

TUMC

May 27, 2018

Acts 2:42-47, Acts 4:31-35, Romans 8:12-17

Sunday after Pentecost

Orient ourselves in time and space here. I'm Lori Guenther Reesor, I've come here from Mississauga – that way. You have come here from all over too. We've gathered to worship God here in this place, this church. So that's already pretty strange. There's lots of great coffee shops where we could hang out and yet we're here. We're here together listening to the Bible and singing hymns and trying to figure out what it means to follow Jesus in the GTA in 2018.

And because we're trying to figure out how to follow Jesus, we are time-travelling too – seeking guidance and wisdom from those who have gone before us. And it's the Sunday after Pentecost.

Back in the day – like way, way back – the apostles gathered in Jerusalem. It was a rip-roaring gathering by all accounts tongues of fire, people understanding the message each in their own language. Then Peter addresses the crowd. His sermon is in Acts 2. Any sermon that starts out – we're not drunk, it's not even noon – is going to be memorable. It is. People hear about Jesus, his life, death and resurrection. They ask “what then shall we do?” and Peter says repent and be baptized.

Repentance – good news, means change is possible

Acts 2:42-47

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Worship, learn, gather together, they eat, they pray. The model really hasn't changed.

⁴³ Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day **those who were being saved**

Seems to be something very Mennonite about ‘those who were being saved’. An ongoing process.

Signs and wonders

First sign - Generosity – sharing

They thought Jesus was coming back soon

This kind of generosity is crazy and unsustainable

Yes, yes they did. And the church survived and survives still.

Yes, yes it is. And the church survived and survives still.

Generosity was the first of the “signs and wonders” of Spirit-filled living. Generosity is part of “being saved.” I don’t mean that we earn our salvation. What I mean is this: when we are children of God, following Jesus and relying on the Holy Spirit for guidance, generosity is a marker of that transformation. God’s children can be generous.

Being generous is a sign and a wonder, then and now. How many of you listen to the CBC or follow the news on social media or read the paper? Can we agree that it’s terrifying out there? Most days it feels to me like the world is going to hell in a handbasket.

Ok so it’s not just me. The world feels scary and uncertain. And when we’re afraid, we hold on tight to what we’ve got. We don’t share, we hoard. We build walls and fences.

Generosity is an open hand, fear is a closed fist.

Romans 8:12-17

Lori’s mash-up of The Message and the NASB

So don’t you see that we don’t owe this old do-it-yourself life anything, not a thing! There’s nothing in it for us, nothing at all. We cannot save ourselves. The best thing to do is give your old life a decent burial and get on with your new life.

Repent and be baptized

God’s Spirit calls us.

“What then shall we do?”

This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It’s adventurous and expectant, greeting God with a childlike “What’s next, Papa?” God’s Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We are free and unafraid.

NASB “for you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again”

We know God, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what’s coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we suffer with him, we are also glorified with him.

Let's zoom back to Jerusalem in the days after Pentecost. I've told you about Peter's barn-burner of a sermon and how thousands of people were baptized.

In Acts 4, Peter & John perform miracles, are arrested and released, told to shut up. They don't shut up. They are free and unafraid.

Acts 4:31-35

And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and *began* to speak the word of God with boldness.

Sharing among Believers

³² And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. ³³ And with **great power** the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and **abundant grace** was upon them all. ³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

That story gets better and better – the sequel is even better than the original here – but we'll stop at verse 35 today.

Holy Spirit- boldness – generosity – testimony – abundant grace

Recap

Acts 2

Romans 8

Acts 4