

CHURCH BEGINNINGS
ACTS 2:14-47
2026-06-14

It was good last week to have Chris Weir share with us his vision for the youth of Haliburton County. For the first time in a long while Minden is figuring into Youth Unlimited's plans. God has a vision for us and for our neighbours in our area. Plans are well underway for our Worship Revival day set for August 15th that Lori and Abby Partridge are leading. I hope you've made yourselves available to help however you can, signing up on the volunteer sheet. Pray for the Lord's very real presence and that hearts, yet strangers to God's grace, will be touched for Him and that we at MBC might be able to encourage their walk with Christ in an ongoing way. To that end, and back to Chris, by God's grace and will, we will get this afterschool program with students from Archie Stouffer up and running this fall on Monday afternoons. Leanne Young has invested considerable time on this venture. There are families in the Minden area eager to see a kid's ministry happening here. Chris himself has pledged to be part of the team and Leanne already has one volunteer from outside the church committed to the program. Pray on these matters.

We've been looking at the book of Acts, written by Luke—the Gospel writer, the only Gentile author in the Bible. So far, we've investigated the Ascension, which occurred 40 days after the Resurrection, when Jesus was lifted up to heaven in the presence of His disciples. The 40 days were significant. God has used 40 to mark times of wiping out evil. It was an event that had to happen. Unpredictable appearances of Jesus after His resurrection couldn't logically go on forever or somehow just fading away. There needed to be a clear separation of the Jesus of earth and the Christ of heaven, where Jesus now sits at the right hand of God the Father.

And that set the stage for Pentecost Sunday, when the Holy Spirit came in power—and permanently (unlike previously when God's Spirit came only to some people and only for some time. Since Pentecost, when we receive Christ by faith, we also receive the Holy Spirit, irrevocably, permanently. We saw that the Spirit is:

- 1) **The source of all guidance;**
- 2) The One who **prepares us;**
- 3) The One who **sanctifies;** He sets us apart, both from regular life and for special assignment;
- 4) He **helps us make decisions;**
- 5) **The Spirit is the source of daily courage and power.** We talked about people changed by the cross and the Resurrection. They were also changed at Pentecost Peter explained what had happened, The power of the Spirit came upon him and gave him the words to say. 3,000 became believers that day!
- 6) **The Spirit gives us courage to meet dangerous or daunting situations.**
- 7) **He gives us joy that is independent of circumstances.**
- 8) **The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God.** If you're sincerely trying to do the will of God, you will experience more and more of the wonder of the Spirit.

Those 53 days (50 after the Resurrection) that included the crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension and Pentecost were mind blowing! Think if you had witnessed those four events! Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been the dominant force in the Christian church and the church has developed since that time. So what shape would it take?

Acts reveals that Jesus and all that happened to Him is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, that God is in control and He is working out His purposes. In Jesus the Messiah has come, the Messianic prophecies are filled and the New Age has dawned. The early Church had a tremendous sense that Jesus was the hinge of all history; that with His coming eternity had invaded time and therefore life and the world could never again be the same. The basics of the Christian faith are reiterated: 1. Jesus had been born of the line of David, 2. He had taught, worked miracles, been crucified, raised from the dead and was now at the right hand of God. 3. And the early Church was sure that the Christian faith was based on the earthly life of Christ. 4. But it was also certain that the earthly life and death were not the end and after them came the Resurrection. 5. Jesus wasn't someone about whom they'd read or heard; He was someone they'd met and knew—a living presence, 6. insisting that Jesus would return in glory to establish His kingdom on earth. 7. Jesus alone was (is) salvation. These strands are woven into Peter's sermon—the first Christian sermon ever preached.

Now, before moving on. Much of the rest of the Bible isn't fully intelligible unless we have a sense of the Day of the Lord. As God's chosen people the Jews looked forward to a day when God would intervene directly in history and exalt them to the day they dreamed of. The day of that intervention was the Day of the Lord. They divided all time into two ages—the Present Age which was evil and doomed to destruction and The Age to Come which would be the golden age of God. Between the two was the Day of the Lord—a day of judgment and terror that would come like a thief in the night, a day when the world would be shaken to its very foundations. It's found frequently: Isaiah 2, Amos 5, Zephaniah 1, Joel 2, 1 Thessalonians 5 and 2 Peter 3. So, here's what Peter is saying. "For generations you've dreamed of the Day of God. Now, in Jesus, that day has come." The great truth is this: in Jesus God arrived in person on the scene of human history.

