

TITLE: THE COMMONALITY OF THE CHURCH

TEXT: ACTS 4:24-35

THESIS: The purpose of this sermon is to show the common characteristics of the early church and compare to the nature of the church today.

INTRO: Because we believe ourselves to be a congregation of the one NT church, we often discuss the different characteristics of that one church Christ died to establish. It is *not* a denomination; it was built by Christ; it began on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem, in approx. AD 33. Its requirements for entrance...believe, repent, confess, & be baptized. Other characteristics we discuss are its worship, its leadership, and its evangelism. We find all these things in the Bible. However, there are other things in the Bible that we can and should learn about Christ's one church...things that we may not address as often as we should.

I. COMMON PRAYER (v. 24-31)

- A. (v. 23) The apostles shared with the church what was happening...they didn't keep it secret.
- B. (v. 24) *They* (pl.) lifted up their *voice* (sing.) to God *with one accord* (lit. same passion/fierceness)
 - 1. They didn't literally have one voice, nor did all voices say the same thing.
 - 2. Clearly, one did the speaking, but it was *on behalf of the church* (as we do today).
 - 3. The indication is that *all members* of the church agreed, and each Christian felt and said in his heart what the speaker said.
 - 4. This should be the VERY same for us here today!
- C. (v. 31) A common evangelism...the result of this common prayer
 - 1. "they were all filled with the HS" - prior to the completed Word. Now we're filled with the HS when we study the Bible.
 - 2. "and they spoke the word of God with boldness" - only the HS can bring this about in the church.

II. COMMON LOVE & EMOTION (v. 32):

- A. The multitude (5000! - v. 4) *that believed* (the true condition for this type of unity - faith → obedient belief)
- B. Because they had this faith in God, *they were of one heart and one soul!* What an amazing statement! (Compare the average 500-member church today!). Yet this attitude is expected of all Christians (**1 Cor 1:10** - speak the same thing, perfect joined together in the same mind & judgment)
- C. Result of this unity: Looking to the needs of one another (common possessions - in order to take care of one another's needs)
*They were not focused inward (as most in the world are today), but rather were focused on one another.

III. COMMON MESSAGE & COMMON GRACE (v. 33):

- A. **Message:** With great power (ability; miraculous), the apostles gave their testimony of Jesus' resurrection.
 - 1. **1 Cor 15:3-8** - Paul tells of this testimony. Jesus' resurrection is the focal point of Christianity. Without it, this is useless!
 - 2. This was fresh in their minds and it's obvious that they couldn't help but talk about it (v. 20)!
 - 3. If you had witnessed it, would *you* be able to keep quiet? It's sad that today his followers aren't as vocal.
- B. **Grace:** "*And great grace was upon them all.*" They enjoyed a common grace (goodwill, kindness).
 - 1. This is either a common grace from God
 - 2. Or a common grace in the sight of all the people (**2:47** - "praising God and having favor (χαρις) with all the people")

IV. COMMON TREASURY (v. 34-35):

- A. The main purpose of this (and the result) is seen at the beginning of v. 34... "*Neither was there any among them that lacked*"
- B. The reason for this result: those who had possessions sold them and gave them into a common treasury
- C. The situation: travelers from all over (Jews & proselytes) were in Jerusalem for Pentecost (**2:9-11**). After becoming Christians, they needed to stay longer than they expected for spiritual growth and strengthening of the church. They probably didn't have the funds to cover this, so the brethren all took care of each other. Some of these Jews were probably ostracized by Jewish leaders for converting to Christianity and leaving Judaism & the law.
- D. What great focus and love was necessary in order to sustain one another during this early time.
- E. NOTE: This 'commune' in Jerusalem doesn't appear to have happened anywhere else.
 - 1. It was necessary only at this time and place
 - 2. It was *not* mandatory (cf. **Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor 16:2** - why this command if Christianity was a commune?)
 - 3. It was done out of necessity, and out of love for one another!
 - 4. *Would we be willing to do this if it were necessary today?*

CONCLUSION: The early church in Jerusalem had several things in common (prayer, evangelism, love & emotion, message, grace, and even treasury). These commonalities require a total faith in God & commitment to follow Christ. Does the church today have this total faith in God? Do we love one another enough that we would take care of each other the way they did in Acts 2 if it were necessary? This kind of dedication takes a constant focus on God, His son, His sacrifice for us, and His resurrection. Do you have it? If not, what will it take for you to get it? You must 'buy in' to the plan God's given to the church. You must love God enough to read & study it.