

Simply Following Jesus

Acts 2:42-47

Introduction: Acts is a history of the earliest Christians. Through them we learn so much about what the church from the beginning was all about and what we should be all about as a church living in 2017 because the Gospel has not changed. We have been looking at the book of Acts for almost a year now and we are going to take a little break and do a Psalm series for the next two months. So this morning I want to do a bit of a recap of a certain theme that I've been seeing in Acts, and this is what it is - The early Church were a community of people who were all about Jesus - They were simply following Jesus. That was it; and as long as they kept him as their main focus they remained faithful and fruitful.

1. Pentecost

1. From Chapter 2 of Acts we see so much action being done for the kingdom of God but Luke connects all of that action with what took place on the day of Pentecost. What was that?
 1. Pentecost meant that Heaven had come down to earth with life transforming power. - Now because Christ had died and risen for the sins of the world, in order to bring us back to God, God's program to renew the world was back on track - to make remake humans in his image, to make the earth his dwelling place once again.
 2. On the day of Pentecost the first Christians were filled up with the spirit of God - experiencing for the first time what Paul calls the Love of God being spread abroad in our hearts. The knowledge that our sins are forgiven, that we have been given a right relationship with God through Jesus. we have been adopted into his family. He looks at each of us and says, "My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."
 3. They also had the knowledge and experience that Jesus, through the presence of the Holy Spirit was with them wherever they went - be it on the mountain tops of joy and prosperity, in a deep dark prison or at the end of the spear - Nothing could take that away, nothing could come between them and Jesus.

4. Because these Christians experienced this filling up of their hearts with God's love and presence they had a new boldness to declare who Jesus is and what he had done. - They experienced a joyful fearlessness. Their past wiped away, their present filled with God's presence, their future secured. The spirit of God indwelling them everywhere they went. What security, what filling.
2. **Acts 2:42-47 - Now because of this experience on Pentecost the Church devoted themselves, committed themselves to the person of Jesus, to following Jesus in four specific ways:**
3. **The Jesus Story - The Apostles Doctrine**
 1. What is that? The simple answer is that the NT is the Apostles Doctrine. They were telling the Jesus story again and again. They were teaching all that Jesus had taught them, about how all the Law, Prophets and Psalms pointed to him, about how all the promises of God were fulfilled by him and available only through him. They taught the O.T. Christocentrically. They taught what the Jesus story meant practically for the lives of this new community - the Church. They were obsessed with Jesus - the Jesus story so moved their hearts they couldn't get enough of it.
 2. **How were they devoted to the Apostles doctrine?** It became the ultimate source of truth for these people. They committed themselves to it. To be taught by it, to be transformed by it, to allow it to inform the whole of their lives.
 3. But to be devoted to the Apostles doctrine, to Scripture, means it becomes the number one source of Truth, information, and influence for our lives. It must become the greatest influence. It must become for us more necessary than daily bread, if we are to be formed, transformed into Jesus people - who reflect God's salvation, goodness and wholeness.
 4. Why were they devoted to it? Because of what Luke already told us - they had been cut to the heart by the story of Jesus - They had been transformed by Jesus work.
 1. The story of Jesus had so captured their hearts and minds. They were so enamored by his love, grace, humility, power...
 2. The road to Emmaus story..... "And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 And beginning with

Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself..... They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

1. The Jesus story had grasped their hearts and minds; to them it was the ultimate story. They wanted to know more, they wanted to hear it again and again and find their sole identity in it.

2. To The Jesus way of Living - Fellowship or the Common Life - The Jesus way of living.

1. The Jesus story wasn't something that they subscribed to intellectually, it was a way of life. It was something they practiced. Jesus is later described by Peter as, **“one who was anointed by God who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.”**
2. Their lives became marked by bearing one another's burdens, making sure that no one lacked anything, no one considered anything their own... when the Gospel cuts you to the heart you have a whole new way of looking at other people. No longer do you look out for just yourself and your own interest, why? Because you know that this is what God has done for you through Jesus. God did not look out for his own interest but made himself of no reputation and took upon himself the form of a bond slave -for you! You did not pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, No! As David says, he lifted us out of the pit out of the miry clay of sin, and death, and set our feet upon the rock! It was him. How can I be selective; how can I stand in judgment of someone's social class, race, or lack of provision when he took my judgment upon himself??
3. The Jesus community was a place where the the effects of the gospel were felt physically, needs were met, no one considered anything as their own, there was no divisions among them, they were simple, they were grateful, they were in awe of God and his glory, signs and wonders were being done and God was adding believers to the faith daily...what an exciting, amazing community to be a part of.

3. To Jesus ultimate sacrifice and intercession - The Breaking of Bread and Prayer -

1. Rehearsing the life death and resurrection of Jesus to one another in the breaking of bread and songs of worship and taking full advantage of his work. Our songs testify to each other.. the bread and the cup are a rehearsing again of what Jesus has done for us.. These word pictures and symbols of Who Jesus is and what he has done.
2. This is what we are doing when we come together to worship the Lord together - calling back and forth to one another the beauty of the one that was broken for us.. As Paul says, **“be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** We’re stirring up the Joy over what Jesus has done in one another.
4. **The Prayers** - are most likely a reference to the Psalms, or at least prayers taken from the book of Psalms- and we saw last summer how the Psalms are chalked full of the person of Jesus and how he is the one they ultimately point to. But in **Prayer** I think there is something more to what they were doing- They were taking full advantage of the finished work of Jesus. He has ascended to the right hand of the Father to plead his blood, to intercede on our behalf. Through Jesus substitutionary work on the cross we have the ear of our Father, the king of the universe, we have access to his power and resources through prayer - to see his kingdom advanced.