Peter's sermon insists that the cross was no accident. It belongs to the eternal plan of God. The cross is not an emergency Plan B of God when everything else failed. It's part of God's very life. Don't think that what Jesus did changed the attitude of God to men. It was by God that Jesus was sent. The cross allowed us to see the suffering love that's eternally in the heart of God. Acts sets out to prove that the sufferings and death of Christ were the fulfillment of prophecy, even though the idea of a crucified Messiah was incredible to Jews (a hanged man is cursed by God—Deuteronomy 21: 23). Acts stresses that the Resurrection is the final proof that Jesus was indeed God's Chosen One. Without the Resurrection there would have been no Christian Church at all. The Resurrection changed the disciples from cowards into heroes.

When people realized what they had done in crucifying Jesus their hearts were broken. (*"When I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to Myself"* John 13:32). Every one of

us has had a hand in that crime. A missionary told of Jesus in an Indian village, afterwards showing Jesus' life on slides. When the cross appeared, 1 man ran forward: "Come down from that cross, Son of God! I, not you, should be hanging there." The cross must pierce our hearts. The experience demands a reaction to repent—involving both a change of mind and a change of action. When repentance comes, something happens for the future. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and in that power we can win battles we never thought possible and resist things, which, by ourselves, we would have been powerless to resist.

With all of this as backdrop, what would the early Church look like? First, it was a learning Church—a Church that valued the apostles teaching. And the apostles' teaching came from the Word of God. Often, people are quick to tell you what they believe or don't believe about life and about God (really one and the same thing). When you ask them if they've read the Bible—the Word of God—their answer is usually no. The Word of God has authority, is The Authority for all life. A church that plays fast and loose with Scripture is on the thinnest of ice—if any ice at all. That said, there's always the caution to not try to make Scripture say what you want it to say. The recent run of Christian Nationalism is a case in point. I won't get sidetracked on that this morning but it's a movement going down the wrong road, distorting God's Word to increase their own power about how to make life the way they view it. I have an article by Allyson Carr that you might be interested in reading. But, to the point, do you personally, and does our congregation generally have a high view of Scripture, that it's not to be trivialized? The Word of God "is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12) As such it is always new; it speaks to us today as much as it spoke to Bible time believers. Because the riches of Christ are inexhaustible, we should be forward-looking and not stuck in the past (but of course the past has invaluable lessons for us too). Keep looking anew deeply into the wisdom and Grace of God.

Second, fellowship was an essential part of the early Church (*koinonia*), with the quality of togetherness. Again, how often have you heard someone say they don't need to go to Church to believe in God or to be saved. While those things are true, they skirt the real benefit of the church. If you take a coal out of a roaring fire and set it aside, it will soon choke out. You need the collective God-given energy of fellow believers at church to keep you sharp—iron sharpens iron. Within the body you will encounter others whose experiences and gifts will enrich you. You will find ears of understanding and compassion and caring—or at least you should! I hear it frequently here when people come to visit: "It's truly a friendly church, full of people who genuinely care and aren't just going through the motions." You may be here today because of that kind of atmosphere that attracted you in the first place. And to state the obvious, which sometimes isn't so obvious, that bonding should extend throughout the week away from the church. They will know we are Christians by our love.

Third, the early Church was a praying church. They knew they couldn't meet life in their own strength and they didn't need to, always going in to God before they went out to the world.

They were able to meet the problems of life because they 1st met Him. I'm grateful for the priority our church places on prayer. There is lots of evidence in answered prayer that this is so.

Fourth, the early Church was a reverent church. There is a sense of awe. The Christian lives in reverence because we know that the whole earth is the temple of the living God.

Fifth, the early Church was a place where things happened—including signs and wonders. If we expect great things from God and attempt great things for God things happen. We have a big God, a great God, who delights in doing both small and great things. Sometimes the small things reveal to us just how much attention God is paying to us. The big things can wow us in way we never expected.

Sixth, the early Church was a sharing church, with an intense feeling of responsibility for each other. A real Christian cannot bear to have too much while others have too little.

Seventh, the early Church was a worshipping church. They never forgot to visit God's house. Solitary religion—an oxymoron. Things can happen when we come together. God's Spirit moves among and upon His worshipping people. We see that here. I don't know about you, but I get pumped the closer we get to Sunday morn. For me and I hope for you the highlight of the week.

Eighth, the early Church was a happy church. Gladness was there. I believe it is so here. A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms.

Ninth, the early Church was a church whose people others could not help but like. Agathos simply describes a thing as good. Kalos means that a thing is not only good but looks good; it has a winsome attractiveness to it. Real Christianity is a beautiful, lovely thing. Too many people are good but with their goodness possess a streak of unlovely hardness. Do a bonnie thing. Be the winsomeness God intends you to be. This, I trust, is who we strive to be.