



Sermon, Sunday October 6, 2024

“Faith and Our Lives”

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2:42-47 ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Introduction: Characteristics of early Christian communities

Today is the 20th Sunday after Pentecost. Today’s text summarizes the characteristics of the early Christian community. A characteristic of the early Christian communities described in today's text is that they gave up private property. Verses 44-45 of today’s text say this as follows. **“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”**

Furthermore, acts 4:34-35 describes the early community in detail as follows: **“There were no needy 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.”**

As seen from the passage above, the early Christian community dreamed of a fair world where there would be neither rich nor poor. They also dreamed of a world where there would be no differences between people and a humane life.

Jesus also taught his disciples about the kingdom of Heaven and proclaimed fair governance of the world. However, this ideal for the early Christian community was not fully realized. This is because, in our realistic lives, the nature of putting all our effort into survival dominates us.

In fact, full communal life did not persist even in the early Christian communities. The reason is because of human nature, but it is also because the second coming of Jesus was delayed. People in the early Christian community had no choice but to own their own wealth as the second coming of Jesus was delayed.

The early Christian community did not think that the kingdom of heaven could be realized through the realization of equality. However, they pursued the most ideal life on earth.

We can confirm this not only in the fact that the early Christian community sold their property and shared it with others, but also in the fact that they formed a community by eating together joyfully with a pure heart. (v.46)

This passage shows that the early Christian community placed great importance on the common meal in which all members participate together, in addition to the bread of the Holy Communion shared during worship. They created a concrete life in the Christian faith, eating, laughing, crying, dancing, and holding festivals together on this land.

Today’s text shows that material equality and concrete fellowship of life were key elements that made up the early Christian community. We must restore these early Christian traditions in our lives. And to do this, we must gain a deeper understanding of the connection between faith and our realistic lives.



Body: Connection between faith and life

We live within the concrete reality of our lives and our Christian faith. This kind of life can be seen more clearly in today's text: the early Christian community 2,000 years ago.

In today's text, the early Christian community listened to the apostles' teachings (v.42), gathered in the temple, broke bread (v.46), and praised God (v.47).

This shows that early Christians were believers who sought oneness with God. Worship is when we embody our oneness with God through religious rituals in our religious life. So as Christians we must ask:

‘Am I experiencing the Lord, a holy being, through worship? ‘Am I experiencing holiness through worship?’

For the past 2,000 years, the center of Christian worship has been for those who participate in worship to focus on God, the source of grace. In other words, the essence of Christian worship is not to focus on one's own feelings or preferences, but to focus on God.

However, we often find it difficult to focus on God in worship. Because it is easy to listen to our feelings and preferences, but focusing on God goes against our instincts and requires the help of the Holy Spirit.

Nonetheless, I wish we could all focus more on God during public worship. When our thoughts and hearts are confused, please pray as follows: **‘Lord, have mercy on us! Please give me the full presence of the Holy Spirit.’**

Today I talked about the identity of the early Christian community in two ways. One is the reality of life they face, and the other is the reality of their faith. However, although both elements have their own unique world, they are interconnected. This means that the realities of our faith and the realities of our lives communicate in a very intimate way. In other words, although it may seem that the life of faith and our reality are separated, they are not.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

All our lives on this earth can find true meaning through a spiritual relationship with God. Additionally, our faith can gain concreteness and substance through this realistic life. So, our religious life and our realistic life must be balanced. Simply put, we must worship diligently and live an exemplary life in the world.

However, although the reality of our lives and faith seems to be separate, they are not separate. Simply put, **‘life is worship, and worship is life.’** In verse 46 of today's text, the statement that the early Christian community diligently gathered at the temple every day means that worship and life are one.

Conclusion: What it means to say that our lives are worship

Now, let me summarize today's message. What lesson does today's text give us? Also, what does it mean for our life to be worship?

Living a life of faith well, means leading our lives so that our lives are filled with joy and peace. Additionally, the fact that our worship is our lives means that through worship, we must not remain only in religious self-satisfaction but move toward the dynamism of life.

The early Christian community we see today through the text shows us this. I pray that our families, churches, nation, and society can understand and come closer to what these early Christian communities were like. **Amen!**

