

The Beginning of the Church *Acts 2:40-47*

As we have studied *Acts*, we have learned some basics of the Gospel message. Jesus left heaven and came as a baby, taught about the kingdom of God, and died on the Cross for our sins.

Jesus then rose again and is currently seated at the right hand of God the Father. After Jesus rose from the dead, He gave the believers His Spirit which was the beginning of the Church.

Today, the Universal Church includes everyone and anyone throughout time, who placed their faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross to be saved from sin and have eternal life.

Why is that important? Because Jesus is the head of His body, the Church, and if we are saved, we are members of His Church.

Being a member of the Universal Church should cause personal growth and a deeper connection to Jesus and other followers.

Being a member of the Church should bring joy with a sense of community, belonging, support, and shared faith, as we connect with others who have also trusted Christ for salvation. **Then...**

Members of the Universal Church should attend a local Church.

Within the local church, we also share community and belonging. We share a common faith, worship, personal growth and development, and hope as we encourage each other.

Please open your Bibles to *Acts 2* as we continue in that study.

Last week we looked at the 3rd part of Peter's sermon in *Acts 2* and spoke about Jesus being both Lord and Christ.

Today, we will discover what part these early Disciples played in the growth of the church and the joy they experienced by simply following the basics in church, once filled with the Spirit.

We will also discover how we can get back to the basics of how the Church should operate to experience the Joy of the Lord.

I. The sermon's results.

Read *Acts 2:40-41*

Peter preached a powerful sermon, filled with the Holy Spirit, and three thousand people received Christ.

Notice "*with many other words he testified...*

According to *outline of Biblical usage*, to **testify** means "to earnestly, religiously to charge, to attest, testify to, solemnly affirm, or to give solemn testimony to one."

Although Luke wrote *Acts 2* about Peter's sermon, the entire sermon was not recorded word-for-word for us to read.

Peter had a lot more to say as he had become a witness for Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Notice, "*and exhorted them.*" The word **exhort** in the original language means to beg, entreat, beseech, **encourage**, and strengthen by consolation, to comfort with the Word of God.

This is what we are called to do for each other with the Word.

2 Timothy 4:2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers.

2 Timothy 4:4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables.

2 Timothy 4:5 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
NKJV

And what was Peter exhorting them to do? To be “Be saved from this perverse generation”.

A couple of weeks ago we read ***Acts 2:23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;***

We know every generation without Christ is *perverse*, but the people that Peter was preaching to in Jerusalem were especially *perverse* because they had **consented** to Christ’s death.

Thousands of people heard the Gospel that day, but 3,000 of them responded to the Gospel.

Because those 3,000 people knew their need for a Savior, they received Jesus and submitted to His command to repent and be baptized.

And notice the response of those who would receive...

Re-read *Acts 2:41*

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. NKJV

So, allow me to ask you a question: *“If the LORD is the same, yesterday, today, and forever, can He provide a revival like that here in Klamath Falls?”*

II. Early Christians were determined learners.

Read *Acts 2:42*

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.”

NLT Acts 2:42 devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

dictionary.com says that ***steadfastly*** means fixed in direction, firm in purpose, resolution, faith, attachment, and unwavering as a resolution, **devotion**.

These folks didn't just read the Word casually once in a while, they were hungry for more of God's love letter written to them.

These early believers were committed to the Word of God and wanted more and more of it because a true follower of Christ wants to know about the object of their affection.

True followers, want their minds to be transformed and renewed by the washing that comes from the Word of God.

Walking the Christian Walk and standing firm in the Word of God produces real JOY.

Also, note the early followers were also devoted to each other.

Acts 2:42 and fellowship, in the breaking of bread NKJV

The Greek word for fellowship is *Koinonia*, which means intimate participation.

Koinonia explains the state of *fellowship* and community that should exist within the Church.

The essential meaning of *koinonia (fellowship)* implies joint participation, sharing, and intimacy. It is doing life together.

