

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 05 June 2022
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: New beginnings
Title: Church Blossoms
Passage: Acts 4:32-37
Outline: **One in heart and mind
Shared everything
They testified to the risen Lord Jesus**

Have you ever come across the **perfect church**?

You've heard what they say you should do when you find the perfect church haven't you?

Don't join it!! – you'll only muck it up!!

Of course, because we are all **broken people** – there's no such **thing** as the **perfect church**...

But with that passage Kevin shared with us a couple of **weeks** back and this passage **today**...

...you could be **forgiven** for thinking that the church in its earliest **days** was pretty **close** to **perfect**. (It **wasn't** and next week's chapter will make that clear!)

But at the end of ch 2 and here at the end of ch 4 of Acts, there are these **profound** and beautiful portraits painted for us...

Do you recall at the end of ch 2?

Turn back there for a moment if you will...

Those early disciples were **absolutely devoted to**

1. The apostles' **teaching**
2. To the **fellowship** – ie – to one another
3. To the **breaking of bread** – hospitality centred around remembering Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection; and
4. to **prayer**

and Kevin asked us – does **our** church – **your** church – **match** that description? To what **degree**??

and in fact – we are asking **all** churches in our diocese **questions** around those **four features** in the **coming weeks**.

I hope you'll take part in the survey.... as I think it will be **incredibly helpful** for us to examine our churches in the light of that **Acts 2 summary** and see how we **match up**...

And then – the **strategic planning taskforce group** – will be working **very hard** to **help** us in very **practical ways** to implement **change** which will help us grow more like the church **described**. //

But – back now to **Acts 4** – the **end** of the **chapter** – please turn back there...

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...and **here** is what we'll see **today** in this **further summary statement** about the nature of **church** in its **earliest days**...

That the believers were

1. **One in heart and mind**
2. **Shared everything**
3. **Testified to the risen Lord Jesus**

Ok – first:

1. ONE IN HEART AND MIND

Have you ever felt that you're totally on the same **page** as **someone else??**

Perhaps your **spouse** when you first met

Or **business** partner when you started out...

Same **passions, interests, tastes, goals... priorities...** similar **dislikes** too...

That is what it felt like in the early days of the **church**.

They had **seen** Jesus risen from the dead

Watched him **ascend** into the **heavens**

Been **filled** with the **Holy Spirit** as he was poured out (as we remember today)

Already been given a hard time for following and proclaiming Jesus

...yet they were totally **unified** in what they were **about**

They **understood** their **purpose**

There was an incredible **bond** between them as they were all on the **same page** – **passionate** about making Jesus **known** – **excited** to be the **body of Christ** – **loving** each **other** – **caring** for one **another**... //

Paul would later write in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus - ³*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* ⁴*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;* ⁵*one Lord, one faith, one baptism;* ⁶*one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all*

That is what church life was **like** in those **early** days... one in **heart** and **mind** – **captivated** by **Jesus**... **motivated** by **Jesus** – **driven** in all they were on about – by **Jesus!!** //

Is **that** how you would describe **your church?** //

I do think there is a growing **conviction** in our churches that we **have** to be **on about Jesus**... //

and that there is **growing passion** to know him **better** through his **word** and make him **known** – and I **praise** God for that...

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But I **also** know – that in **some** churches – we are **NOT** all on the same page – some just want everything to stay the **same**; for **some** – their focus is almost entirely on the **buildings**; for others – the issues surround **money** and the **budget**... and for others – mere **survival**...

Brothers and sisters... we need to come **together** – to be **united** in the cause of the **gospel** – in the cause of **sharing Jesus** with **others**.... //

... for when we rally behind **THAT** cause – all the **other** matters which can **consume** us and cause **division** – will actually melt away and fall into their **proper place**

It's not that **buildings** and **money** and **welfare** are **NOT important** – of **course** they are...

But when we order our priorities with the cause of the gospel **FIRST**, everything **else** will fall into place and be taken **care of**... //

I urge you to consider what **YOU** reckon is most important in the life your church right **now**...

And if it is not **Jesus** and **sharing Jesus** – than do whatever you can to **make it Jesus**...

...and then I'm absolutely **sure** your church will **flourish** and relationships **deepen** – and **other needs** will be taken **care of**... /

If it is Jesus – then increasingly – like the church described here in Acts 4 – then *all the believers will be **one in heart and mind***.

Second, they:

2. SHARED EVERYTHING

Have a look with me at the second sentence in v32 – *no one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had*.

That's **extraordinary** isn't it!???

Can you imagine not considering that your **car** for example was **yours**? – but you just made it **available** for everyone else in your church to **share**???

How is this **possible**?

And it is **unrealistic** to think that church could be like this **today**?

Well I'll come **back** to that **second** question...

...but **how** was this **possible**?

Notice the structure here – I hope you have the passage open in front of you....

V 32 – they **shared** everything they had

V 33 – with **power** they continued to **testify** to the **resurrection of the Lord Jesus**

AND **Then** – God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among

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them...

How was it possible that they shared everything?

Two things I suggest: (1) because they were so passionate that the most **important** thing in life was **testifying** to the **resurrection** of the Lord Jesus.... when **that** is what **drives** you – **EVERYTHING** else – including your **possessions** – take a **back seat**

AND – (2) God's grace was **so powerfully at work** in them all...