5. Results

1. All of this resulted in this way: **“And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles...having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”** Their deeds displayed the Good News; their words explained the good news - The Jesus story was lived out, the Jesus story was proclaimed.
2. Isn’t this our great desire as the people of God that the good news of God’s great rescue and love would be put on display through our deeds and words; and that God would add to the redeemed people daily? Revival, and renewal like this only come as the church reclaims it’s understanding of the radical rescue of God in Jesus

Christ.. when this becomes the thing that we are truly devoted to, the thing we are living for.

1. “When Jesus directs us to pray, “Thy kingdom come,” he does not mean we should pray for it to come into existence. Rather, we pray for it to take over at all points in the personal, social, and political order where it is now excluded: “On earth as it is in heaven.” With this prayer we are invoking it, as in faith we are acting it, into the real world of our daily existence.” — Dallas Willard

6. Jerusalem vs. Antioch

1. The story of the early Church in Jerusalem is fantastic, it’s so inspiring and powerful. Unfortunately though as you follow the narrative of Acts you see that this revival and renewal didn’t last.. why is that?
2. The Jerusalem church got caught up in what I believe was an identity crisis. When they were a church defined by Jesus, whose identity was Jesus and following him to bring the Gospel to every creature starting in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth, then they were faithful and they were fruitful. But around Acts 15 there is a turn in the narrative where all that comes out of the Jerusalem church are matters concerning Judaism, circumcision, the Law, and the kosher diet. We simultaneously see that the Church in Antioch was Gospel centered, multi-national, multiethnic, multi class, merciful to the poor, generous to other churches and it becomes the place where God is moving and continuing his mission to the world. The church of Antioch was so adaptable because they kept the main thing the main thing - Jesus - following him and seeking his kingdom.

7. Refuge Christian Fellowship

1. I believe every church and every Christian should take the church in Jerusalem as a cautionary tale. So many have started off so well, with great intention and great focus making Jesus and his gospel the main thing. The church in Ephesus is another great example of this: **“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I**

have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.”

2. Our heart since day one of Refuge is to be a church that simply follows Jesus wherever he is going, in the places he wants to be... Acts has been hugely recalibrating for me and for our church. This statement, “Simply Following Jesus,” is so simple, and single focused. Follow Jesus. Just stay close to him, keep your eyes on him. keep trusting him... He is the WAY, the TRUTH, the LIFE.
3. But it is also such a loaded statement because it doesn't allow us to be the die on the hill of anything Church. We aren't the Bible church; We aren't the praying church; We aren't the reformed church; We aren't the charismatic church; we aren't the gifts of the Holy Spirit Church; we aren't the social justice church; we aren't the community church; we aren't the worship church; We aren't the seeker church; We aren't the signs and wonders church; We aren't the evangelism church; We aren't the prosperity church; We aren't the poverty gospel church; We are not anyone of these things and yet we are all of these things.. because this is what it means to follow Jesus. To be a worshipper of God; to love our neighbor; to be faithful to God's word; to love and evangelize the lost; to seek justice and mercy for all people; to always be reforming according to the scripture and the person of Jesus Christ, (and the cultural need?); to be spirit filled joyful people who serve one another; To be a loving, accepting, supportive community; To see God work miraculously in our midst; to prosper according to the will of God; to suffer loss for the kingdom of God; to win through losing.
4. Paul and the church in Antioch were so adaptable, because they kept their focus on simply following Jesus. We make it more complicated for the Spirit to move and work when we become fixed on a place, a practice or an identity other than Jesus, other than simply following him - the downtown church, the small church, the family church, the young hip church...”
5. God is clearly calling Refuge to a new space. This isn't something that we were necessarily looking for, or trying to make happen. God has been growing our little church, he's been bringing more people to an understanding of the Gospel of Grace through the ministry here. Our mentality has always been - preach Jesus, preach the Gospel of Grace and so equip the saints to minister the Gospel to

Santa Rosa. That's been our big master plan. And now were too big for this space - we believe that God has many more people that he wants to save in this city that he wants to establish in his grace, we believe that there are many more that God wants to touch through you and through your deeds of kindness, generosity and mercy - and though it is bitter-sweet to leave this downtown space, with all the memories of all that God did, we are excited about the future, we are excited about what God is going to do, who he is going to reach; how he is going to use us in our new location and with our new neighbors.

8. Why should we adapt or change as a Church?

1. Because Jesus radically changed for us. He adapted to our condition. Jesus left the comforts of his heavenly home to come to our broken world. Jesus became human so that we could become eternal; Jesus became killable so we could be raised to life, Jesus was broken so we could be healed, Jesus became sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him. As followers of Jesus, how can we not follow him and be willing to change whatever the need, whatever the circumstance, so the life of Jesus might be put on display through us?