

Acts 2: 41-47

So those who welcomed Peter's message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 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, 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.

SERMON:

(SLIDE)

Legendary pastor, teacher, civil rights leader and writer Howard Thurman might have dedicated his autobiography to any of a number of people.... Instead, *With Head and Heart* is dedicated to an unknown stranger, without whom Thurman's impactful career would never have started.¹

(SLIDE)

"To the stranger in the railroad station in Daytona Beach," writes Thurman, "who restored my broken dream sixty-five years ago."

Young Thurman needed additional funds to cover the transport of his trunk in order to make the journey by train to attend high school. He writes about that pivotal moment in his life:

I sat down on the steps of the railway station and cried my heart out. Presently I opened my eyes and saw before me a large pair of work shoes. My eyes crawled upward until I saw the man's face. He was a black man, dressed in overalls and a denim cap. As he looked down at me he rolled a cigarette and lit it. Then he said, "Boy, what in hell are you crying about?"

And I told him.

"If you're trying to get out of this damn town to get an education, the least I can do is to help you. Come with me," he said.

He took me around to the agent and asked, "How much does it take to send this boy's trunk to Jacksonville?"

¹ [Thurman story](#)

Then he took out his rawhide money bag and counted the money out. When the agent handed him the receipt, he handed it to me. Then, without a word, he turned and disappeared down the railroad track. I never saw him again.

That act of sharing changed his life.

(SLIDE)

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Those who welcomed Peter's message were baptized - not all Jews (the intended audience) welcoming this message. Need to be aware of this reality. The story of Acts gets messy - both from inside the community and outside of it. WJJ: *The offensiveness of the message of Jesus is a real problem for some, and they will not have their religious sensibilities challenged.*

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching - these 12 men were not educated, likely not even literate, and yet they had a message to share. What does this offer us?

Devoted to teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers - 4 things. Not just one. How do we stay balanced in our faith journey?

Had all things in common - selling possessions and sharing with any that had need -

That sentence can stop me in my tracks. Yet there is so much joy and gladness in this passage. WJJ: The giving - **IT'S ABOUT ANNOUNCING GOD'S LOVE.**

This holy wind blows through structured and settled ways of living and possessing and pulls things apart.

All of us have something to give, all of us have something to share. (Pulpit Fiction podcast)

Day by day... They did the ordinary work of living. They did it faithfully, together.

They went to the temple - they didn't give up that which brought meaning to their lives. TENSION. They held onto traditions and were open to the movement of the Spirit.

Day by day the Lord added to their number - this was God's work. The people were to teach, fellowship, break bread and pray.

(SLIDE)

What is the Spirit of God doing in this story?

The Spirit is....

Opening hearts to share. Moved them from scarcity to abundance
Adding to their numbers. This is the work of God. They are simply being obedient to the revolutionary call.

What is God asking people to do in this story? (SLIDE)

God's asking the people to...

Share. Everyone has something to share - everyone has something to give away/let go of - ideas, holding onto opinions/doctrines. Do I need to give up my ego's beliefs of how things should be?

Day by day - day in and day out. This becomes part of the routine of life. Not extraordinary living.

BE JOYFUL - there's a sense of goodwill; of glad and generous hearts.

(SLIDE)

STOP - think of someone who shared some part of themselves with you - maybe it involved possessions, but maybe it was a piece of wisdom; maybe a hug that reminded you who you truly are; maybe it was giving you their full attention. Might have been a family member, a teacher, or like for Thurman, a stranger.

Notice what it feels like in your body to bring up that memory.

WJJ says the sharing in this passage; The giving - IT'S ABOUT ANNOUNCING GOD'S LOVE.

Is this memory a way of someone announcing God's love?

Where is the Holy Spirit taking us and into whose lives?

In marking the 1 year anniversary of her cancer diagnosis, Esther Prins looked back and noted in her blog the many, many people who have accompanied her on this journey.

We can't do life alone. That's one thing this story of the early church makes clear. We are called into each other's lives - when they're pretty, and when they're not.

Esther shared this blessing from podcaster, blogger and teacher Kate Bowler:

(SLIDE)

A blessing for the life you didn't choose

Blessed are you when the shock subsides, when vaguely, you see a line appear that divides before and after.

You didn't draw it, and can barely even make it out. But as surely as minutes add up to hours and days, here you are, forced into a story you never would have written.

...

Show us a glimmer of possibility in this new constraint, that small truths will be given back to us. We are held. We are safe. We are loved. We are loved. We are loved.

And best of all: We are not alone.

Resources:

[Christian Century, Sunday's Coming.](#) June 18, 2023.

Jennings, Wille James. 2017. *Acts: A Theological commentary on the Bible.* Westminster John Knox Press.

[Pulpit Fiction](#) podcast #538