

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, Apr 8, 2018

**How Do We Encourage Others?
(Psalm 133 & Acts 4:32-35)**



**With great power the apostles gave their testimony
to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,
and great grace was upon them.
(Acts 4:33)**

The story into which our passage and text fit

The Acts of the Apostles – how the “great grace” of the Holy Spirit was upon them, encouraging them to witness to what God had done in Jesus Christ – in the midst of opposition, prison, abuse, and death – most ignored, powerful forces opposed, and some came to see that God was reconciling the world to himself in Jesus Christ – how do we encourage each other in that mission – testifying to what God was doing for the world in Jesus Christ – restoring the justice, kindness, and humility intended in the beginning

Provocative Points to Ponder

- Acts written by Luke – a continuation of his gospel – the coming of Jesus Christ and the continuation of his mission through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit – beyond the Jewish people to the Gentiles – the whole world – a book filled with wonders, surprises, challenges, and graceful truth – worth spending more time exploring – basis for sermons next year, after we have looked at the prophetic roots of Jesus’ testimony and life for the rest of this year – inspiration for being the church today in a context very much like that of the early church – and so very different
- One of the challenges we discussed a bit on Friday night at Bible Study is this idea of selling your property and giving the proceeds to the church to be shared with all in need – something we don’t do a lot – but behind this story lies the profound truth that everything we enjoy comes from the God who reconciled the world to himself in Jesus Christ and who continues to work for justice, kindness, and humility through the Holy Spirit – a very concrete way of encouraging each other and those who come after us – a gift from your accumulated wealth to continue the mission of Brentwood for future generations – resources available if you want to have this conversation with your family and heirs – why you’d like a portion of your estate to go to the church to continue it’s good work in the community
- What struck me most as I was ponder this passage this week was the work of the Holy Spirit in all of this – and throughout Acts – in some ways, it’s a biography of the Holy Spirit – works with and through a lot of people to encourage them in the face of threatening circumstances – and not the people one might expect or even want – Paul, for example – violent repression of the nascent Christian community – one of the most

fervent of persecutors – and Peter, the denier – and that rag-tag bunch of fishermen and farmers and tax collectors and women who bought into this craziness that a radical rabbi from Galilee who had been crucified as a traitor was indeed the One in whom God was working out the salvation of the world – and, even crazier, that some kind of gracious power was continuing this work and spreading its blessings throughout the known world

- And here, in our day and in this place, that work is still going on – Brentwood is one of the recipient communities entrusted with this mission – we’re not big – we’re not flashy – we’re not growing at a great rate – but we are creating spaces for Jesus Christ to encounter people, to encourage them with his grace, to draw them into a greater awareness of what God is doing in and for the world – the “great grace” of the Holy Spirit is upon us, as it was upon the early church as recorded in part in Acts – that truth is the foundation of our encouragement of each other in the mission God has entrusted to us – a mission of caring for and cultivating his creation in all our circles of influence -

Your Notes

Prayers of Thanks – for the gift of the Holy Spirit and her wondrous ways of nourishing us to flourish - (silence to consider this)

Prayers for Help – to process and live through the traumas and tragedies in our lives – especially remember the survivors and families devastated by the crash in SK – but also the daily losses of life and hope throughout the world – bring your peace quickly, O Lord – (silence to consider this)

Prayers for Awe – at your persistent faith in us as capable, in companionship with you, of caring for your creation in the way you originally intended – (silence to consider this)