

Roger Woltermann, Lay Pastoral Associate  
April 8, 2018 – Zion Lutheran Church – Text: Acts 4: 32-35

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts, be acceptable to you, O God, our strength, our rock, and our redeemer. Amen

Grace and peace to you from our Risen Lord, Jesus, the Christ.

Christ has risen, Alleluia! *(Response? Try again!)*

Appropriately, because God always works in wonderful ways, our reading from Acts today, speaks of living in a Christian community, of belonging to a Christian family. Isn't that what Keegan and Autumn will do here in a few minutes in their baptisms? Isn't that what Kurt and Anjeanette, Logan and Emily, and the Solberg Family (Scot, Chelsea, Emma, Shayla and Tatum) will experience in joining our church today? How important it is for human beings to belong. Congratulation for belonging to our Risen Christ and His family! Amen

*Keep things in context. You are taking things out of context. You only quote those things that fit your agenda.* Let's look back at the context where we find this very early Christian Church, this very early Christian community. This so-called "little" Christian community has grown rapidly. Acts 2:41 says the number is 3,000! Later in Chapter 4, we are told the number of men came to about 5,000. Whether you settle on 3,000 or 5,000, those numbers easily double when you count the women and children.

This was no small band of believers who could gather in someone's living room. This group was substantial, brand new, fast growing. It should have been struggling to get its feet on the ground. BUT it has been able to achieve remarkable unity and harmony.

This church began in a world hostile to its purposes. The council (Sanhedrin) had tried Peter and John, but had failed to take any action against these apostles because these men were popular with the people. They were told NOT to preach anymore in the name of this Jesus guy, BUT, to this, Peter and John told the council they would continue to preach, because they were called by God and that they would much rather obey God than the Sanhedrin. Such courage to proclaim the gospel with such boldness—great models for us all!

#### Acts 4:32

Their common ownership is not imposed, but rather has its roots in their unity of heart and soul. These early church members simply loved each other, and in this love, they took care of each other. Their ancient society always supported the belief that your family would take care of you. These early Christians at times gave up their family bonds to join a new family, the church. The unity of heart and soul finds reality in the sharing of possessions—not figuratively, no metaphor here, but literally. How difficult for us today to understand this! We find security and comfort in possessions. We find it hard not to love our money and be jealous of our neighbors who have more. OK – we’ll give a homeless person a buck or two. OK – we will give an extra generous tip once in a while at a restaurant when the service is really outstanding. But hey, we are not selling our house and putting the proceeds in the church offering plate.

But a unity of heart and soul should lead us in that direction of generously sharing our possessions. It is what true unity is all about.

#### Acts 4:33

Isn’t this the heart of the church’s mission—witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus. Isn’t this why we proclaim, “Christ has risen, Alleluia”. Isn’t this why we proudly bear the title of Easter or Resurrection People? We strive to live in a harmonious community of believers. We drop our defenses; we assume the best in people, not the worst; we resolve differences without being bitter or resentful; we live without fear of physical danger, financial catastrophe, or personal rejection. We achieve this because we have a common commitment to higher ideals granted to us by the Grace of God.

This Grace extends beyond a tight Christian family circle. It allows members to enjoy “the goodwill of all the people!”

#### Acts 4: 34-35

“There was not a needy person among them.” Way back in Deuteronomy, Yahweh promised Israel, “However, there shall be no poor with you, for you shall be blessed in the land you are given, in the land you possess.”

The miracle of these early Christians is the miracle of community. It is a community that shares both wealth and poverty so no one will be truly poor. It is a miracle of generosity—generosity inspired by God’s generosity in Christ. Finally, it is a miracle of love—a love that focuses on the needs of the other person, rather than one’s own needs or desires.

“They laid it at the apostle’s feet.” They submitted to the Lord, not to the apostles who served them. The apostles were responsible stewards of the property they received, property they cared for in the name of our Risen Christ.

“And it was distributed to each as any had need.” These gifts were used to MEET HUMAN NEED—NOT TO SATISFY HUMAN GREED!

Closing

When Jesus commanded the rich man in Mark 10, to sell all he had and follow Him, we are reminded that all we have no longer belongs to us. It’s Jesus purse. It’s His gift, stored away for others not because they owe, but simply because they need.

Let us pray: All I have is yours, dear Jesus, Who will receive from me today? O generous Christ, may no one who knows me be in need. Point me toward those who need my help today and every day. You lived, died, and were resurrected for me. Because of that precious fact, allow me to serve others in your name. Amen.