**The Covenant Community**

**The Word**

Read together Acts 2:42-47

**The Big Idea**

The early believers devoted themselves to practices that set them apart and made them a very compelling alternative to the surrounding culture. The church today has that same opportunity in a society that is thirsty for a new experience of community.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Have you ever experienced a type of fellowship that began to approach what is being described in Acts 2? If so, what were the specific dynamics going on in that community that made it so special?

2. As you consider the sacrificial sharing of possessions of that early community, what questions and ideas does that raise for you regarding the church of today?

3. The early church experienced a sense of awe that God’s miraculous power was active among them. On Sunday it was argued that, while we can’t force God to act, we can cultivate a sense of expectation. What, in your mind, should our sense of expectation be for God’s power and presence to regularly “show up” among the gathered community?

4. As you consider the various descriptions of that early church, is there any specific way you’re feeling inspired to “lean in” more intentionally to fellowship at Grace (or your home group in particular)?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. What God was doing in that early community in Acts was unique and not necessarily prescriptive for the church at all times. That being said, the description of that early community is something we should long for and pray for in our time.

B. The apostles didn’t have an organized blueprint for effective community. They simply kept doing with others what Jesus did with them, and the Spirit worked in powerful ways.

C. Many people in our secular postmodern culture is thirsty for this kind of community

1. Secularisms denial of a transcendent reality leaves them with nothing purposeful beyond the five senses

 2. Postmodernisms denial of truth leaves them without a firm foundation

3. Expressive individualisms promise of identity from within and freedom in loose relational networks leaves people lonely and isolated

4. Digital technology leaves people disconnected from tangible/embodied experiences.

II. They had a shared commitment to a body teaching (v. 42)

A. The apostles passed on the stories and teachings of Jesus (v. 42) which is what Jesus told them to do (Matthew 28:19-20)

B. At Grace we want to be a church that is grounded in the teaching of the apostles (= the New Testament documents)

1. Our ministries are all essentially about gathering people in small groups around the Word of God

 2. It’s so rich to ponder, discuss, and live out the teaching together

C. The more grounded in the apostles teaching, the more relevant we are to the culture

1. There’s the temptation to abandon some of the Apostle’s teaching because it may seem embarrassing, unpopular, or even offensive, but they really are the words of eternal life

 2. There are people in the world hungry for a truth they can count on

III. They shared a commitment to covenant community

A. “Koinonia” (translated “fellowship” in v. 42) and “koine” (“common” in v. 44) refers to what we share in common.

1. They had such a spiritual koinonia. Many had just come to faith together, sharing a common conviction, forgiveness, salvation, and experience of the Spirit

 2. What they shared in common was more powerful than their differences

 3. Example: How a Laker game brings two unlikely people together

B. Their spiritual koinonia translated into very tangible expressions

1. They enjoyed being together in large groups and in homes, breaking bread (v. 46)

2. They sacrificially shared their possessions with each other (v. 44-45 and Acts 4:32-35). This was not done under compulsion but was a Spirit-led joyful sharing with one another

 C. We hope to aspire to more of this koinonia at Grace

1. There are official structures for fellowship (small groups) and provision (Hands of Grace and our Benevolence Fund)

 2. But most of this happens organically

D. Many people in society are lonely and isolated and are thirsty for this kind of real fellowship.

IV. They shared a sense of transcendence

A. They were filled with awe at the presence and power of God among them (v. 43)

B. “Today for most people, including most professing Christians, God is just an idea to talk about, or an inference from an argument, or a family tradition to be preserved. But for a very few people God is a stark, fearsome, stunning, awesome, shocking present REALITY. Where are the churches of whom Luke could say today, "Fear—awe, wonder, trembling—is upon every soul"? The absence of this fear/awe has a direct effect on the way we accumulate possessions for ourselves, the way we ignore the needy, the way we trivialize fellowship, and the way we play more than we pray.” – John Piper

C. We can’t fabricate miracles or force God to move, but we can cultivate a sense of expectation that we will encounter him together as we gather.

D. In that early church, there was a seamless way transcendence marked their fellowship.

1. The breaking of bread was paired with prayer (v. 42) and praise (v. 47)

2. We often compartmentalize things (Friday night is fun night and Sunday morning is a time to be spiritual (but for them it seemed very integrated)

E. In a secular culture that has lost a sense of transcendence beyond the five senses, people are thirsty for true transcendence.