Generosity – **sharing** everything – making sure there was no one **needy** among them – was a powerful **work** of God's **grace** – **softening** their **hearts** – giving them the gift of **generosity**...

So a focus on testifying to **Jesus AND** a work of **God's grace**....

THAT is what resulted in sharing **everything** they had and there being no **needy people among them**.... ////

Now – **could** we / **should** we expect that in our churches today?

Well – note this is **descriptive** NOT **prescriptive**...

And we live in a **very different social** and **economic context** from the 1st century....

HOWEVER - before we let ourselves off the **hook**!!

... I **DO** think that if we

... Make **testifying** to Jesus our first **priority**

AND allow the **grace** of God to **touch** and **transform** our **hearts**...

We would have a mindset which

... **shares** more **openly**

...**gives** more **generously**

...**ensures no one** in our church struggles **financially**

...holds on to our **possessions** way more **lightly**...

So let me just put it out there...

Do you have a **spare** property that you could **sell** and give the **proceeds** to your **church**...??

wow – that could pay for a **minister** at your church which currently can't **afford** one... or a **children's worker** or **youth** minister...

Let me tell you about Bill (not his real name) who died just last week aged 99

He was a member of our church in **Roseville**....

...and about a year or so after I moved to **Noosa** he contacted me and asked if he could drop by and see me

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in Noosa...

I readily agreed – he was a **lovely** man...

During the **course** of our **conversation**... he shared with me that he had recently sold his **business** and wanted to **tithe** the proceeds...

That is – he wanted to give **10%** to the **work** of the **Lord**...

And he wasn't connected that deeply to the church he was attending at the time... and wondered if the church at **Noosa** may be able to help him by providing an **opportunity** to share the proceeds of the sale of his business...

I said – of **course** – not knowing how **much** money he was talking about...

he then said – something of the order of **\$100,000** – and my mouth **dropped**...

well – it **ended up** being **\$260,000** and we were able at Noosa to employ an ordained **minister** who specialised in **family and children's** work for **2½ years**!!

What an **amazing blessing**...!

V34 – from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet... and it was distributed to anyone who had need

Perhaps today – you might decide to sell that spare **block of land**... with a **joyful generous heart** – give it over to your church – who could use it to help anyone in need – OR – to employ a **minister** – or **additional** minister to help with the **work** of the **gospel**....

Radical **thought**?

Absolutely!!

But it would be entirely **consistent** wouldn't it, with what we **read here**! ///

Well **thirdly** and **finally**.... //

This church was **one** in **heart and mind**, they shared **everything** and they:

3. TESTIFIED TO THE RISEN LORD JESUS

There is it is in v33 - *With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*

Now – as we saw earlier in the series – we aren't able to tell others we've seen Jesus **alive** and **well**...

But we **ARE** able to testify **to** our **EXPERIENCE** of the **risen Lord Jesus** and on this **Pentecost Sunday** – our experience of **Jesus' Spirit** – the **Holy Spirit** – in our **lives**...!

But IS this our **passion** and **priority**???

Is it in the **DNA** of our **churches** – that we **long** to **testify** to the **transforming power** and **gracious forgiveness** of the **Lord Jesus**?? – telling others who don't **know** about Jesus that they can find **life** to the **full**

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by coming into **relationship** with **him??** //

Is your church **working out** how you can **share Jesus** in your **town...??**

We can't do this in our **own** strength – which why Luke tells us – that with **great power** they **testified...**

The power that came from the **indwelling Holy Spirit....** ///

We'll only **want** to do **this...**

...if we **see** the **need**.

...if we understand that those who don't **know Jesus** are in very **grave danger...** //

The USA will never change their gun laws until they realise that **THAT** is what is **needed** to put an end to mass **shootings** which kill **children...** //

Our **churches** won't prioritise sharing **Jesus** with **others** – until we realise that the **best thing we can do in our towns and villages** – is **share Jesus...** share the **news of Jesus** – the **gospel** of Jesus – the **Good news** of **Jesus...**

Until we realise the **need** – we won't **change...** //

But once we see **clearly** that people who don't know **Jesus** now will be in a **terrible** situation when Jesus **returns...** then our **love** for them – our **concern** for them – will **change** what we think **matters...** //

Oh friends... how I pray that right across our **diocese** – from **West Wyalong** up to **Bourke** – from **Condobolin** to **Coonabarabran** – from **Bathurst** out to **Tullamore** - we'll develop such a **heart** for – such a **burden** for those who don't know Jesus – that **all** of us will be working out – how do we **share** Jesus? how do we tell **others** about him? How can we **share** the news that there is **forgiveness** and **life** on **offer** through him...?

And that asking those questions would result in us becoming **one in heart and mind** – and therefore **sharing everything** we have – so that Jesus is pre-**eminent** in all we do!!

This early church

... **were one in heart and mind**

...**shared everything...**

... **and testified to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus....**

May those who one day write the history of OUR **diocese...** that those people in Bathurst diocese,

... **were one in heart and mind**

...**shared everything...**

... **and testified to the life which is from the Lord Jesus....**