

Opportunity for Great Joy

1. Last week we looked at the 4 primary things the **first** church did
 - a. They were committed to the apostles' teaching...to fellowship...to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper)...and to prayer
 - b. We could have taken a Sunday...to study each of these 4 commitments
 - c. But I think we have a pretty good understanding of those 4 commitments
 - d. I believe that verses 44 and 45...contain some deeper spiritual truths...and may be the most mis-understood...verses in the Bible
 - e. Last week I touched on how the enemy doesn't want the church...to do any of the 4 things the first church did
 - f. Simply ...because there is power in being the true church
 - g. We ended last week...with the thought...of how...a deep sense of awe came over the church...and the apostles did many miracles
 - h. How it wasn't the signs and wonders that caused the awe...but rather being the church that caused the awe
 - i. A church can become spiritually powerful...when they are willing to do those 4 things
 - j. Next Luke is going to expand on the sharing aspect of the first church...and the results of this kind of sharing...is for the benefit of the giver
 - k. This is similar as forgiving benefits the forgiver

1. It is important to cover this spiritual power of sharing...because chapter 3 starts with Peter and John...giving what they have freely been given
 - m. Let's look at
2. Acts 2:44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.
 - a. Here is what the enemy wants you to think these verses says
 - b. Sell everything you have and give it to the church...but it doesn't say that
 - c. The key word is...shared...It says they shared everything they had...they sold property and shared the money with those in need
 - d. This sharing caused them to worship together...it created great joy in their hearts...let's add Verse 46
3. Acts 2:46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—
 - a. They worshiped together...they went to the temple each day...for them the temple was still the place of worship
 - b. But they couldn't share the Lord's supper at the temple
 - c. So...They met in homes for the Lord's supper... and they shared meals...with **great joy and generosity**
 - d. Again...this verse is not saying is...sell all their stuff...and give the money to the church...
 - e. The enemy does not want Christians to share...money or stuff...why
 - f. Because it will create great joy and generosity

- g. If this verse said sell everything...then they couldn't meet in people's homes for the Lord's supper...
- 4. Slide... So...The 5th thing the church did was to be generous with each other
 - a. They shared homes to continue worship...they shared money to the ministry...in order to operate
 - b. What I want us to focus on...is the result of this sharing in verse 46...they shared with great joy...and generosity
 - c. How many of us can say...we take great joy in sharing...or we take joy in being generous...
 - d. If we can say...our giving...brings us great joy...then we have learned the spiritual truth...or lesson of giving
 - e. Most Americans love their stuff...and they love their money...because the world is a greedy place...and most Americans are greedy
 - f. Here is some of what the enemy wants you to believe...cling to your money...your life...and stuff...then you will be happy
 - g. The world tells you...work hard and you get to collect all these worldly things...then you will be happy...that's a lie
 - h. There is a lot of miserable rich people...that still are missing joy
 - i. Let me start by saying there is a difference between happiness and joy
 - j. Joy and happiness are two completely different emotions...although they seem similar but are actually very different
 - k. Joy is something that stays consistently steady...joy is internal...while happiness... is dependent upon your circumstances...or external

1. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit...which becomes an easy choice...when the things of the world...or the flesh...become less important to us
 - m. The Bible has lots to say about joy...which seemingly has absolutely nothing to do with external happenings
 - n. Paul shares His struggles of ministry...his hardships...but counts it all joy
5. 2 Cor 6:3-5, 3 We live in such a way that no one will stumble because of us, and no one will find fault with our ministry. 4 In everything we do, we show that we are true ministers of God. We patiently endure troubles and hardships and calamities of every kind. 5 We have been beaten, been put in prison, faced angry mobs, worked to exhaustion, endured sleepless nights, and gone without food.
- a. This is what most people don't see minister of God go through
 - b. These things cause most to quit...that's why it's a calling
6. 2 Cor 6:6-10, 6 We prove ourselves by our purity, our understanding, our patience, our kindness, by the Holy Spirit within us, and by our sincere love. 7 We faithfully preach the truth. God's power is working in us. We use the weapons of righteousness in the right hand for attack and the left hand for defense. 8 We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. We are honest, but they call us impostors. 9 We are ignored, even though we are well known. We live close to death, but we are still alive. We have been beaten, but we have not been killed. 10 Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.