Breaking bread symbolizes sharing the Passover meal, eating from the same loaf of bread, and dipping in the same sauce. Imagine a stranger's dirty hand in your bowl of sauce.

Dipping in the same bowl was a sign of fellowship and trust in the ancient Eastern culture, which suggests a close relationship, friendship, and like-mindedness.

Do you understand Christians if we are both saved, we share in the same bread of Life, Jesus Christ?

Koinonia is a picture of people being real with one another, loving one another, being honest about struggles and trials with church members, and not worrying about being wrongly judged.

The word *koinonia* appears 19 times in the Greek New Testament and the words “*One another*” appear 67 times.

This teaches us that these early followers were committed to the LORD and each other.

They didn't allow unforgiveness or petty differences to separate them and they truly cared for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another.

Think about redwood trees, they are huge, but a mild wind can topple a redwood because their root systems are very shallow.

But when redwood trees grow in groves, they don't topple easily because their strength comes from the trees' interlocking roots.

If you try to do the Christian Walk on your own, without a strong root system, the winds of this life will topple you.

Walking through this Christian journey together produces JOY

Notice, *Acts 2:42 “and in prayers”*. The early followers were also devoted to **praying** together.

No one would argue that Jesus told us to pray to Him alone.

Matthew 6:6 when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. NKJV

Jesus condemned the Pharisees in *Matthew 6:6* for playing the hypocrite with their elegant prayers for people to see, while not truly seeking the LORD with their prayers.

The LORD honors the prayers of His people, and a special dynamic happens when the LORD's people pray together.

Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. NIV

The LORD doesn't need our prayers, but He does honor obedience, and when we pray as a body of believers; it knits us together and something special happens in the heavenly realm.

Intimate conversations with the LORD produce JOY.

III. The early followers were in Awe of the LORD.

Read *Acts 2:43*

Acts 2:43 Then fear came upon every soul NKJV **

The *NIV* says in *Acts 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe.*

The *fear* of the LORD for His Children doesn't mean we are terrified of Him, that *fear* is reverence and a sense of wonder!

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. NKJV

The terror of the LORD comes upon those who do not know God as their Abba Father, but believers in Christ should be **awestruck** by His majesty and wonder.

So, as the NIV puts it in *Acts 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe*

Have we gotten so used to the blessings and presence of God that we have turned our marvel into a mundane experience?

The early followers had a deep sense of reverence and wonder because of their thankfulness for all the LORD did for them.

The early followers also witnessed signs and wonders.

Acts 2:43 and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles NKJV

You have heard me say that Christians are pendulum people, we either swing to one extreme or the other.

Some don't believe in signs and wonders and the other extreme only focuses on signs and wonders, both are wrong.

We are not to seek after the signs and wonders, but we are to have eyes to expect the LORD to move in power!

I am not talking about Charismania, but the LORD is awesome, and He is moving all around us.

Do you have eyes to see Him?

As we are led by His Spirit, we should **expect** great things from the LORD, as we attempt to do great things for the LORD!

These early followers were convinced that the LORD was real and that He was moving, so they expected and attempted!

As they witnessed God moving, it brought fulfillment and JOY.

IV. The early followers shared with one another.

Read *Acts 2:45-46*

Welfare in the US commonly refers to federal government assistance to the poor through a variety of different programs.

Once the Great Depression hit the United States, many families suffered, so the government stepped in to try and solve the problem with the welfare system we know today.

F.D.R. enacted the Social Security Act in 1935 establishing different programs to provide aid to various people groups. But during the time of the early church, things were different.

Most of these early followers were hated by their families and communities so they were **excommunicated** by their synagogues for accepting Christ.

The early followers were also hated by the Romans for refusing to worship the emperor as a god. So, for these early followers, Christianity was not a religion or even a duty...

The early followers actually believed in Jesus with all of their being and they were hungry for more of the LORD.

Jesus asked in *Luke 18:8 when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" NKJV*

Real Faith is more than something you have said...Real Faith is the type of belief that causes a response.

