

Acts 2:40-47

The Jesus Community

Introduction: What does the Christian Community look like? Acts 2:42-47 is a description of the life of the early church - what it looks like to be a Christian. Or we could say they are signs that the message of the gospel has cut you to the heart...

That is to say then, if these signs aren't in you and never have been - then you are not a Christian... that may sound harsh to you but it's not me saying it. This is the Holy Spirit describing for us what are the sign that God's message of salvation has gripped your heart. So here is a chance for you to examine your life.

If these signs are weak in you or they used to be a part of your life then you need to ask God to strengthen these things by his Holy Spirit, to let the good news of his gracious love and acceptance through Jesus cut to your heart afresh.

The description of the early church comes on the tails of Peter's sermon at Pentecost. We summarized it like this: God's kingdom project to heal the world of sin and evil and make it his dwelling place once again, is back on track, because of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the messiah. You are a co-conspirator in the evil that is destroying God's world and in resisting his kingdom by rejecting and crucifying his anointed servant and king, Jesus. Yet, God raised him from the dead and now He offers you redemption - the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' death on your behalf - so turn around and choose God's side - join his kingdom community and project.

Luke records - **“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 And Peter said to them, “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. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone**

whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” 41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves....”

1. Devotion

1. Luke’s exact words in verse 42 are very connected to the whole situation above - He says, because of what happened (being cut to the heart by the Spirit through Peter’s message), they devoted themselves.... The word devoted , or the term “they were together” is very strong, this is not cavalier, this is not a hobby, or interest. it is often a word used for marriage in the greek language. The Idea is they gave themselves entirely, in constant diligence, this became the all meaningful purpose of their lives...
 1. These people did not have to be guilted or coerced to go to church, or get together for fellowship, they met daily, as often as they could, they were consistent, they were driven, motivated, dedicated. They were devoted.
 1. As we said last week, it is only when your sin has become personal, when you realize - it was your sin that took the king of glory to the cross, it was your sin that brought his separation from the Father - that you were and are so flawed that the holy almighty, son of God had to give his perfect life, and yet you are so loved that he was willing to do it. It is when this has truth has really cut to your heart that you will devote your life
 2. Many of us are still treating our christian lives as a commodity - adding it to our already busy lives, something we’ve taken up, but it isn’t our life, it isn’t our identity or purpose. What is your driving purpose; with what or whom do you identify? What are you devoted or committed to? Christianity will never work for you if you take it this way, in fact you will be totally disillusioned by it. It must be everything to you or it must mean nothing at all. As Lewis said, “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance, the only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”
 3. Paul the Apostle said about his life, “**I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.**

And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” What is Paul saying? In short - My whole life now is Jesus.

2. The Jesus Story - The Apostles Doctrine

1. What is the Apostles Doctrine?

1. 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.
2. 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?

1. 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.
 1. When it comes to this issue of Biblical authority there is no middle ground. Either you believe the Bible is God's word and that it has absolute authority over your life or you believe that you have authority over it and you decide what is true in it, and what you can take or leave, what needs to change in your life and what doesn't. Either the Bible is the authority or you are. There is no middle way.
 2. 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.

3. Why were they devoted to it?

1. **Because of what Luke already told us - they had been cut to the heart by the story of Jesus.**
2. The story of Jesus had so captured their hearts and minds. They were so enamored by his love, grace, humility, power...

1. "In Him, we shall discover a Mind that loved his own creation so completely that he became a part of it, suffered with and for it, and made it a sharer in His own glory and a fellow worker with Himself in the working out of his own design for it" - Dorothy Sayers
2. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians they saw the glory of God, the fulness of his grace, love and truth, in the face of Jesus Christ!
3. Jesus constantly had, and still has, this effect on people - people heard him gladly, the people he healed wanted to stay close to him - legion, Mary Magdalen.
3. 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?””**
4. 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.

3. 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 burden's, making sure that no one clacked 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 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 stand in judgment of someone's social class, 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.

4. **To Jesus ultimate sacrifice and intercession -To Liturgy - 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..
2. Lewis in His reflections on the Psalms writes how human joy is incomplete until we share it with someone -"I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with. . . . The Scotch catechism says that man's chief end is 'to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.' But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him." C.S. Lewis
1. 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, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God**

the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We’re stirring up the Joy in one another.

3. **The Prayers** - are most likely a reference to the Psalms, or at least prayers taken from the book of Psalms- and we saw this 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 and he ever lives to intercede on our behalf, 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:** We read, **“And awe^d 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 lived out, the Jesus story being proclaimed.
6. 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?
 1. 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.

Conclusion: When was the last time that you sat and read about Jesus and what he did for us? When was the last time you sat and thought upon his sacrifice for your sins? When was the last time you got together with a group of believers and shared your favorite portion of Jesus’ story? When was the last time you got together with friends simply to worship Jesus together? This is what the church is to be - a people who are literally obsessed with the Jesus story... have we, like the church in Ephesus, lost that?

Jesus says, “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. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.”

Let's ask that the Lord would do this in us - that we would recapture the glory of the Gospel, the glory of Jesus and his great story and we would simply invite people to rejoice in it's glory!