- a. I find it amazing that Paul still has joy...in the midst of all these unpleasant happenings
 - b. Verse 10 shows us the key...they gave...or shared Spiritual riches
7. Slide...They found joy in sharing spiritual riches
- a. They had joy in their heart because they gave what they had been freely given
 - b. Here is what caused the joy...purity...understanding...patience...kindness...how...by the Holy Spirit within them...and by their sincere love
 - c. They have nothing of worldly value...and yet Paul says they have everything...spiritually rich...huh
 - d. I got to see a people group that had nothing...it actually caught off guard
 - e. Before I started jail ministry...I went with a friend who held a church service at a high security prison in Colorado...it was a bad place
 - f. I didn't know what to expect...but as I was terrified after my tour of the facility...and seeing how mean and angry...these huge men were
 - g. There we were...sitting in a room...waiting for the inmates to arrive
 - h. I will never forget the Spiritual presence I felt as these men walked into church...this class room...with such unmistakable joy
 - i. I saw such their joy...and wondered...how can this be
 - j. There situation of having nothing...being incarcerated...around so many angry people...who want to hurt each other
 - k. And yet they walk into church...singing hymns...encouraging each other with true joy in their hearts

- l. I have never been in a church like this ever before...or ever since...and I mean any church
 - m. I asked my pastor friend...how can this be...He just said...who the Son sets free is free...they chose to live free on the inside
 - n. This answer was above my understanding...because thought I was there to help others...but I was the one who was helped that day
 - o. I saw...that I wasn't living free yet...that I was lacking the kind of true joy I saw in horrible circumstances...I saw I was still a prisoner of Satan
 - p. Let's look at what brought Jesus great joy
8. John 15:9-11, 9 "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. 10 When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. 11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!
- a. Joy is something to do with our inner being...while happiness has to do with our outer circumstances
9. Slide...Obeying Jesus is the evidence of Jesus's love...which will bring you joy
- a. Jesus is saying...it brought Him great joy...to obey the Father by offering Himself...or surrendering Himself...or sacrificing Himself
 - b. And when we do the same...it should also bring us great joy to share with others...thus proving we love Jesus...and Jesus loves us
 - c. Jesus told us this for a reason...so that we can...obey Jesus...and find this kind of joy also...an overflowing joy...when we do these things

10. Heb 12:1-4, 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. 3 Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. 4 After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.

11. Slide...There is a future joy in finishing the race

- a. Another difference between joy and happiness is...happiness can be something related to pleasure...while joy is more of a sacrifice
- b. Have you ever noticed that walking with Jesus...is like learning to die to ourselves...is this what Jesus meant by
- c. If you want to be My follower...you must turn from your selfish ways...and pick up your cross daily
- d. Any sacrifice we offer...is the opposite of what the world tells you
- e. In Galatians 5...Paul lists the results of following our flesh...or the things the world wants us to believe...that will somehow...make us happy

12. Gal 5:19-21, 19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell

you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

- a. I used to live this way...I was searching for happiness...and all I found was temporary happiness...that soon followed misery...and emptiness
- b. As soon as things didn't go my way...I instantly got angry
- c. I would work hard to save enough to buy something...thinking it would make me happy...but what I lacked in my life was joy
- d. What Paul says next...is what man is really looking for is...the things the Holy Spirit produces

13. Gal 5:22-23, 22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

- a. Notice Joy is a product of the Holy Spirit...when we allow the Holy Spirit to work on our hearts
- b. Love is a product of the Holy Spirit...when we allow the Holy Spirit work on our hearts...goodness is a product of the Holy Spirit

14. Gal 5:24-26, 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. 25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. 26 Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

- a. The first church...shared with each other...with joy and generosity

- b. The enemy of sharing is greed...greed will keep you from experiencing what Jesus wants for you

15. Luke 12:13-15, 13 Then someone called from the crowd, "Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father's estate with me." 14 Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?" 15 Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."

