

# Learning Big, Learning Small

Thomas Robinson, September 23, 2012

## Acts 2:36-47 Peter concludes his sermon on Pentecost

<sup>36</sup> “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

<sup>37</sup> When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

<sup>38</sup> Peter replied, “Repent (change your way of thinking) and be baptized (be plunged in water), every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

<sup>40</sup> With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”

<sup>41</sup> Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching  
and to fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread  
and to prayer.

<sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.

<sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

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## Philippians 2:1-2, 5

<sup>1</sup> Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had.

## Luke 24:45-49

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

## 1 Corinthians 16:19

<sup>19</sup> Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.

## Lives Shaped By Jesus

Last week was a special time of Retreat focusing on the Lord's Prayer. We've been on a shared journey this year centered in Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (*'Life through Jesus' Eyes'*) and Jesus' call to discipleship (*'Learning at Jesus' Side'*), all exploring Matthew 5-7 and 8-10. The Lord's Prayer brings that into focus.

We want to shift to how Jesus' words and deeds took shape in the lives of people after his ministry: *'Lives Shaped by Jesus'* based on Paul's letter to the Philippians, starting next week. We, like Paul and early Christians, perform the symphony that Jesus wrote.

Acts 2, Pentecost, marks the transition moment: The full teaching and actions of Jesus are proclaimed to the world. Luke wants us to see clearly the important elements. Proclamation, individual response, sharing in a great assembly and in small circles.

## Events that Changed Everything

God intervened in human life in Jesus. His life as a whole is crucial, not just one element (teaching or cross or resurrection). All together make the great event that brings Israel's story to a climax in the Messiah and opens God's promises to the world.

God continues to intervene in the Holy Spirit, the power of Pentecost, the power of all Christian life. In the Holy Spirit and community of believers, the Jesus event goes on.

## Faith Becomes Life

No matter how many years pass or how much culture changes we never get away from the basic heart of Christian faith, continually developed in every disciple.

Faith: Realization (Jesus is God's intervention); changed thinking ('repent'); trust (it is all for my good); commitment (I need/want to live this truth that God is my God.)

Baptism: Faith moves from inside to outside. Jesus gift of a "whole-body" sign that marks my trust in God, God's commitment to me, my incorporation in community.

Forgiveness of Sin. Sign of the new age of God renewing his people. Deliverance from the death-dealing power of sin to enslave. God takes hold of me and won't let go.

Gift of the Holy Spirit. God's own life given to me. I am a mortal dustling, but God comes to live in me. An ongoing process of learning, growth, maturing, service, ministry.

## One Heart, A Great Assembly, A Small House

Luke shows individuals cut to the heart, becoming part of a great assembly (church) that is one across social status, ethnic group, gender, age, time period, religious background.

But the great assembly was fortunate in having no isolated place to meet alone. Big groups met in the temple courts with other crowds. But otherwise they had to break up into scores of houses, small groups, creating a new community of Jesus' followers.

In its first centuries, the church grew as a network of assemblies in private homes.

The Apostles' teaching. Remembering Jesus, telling the events, studying the scriptures. It was important that the community always be solidly grounded in what God had done.

Fellowship. Sharing life. This took many forms according to need. Selling property. Feeding widows. Spending time together. Breaking down barriers. Hospitality to travelers.

Breaking Bread. Eating together, physical and spiritual oneness. Sharing Jesus' meal.

Prayer. Realization that they were participating in God's work. Bringing every need to God.