

The First Church

*"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."
Acts 2:46*

Icebreaker—*What do you look forward to the most about being with other Christians?*

Last week we talked about how 3000 people were cut to the heart and responded with repentance and baptism following Peter's sermon at Pentecost. Today we are going to have a look at the rest of the story. Our Christian walk is not finished once we are baptized. It has only just begun. Baptism is the gunshot at the beginning of the race. It is the marker of our spiritual renewal into a new creation, holy and devoted to God.

Imagine if you went on a long journey to another country. While you were gone you heard a message about the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ and you became a Christian. Instead of going home, you stayed to learn more and to grow in your relationship with other Christians. Without a home, without your belongings, without many changes of clothes, you would be dependent on your new family to provide you with many things.

Acts 2:42-47

When you look at the first century church, what words come to mind that would describe them?

- Selfless/sacrificial
- Kind
- Devoted
- Joyful

How does Luke describe their hearts during this time?

- Glad and sincere

What do you think made them so happy?

- They just found out that they killed the Son of God and that they still had hope from God!
- Their sins had been forgiven. Wouldn't that make you glad?
- We have just as much to be joyful about today!

How often do we forget about the joy that we should have as Christians because of what God has done through Christ?

How can the joy of being a Christian influence our daily lives?

- It should be evident to the people around us that we are different
- Our whole attitude about life can be one of joy because no matter what we are saved.

What would you think about a grumpy group of Christians if you were a non-Christian?

- You wouldn't want anything to do with them.

If we are going to be like the early church then we need to be a people of joy and of sacrifice. Their joy was expressed through certain activities that we find in the early church. *What do we find these Christians doing together?*

- Studying the apostles' teaching
- Fellowship
- Table fellowship
- Common possessions
- Giving
- Daily meetings
- Worship

How connected do you feel with others at church?

How connected would you feel if you were with the church almost every day?

Which of these things do we still practice and which of these things are not really practiced today?

Still practiced:

- Study of the apostles' teaching
- Fellowship
- Table fellowship
- Worship

Not practiced:

- Common possessions
- Daily meetings

Why don't we practice several of these things like they did. *Should we in some way, shape or form? Why/Why not?*

- We don't always exhibit the same level of sacrifice that they did. These two things are very inconvenient. We often let our schedules get in the way and don't like for others to have a say in how we spend our money. Many of us have forgotten that it is not really all ours to begin with. We are just stewards of it.
- You may say it is hard to do with 500 people. They did it with 3000+
- We can still find ways to help each other and to find more ways to spend time with each other.

What level of sacrifice were these new Christians willing to endure for each other?

- Time each day in fellowship and study
- Selling possessions and giving to each other

When have you seen the church or church members really sacrifice to help others?

Donny Dillon used to say that we often see church as a "got to" instead of a "get to." Because of the grace and mercy of God we get to be here. We are very blessed to be in the family of God and that should show to others through the joy we have in our lives and in the time we spend with each other. Church is not a burden when you think about all that God has done to bring us together. We get to be here and we should love being here with God and with each other.

What difference is there when people come together to give to each other than everyone coming together to get from each other?

- One is selfish and one is selfless. One build up and one tears down.

What would church be like if we all came with a giving attitude?

Which of these things that the early church did challenges you the most?

What can you do to help make the church more like the early church?