- a. Think about this...here is Jesus...the Messiah...the Son of God...the Son of man...the only One who can give you eternal life...and
- b. Here is this man's request is...tell my brother to give me my inheritance
- c. Jesus replies by saying...He is not the Judge over the worldly things
- d. What this man's greed is keeping him from seeing is...Jesus is the Judge over both of them...and the only gate to eternity
- e. What is happening is greed is keeping this man from seeing who Jesus really is
- f. Jesus said...life is not measured by how much...how much you own
- g. The world measures you...by how much you own

16. Luke 12:16-19, 16 Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. 17 He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' 18 Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. 19 And I'll sit back and say to myself, "My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!"

17. Slide...Money was this man's god

- a. Is this not the American dream...all I need...is this one more thing...and then I can sit back and enjoy the fruit of my labor
- b. Then you get that one last thing...and soon...it is not enough...so you will need a bigger barn
- c. I want to say this...God wants us to be successful...and blessed...for sure...
- d. So we can be like Paul...Peter...John...or the first church...sharing what we have...silver or gold I have not
- e. The world wants us to covet things...at the cost of our relationship with God...by choosing our wealth over Christ...or others
- f. Each of us has to decide what we desire more...and then count the cost of our decision

18. Luke 12:20-21, 20 "But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night.

Then who will get everything you worked for?' 21 "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

- a. Jesus called this man...who is greedy...and stores up earthly wealth in a selfish way...a fool
- b. Why...because greed cost this man his relationship with God
- c. Listen...God is not against people having money or things
- d. God only ask that you share them to advance the kingdom of God
- e. There are many similar parables to this same truth
- f. Jesus has more to say about this subject...skip down to verses

19. Luke 12:33-34, 33 "Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven! And the purses of heaven never get old or

develop holes. Your treasure will be safe; no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it. 34 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

- a. I put this in the Matthew 5 category...along with gouge out your right eye...or cut off you hand
- b. Did Jesus really want people to sell everything...no
- c. Just get radicle...to not let your greed keep you from God...but don't miss the promise of storing up wealth in heaven
- d. The key to our message is...the first church...they valued sharing things in fellowship...so the kingdom of God will be advanced
- e. Over the things of the world...which created true joy...and the joy...created generosity
- f. Is your heart's desire for the kingdom...or your money...Jesus said...if you want to know the truth...look at your check book...or treasure
- g. Those who Jesus can trust with little...will be trusted with much...all it takes is faith
- h. What happens is when you start to live your life this way...you will find the kingdom of God
- i. When you find the kingdom of God...you find joy...when you find the kingdom of God...is when you find true worship
- j. When you find the kingdom of God ...you will find the good will of the people...and God will add to that kind of fellowship
- k. Here is another result of the people sharing...the last verse of Acts 2

20. Acts 2:47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people.

And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

21. Slide... When the people of God...act like the people of God...the gospel of God is very attractive

- a. Where the kingdom of God is where heart felt praising of God is
- b. I want to take a moment to share something I didn't realize I was missing until I got a taste of it again...intimate worship
- c. Something our generation has re-discovered in worship...this generation has gone from cooperate worship...back to intimate worship
- d. So many churches just sing songs...I don't just want to sing songs together...I want to worship in Spirit and in truth
- e. Our generation's worship has gone from corporate worship...to intimate worship through the working power of the Holy Spirit
- f. Which allows us to have an encounter with the very presence of God
- g. Intimate worship is less about our contribution...and more about our surrendering to God
- h. Intimate worship...is worship that causes me to weep...because of the intensity of the presence of God
- i. That creates a fear of the Lord in my heart...to the point I want to cry out holy...holy...holy is the Lord all mighty
- j. The first church is the book of Acts...were praising God together...fellowshipping...sharing...and praying together...studying the word

k. The results were joy... generosity...fellowship...prayer...worship...and
people were being added to the kingdom of God...daily