Week 1-Embodied Faith, Flourishing Communities

Vision and Objective:

Throughout Scripture we see glimpses of a new kind of community being formed by God: a community that reflects God’s Character and lives out God’s Character and lives out God’s teaching, so all of creation can flourish as God intended. But what is the key to this flourishing community? It starts with embodied faith. When we live as Jesus has called us to live, empowered by the Holy Spirit to love radically and participate in God’s work of restoring our broken world, we impact the world through our words and actions. God never intended for our flourishing to be just about us; we are meant to be a blessing to the world.

Opening Prayer

Our Father, we come this evening to study and learn from your word for as the Psalmist said, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”. Please use this time that we have together as that lamp and help us to keep to the path that you have put before us. In the name of Jesus, your son, amen.

Scripture Passage: Acts 2:37-47 NRSV

**37**Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” **38**Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39**For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” **40**And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” **41**So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. **42**They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

**43**Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. **44**All who believed were together and had all things in common; **45**they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. **46**Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, **47**praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Background information: Earlier in Acts 2, Jewish believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues (Acts 2:4). A huge, ethnically diverse crowd gathered and heard what was being spoken in their native languages. Peter gave one of the greatest homilies ever and many people joined the church that day. It should be noted, eating together, as is mentioned in verse 42, was a sign of intimacy and trust in that culture.

Questions to Discuss:

Why might this community have been radical at the time?

Christianity brand new, resurrection recent.

Ethnic diversity within community was not common.

Signs and Wonder. Sharing wealth.

How does this community embody faith?

Living and supporting each other, “as in need”. “Brothers and Sisters”--🡪 family, all children of God Day by day vs Sunday only Waiting for second coming

Devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching, fellowship, study, prayer

Where do you see it flourishing?

3,000 one day. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Difference between “membership” and community, i.e. mega-churches?

What inspires you personally about this community?

“All things in common”; lack of individualism Collective community I.e Amish community

How is God speaking to you and inviting you to respond?

Activity

Cover story: We are working towards being a flourishing community in away that impacts our community. Imagine years from now, our group is on the front page of the newspaper. What are the headlines, quotes, images, or highlights on the cover?



Highlights: Community and Prayer Garden provides food for the body and soul!

Pine Grove Community comes together at Good Shepherd

Good Shepherd is a gathering place

Participates with other churches in progressive dinner

**Good Shepherd Impacts Its Community in Dynamic Ways!**

Closing Prayer

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

*Old Gaelic blessing found at: https://www.lords-prayer-words.com/times/closing\_prayer.html*