everything they had was not theirs but God's and was at His disposal to be used as He directed where it was needed. From time to time they would sell their possessions to meet a need. The implication is that as special needs arose some of the believers or a believer would sell property or goods and make the proceeds available to meet the emergency. The same thing still happens today. I know people in this church that sacrificed to help another person in need.

We need fellowship, we need each other. Individually we may be weak, but we will be held together by one another. We are like glowing hot coals, separated from each other our fire will go out, but rake us together and we will break into a flame.

**Heb 10:25**

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

For the health of our own souls and for the health of our church let's make every effort to build this kind of loving fellowship, partnership, community because we are held together by same Lord, Christ Jesus.

The early church showed us to:

**Be devoted to prayer:**

(v42c) All the believers devoted themselves to ...prayer.

We want to be a church that is devoted to prayer.

What did the early church pray for? God's Power.

(v43) A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.

They prayed for God's power and they were seeing it. They were praying for the manifested presence of God and they were experiencing His glory, they were praying to be bold in sharing the message of Christ and the Lord was adding to their number.

Unless a church is devoted to prayer they will be worth very little, not accomplish much, and not possess much power. The most important thing a church can do is pray. You want to experience God's presence and power then first be fervent, faith-filled, persistent prayers.

It is not that we don't know how important prayer is, it is not that we don't know God's promises, it's not that we don't know the priority God gives to prayer, it's that we don't

do it. Maybe that is too harsh, we do pray, I just want to challenge you bring it up a notch. If we do things will change. I want to respond to the Lord's invitation in...

#### Jer 33:2-3 NIV

"This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it — the LORD is his name: 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

We will fail to see God work if we fail to pray or if we pray for selfish stuff.

#### James 4:2b-3

...you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure.

Pray for God's will, pray for power, pray for boldness in your witness, sometimes pray and fast, but pray - devote yourself to prayer – be persistent in prayer, perseverer in prayer; our church must devote itself to prayer.

The early church showed us to:

#### **Worship with Joy**

(v46-47a) They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God

We want to be a worshipping Church – exalting Jesus with great joy. Too many churches are asking “what do people want in church?” We want to ask, “What does God want in church? The answer should be obvious; God wants the sincere and fervent worship of His Son. The most powerful experience is to express love to the One most worthy of our affection. The greatest sin is to direct that adoration elsewhere. When we worship Jesus our greatest joy is discovered. Worship is giving worth directly to God and bowing our lives in submission to Him.

The early church showed us to:

#### **Take the Good News to Everyone**

(v47b) enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

We want to bring the Good News Message of Jesus Christ to everyone. But notice, who added to the fellowship? The Lord added. What is our part?

#### **Our part is to be devoted to:**

- being filled with the Holy Spirit
- God's Word

- fellowship
- prayer
- Worship
- Taking the Good News to Everyone

And the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. Aren't these the things Jesus taught the apostles for 3 years?

- be filled with the Holy Spirit
- obey God's Word
- love one another - fellowship
- pray
- Worship
- Take the Good News to Everyone

I guess He did prepare them.

Adding to our number here at this church is up to God. But being devoted to these things we see in the early church, that is up to us, it is up to you it is up to me.