**The Ministry of Word and Deed**

**The Word**

Read together Acts 6:1-7

**The Big Idea**

Church communities thrive when the ministry of the Word and the practical ministry of care for the vulnerable are not being overlooked. Churches need to be adaptive so that members are freed up and empowered to build the body up according to their calling and gifts.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. On Sunday we discussed the very different ways two people can experience the same community: one from the perspective of the majority population and one from the perspective of the minority population. Have you ever personally experienced that difference in a community? In Grace specifically?

2. Consider the early church’s choice to form an all-Greek leadership team to attend to a ministry where Greek widows were being overlooked. How does that solution square with what you would personally propose as the most appropriate solution?

3. Sunday’s message was a call to consider what biblical priorities or people may be currently overlooked at Grace and step in to be a part of the solution. As you consider who or what may be overlooked at Grace, does anything specific come to your mind?

4. Consider the apostles’ faithful commitment to the ministry of the Word and prayer. Are there any ways your small group might commit more faithfully to the Word and prayer as a group?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. In Acts 5 and 6 Luke chronicles some internal challenges that threatened the integrity and health of the early church

B. In our passage there were two important realities that were in danger of being “overlooked” or “neglected” that needed to be attended to.

II. The Hellenistic widows were in danger of being overlooked (v. 1)

A. In the midst of a good thing (the “diakonia” = ministry/service to widows) there was an implicit or explicit favoritism and bias

B. Hellenistic Jews were the minority population: They were born outside Israel, spoke Greek as first language, and were probably more cosmopolitan in their customs and cultural ways. Hebraic Jews were the majority population: born and bred in Jerusalem, spoke Aramaic, and more culturally Jewish

C. We don’t know if the Hellenistic widows were being overlooked intentionally or unintentionally but there was definitely an unequal treatment.

D. Within any community there’s often a Bell Curve of a majority population and those on the margins. Those in the majority community often experience it as comfortable, safe, and welcoming, whereas sometimes those in the minority community might experience it as more intimidating or unsafe or unapproachable.

E. Jesus had such a heart for seeing those on the margins (consider Zacchaeus)

III. The Word of God was in danger of being neglected (v. 2)

A. The same word is used for the “ministry” of the word (diakonia)

B. The apostles aren’t above the mundane and practical ministry of care; they are simply the only ones who can uniquely serve in the ministry of the Word as their calling from Jesus (Mt 28:18-20)

C. There is always a danger in church communities of the Word of God being neglected for either practical reasons or philosophical reasons

D. The Word has such a powerful ministry in our lives

IV. The solution was the handing over of responsibilities to 7 men chosen by the community

 A. They were all full of the Spirit and wisdom (v. 3)

B. They were all Hellenistic Jews (v. 5) who would have a particular eye for the Hellenistic widows.

 C. Notice the growth and transformation that happens as a result (v. 7)

The key to the early church’s explosive growth in the Roman empire was this combination of the ministry of the Word (the life-changing message about Jesus) and the ministry of mercy to the vulnerable

V. The Trellis and the Vine

A. Churches like Grace need a simple and flexible trellis (structures, programs, etc.) in order to support the growth of the vine (the Word-based Holy-Spirit-inspired transformation in people’s lives)

B. The early church adapted their trellis to meet the growing needs of the vine

C. The leadership of Grace should adopt a trellis that is simple, flexible, and adaptable and focused on meeting the needs of the vine

D. Members of Grace should each take ownership of the community and have a “Jesus lens” on what people and biblical priorities may be currently overlooked and then step in to meet those needs and/or make the needs known to the leaders.

E. The Hands of Grace ministry has been a beautiful example of members noticing needs that are being overlooked, stepping in, and working with leaders to create a new trellis of lay ministry to meet those needs.