

Sermon 4-8, 2018

Acts 4:32-35 One in heart and mind

Dear Witnesses of the Resurrection:

We are different. We are not all the same. We have different likes and dislikes. We have different political views. We root for different teams. We live in different communities. We all have had different life experiences. We are not the same.

But there is one thing that makes us all the same. The Apostle Paul said: “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:26ff

We are one in Christ.

- Republicans and Democrats but one in Christ
- Male and female but one in Christ
- Young and old but one in Christ
- German and Norwegian but one in Christ

St. Luke who wrote the book of Acts says here in 4:32 that

“All the believers were one in heart and mind.”

Believers are one in...

- Body – the fellowship of the church
- Spirit – the Holy Spirit activates this fellowship
- Hope – we have the certainty of a glorious future
- Lord – One God to whom we belong
- Faith – our trust is in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection
- Baptism – we were washed by water and the word

We are one. We have the unity of the Spirit.

A Spirit-filled church is unified.

- Acts 2:44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.
- Acts 2:46 They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts

When the Holy Spirit is at work God's people will be united in their spiritual beliefs, in their fellowship, in their giving and in their worship.

A Spirit-filled church is magnified

- Acts 2:47 Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

In the early church people were drawn to the believers because something new and exciting was happening. What the Lord is doing will attract the attention and admiration of people who are hungry to know God.

A Spirit-filled church is multiplied

- Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Evangelism is not the work of a chosen few, but the daily delight of everyone.

What brought these people together in the early church who were rich and poor, Roman citizen and slave, Jew and Gentile? What overcame all of their differences so they could become of one mind and of one heart?

v33 "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all."

What brings us together with all of our differences? The answer: The Resurrection!

The resurrection of Jesus Christ brings us together as brothers and sisters who have had their...

- sins forgiven
- lives extended into eternity

The resurrection of Christ is important to us and our future because it proved that

- Christ is the Son of God
- His doctrine is the truth
- God the Father accepted Christ's sacrifice for the reconciliation of the world
- All believers in Christ will rise to eternal life

The Apostle Paul says:

“Christ was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” Romans 4:25

We are one, united by the resurrection of Christ.

One evidence of the unity of the church is the way they sacrificed and shared with one another. When the Holy Spirit is at work, giving is a blessing and not a burden. No one was forced to give or share. This was purely voluntary and motivated by love.

Petty differences should never be allowed to dissolve the unity that we have in Christ. But before we can be unified we have to receive from God the ability to be one. Before we can love one another we need to receive from God his love which will permeate every fiber of our body and soul.

We have to start with God's love. The Bible says: “It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other.” I John 4:10-11

Before we are able to love, a deposit of love must be put into our bank account of love. Our hearts have an insufficient amount of love. We are only able to love after we have lived being loved by God.

A tree grows because it draws nutrients from the soil. We grow in love as we draw our nourishment from the Heavenly Father. The tree would not grow if it

had no contact with the soil. Our love will not grow if we don't have any contact with the Word of God.

Many people tell us to love but only God gives us the power to love him and others.

Sometimes we may think and feel that we have too much on our plate to love and help others out. Remember what Jesus said: "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28ff

Before tractors covered our farm fields oxen were used to do much of the farm work. Farmers would often team a young ox with an old experienced ox. The oxen would be yoked together with a wooden harness. The straps around the older ox were tightly drawn so that the older ox would carry the majority of the load. The straps around the younger ox were loose so that the younger ox did not have to carry much of the load. The older ox would carry the load for the younger ox and so the younger ox had a light load.

Jesus is carrying our load!

He is carrying our burdens. Our burden is light because Jesus is carrying the burden of our souls, the burden of our sins, the burden of our cares and concerns. We love because he first loved us. He carries the burdens of our fears and worries. His yoke is easy and his burden is light. We are free to love and serve him. We are free to love and serve others.

This is what was happening in the early church. Look at verses 32 and 34-35 "No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had...There were no need persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."

Agape = unconditional love

God has loved us with agape love. Agape love is unconditional love. Agape love loves those who are not lovable. Agape love puts others before self. Agape love is sacrificial. Agape love forgives the mistake when the offense was high. Agape love offers patience when stress is abundant. Because God loved first, agape love responds.

“What a wonderful God we have ---he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of every mercy, and the one who so wonderfully comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials. And why does he do this? So that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort God has given us.” II Corinthians 1:3-4

How can we be of help to others?

How can we be of comfort to others? How can we pass on to our brothers and sisters in Christ encouragement? We can begin by praying for them.

- Ask God to help them know what he wants them to do
- Ask God to give them deep spiritual understanding
- Ask God to help them live for him
- Ask God to give them more knowledge of himself
- Ask God to give them strength for endurance
- Ask God to fill them with joy, strength and thankfulness

The Apostle Paul wrote in Colossians: “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order...that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of the light.” 1:9ff

The Old Testament had seen a day coming when there would be no poor among God’s people, because the Lord was going to bless those who heard his voice. (Deut. 15:4-5) That prophecy came true as believers who proclaimed

the Gospel in the early church sold their possessions and brought the proceeds to the apostles who administered the gifts so that needs would be met.

We still help people today. Perhaps not exactly like the early church in the book of Acts. The passages in Acts are what we call descriptive and not prescriptive. They describe what believers in the early church did. They don't prescribe a certain mode of action that is to be followed by all believers in every age. But we have ways and methods to still help the needy as we contribute to our local food bank and help out such organizations as Food for the Poor.

Christ blesses each of us for each other in the fellowship. We share our burdens and blessings with one another. We are of one heart and one soul who care about each other because of the conviction that Christ is risen and has called us into unity as the church, the body.

Paul says this about us as one body:

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." 1

Corinthians 12:27