The early followers didn't entangle themselves with things of this world, so it was easy for most of them to sell off their worldly possessions to help other followers.

Today, we are fortunate enough not to be under that same obligation as the early church was. But we again are pendulum people and so the church has swung to the other extreme.

Since the LORD has not asked us to live in a commune style of existence, a lot of followers become selfish and think they don't have to give to the work of the ministry at all.

One of the least favorite things to preach about as a pastor is giving. However, Jesus spoke on money more than He spoke on heaven or hell, so we can't simply pass by these truths.

Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." NKJV

So many people say Tithing was an Old Testament institution and since we are under Grace, it doesn't apply to the believer.

The theology of tithing for a New Covenant believer comes from the fact that everything we have, we owe to the LORD.

Abraham practiced **tithing** 430 years before the Law, when he won the battle against the kings of Shinar and the surrounding areas, as Abraham rescued his nephew Lot.

Genesis 14:16 So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

Genesis 14:17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him.

Genesis 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.

Genesis 14:19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

Genesis 14:20 And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. NKJV

We need to understand that under the New Covenant of Grace, all that we have comes from the LORD and belongs to Him.

Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."

Heaven is the true Christians' home, *not Earth!* We need to have an Eternal Perspective

God says to test Him in this... ***Malachi 3:10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house,***

And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.

We are also to give with a cheerful attitude...The LORD is not broke and He does not need your money!

2 Corinthians 9:7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. NKJV

I have said it many times...your spending habits prove where your heart is. If every one of God's people gave faithfully, we would not need a government welfare system today!

It is a shame that the LORD's people trust Him for some things, but refuse to trust Him in their finances.

Notice the result of these followers sharing with one another.

Re-Read *Acts 2:46*

The early Church members shared with one another, so all of their needs were met, and that sharing produced **joy**.

The Abundant life Jesus offers us gets us off the hamster trail of keeping up with the Joneses.

Acts 20 tells us that it is better to give than to receive.

V. The early followers worshipped the Lord together.

Acts 2:47 praising God NKJV

Psalm 84:10 For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. NKJV

These early followers would come together and worship the LORD for hours and hours because they were in love with the LORD...it was not a duty to come to church

And it never was about the show or performance of worship either. God doesn't want perfection; He wants your heart!

Worshiping together is never about the music or style...it's not about having a critical spirit either.

It is about loving the LORD God with all of your being and telling Him what He means to you.

Church services are about Praising God, it's not about us at all.

Worship is not just about music, it is telling God what He is worth to us.

Lifestyles of worshipping the LORD brings real JOY

Acts 2:47 and having favor with all the people NKJV

Because the early church had this kind of unity and reliance upon the LORD the early followers had the respect of others.

When we are living our lives in the power of the Holy Spirit people will notice and want what we have.

Don't be fooled, however, there will also be people who are in rebellion to the LORD who will hate you for no reason as well.

If you follow the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you will have enemies and be slandered.

John 15:19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. NKJV

If you are serving like Jesus, teaching like Jesus, and treating people like Jesus did, you will receive persecution, as you are counted worthy to suffer like your master, and that produces **joy**.

With the unity and like-mindedness of these early followers, there is no wonder why the church grew.

Everybody wants to be on a winning team but notice how the growth happened...

Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. NKJV

Jesus is the head of His body, the Church, and if we are saved we are members of the Church.

Being a member of the Church should bring joy with a sense of community, belonging, support, and shared faith, as we connect with others who have also trusted Christ for salvation.

Being a member of Christ's Church should cause personal growth and a deeper connection to Jesus and His other followers.

So many times, people expect the Church to do something, but they forget, as followers of the LORD Jesus Christ, we do not attend Church, we are the Church.

Within the local church....

We share community, faith, and worship, as we experience personal growth, hope, and **encouragement** from one another.

May our church be about the basic things the LORD has called us to do...as we allow Him to lead and guide us.

And cause us to live in the Joy of our Salvation.