

Acts 2:42-47

May 7, '17

**“FLAWED PERFECTION”**

***“WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.”***

**THOSE FIVE WORDS MAY BE THE MOST  
MEMORABLE WORDS I REMEMBER FROM ANY CLASS  
– AT ANY LEVEL – THAT I HAVE EVER HEARD.**

**THEY WERE THE FIRST WORDS SPOKEN BY THE  
PROFESSOR OF A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CLASS I  
TOOK IN SEMINARY.**

**THEY WERE WORDS THAT HE USED AT LEAST  
ONCE EVERY TIME THE CLASS MET.**

**THEY WERE COMFORTING WORDS – ESPECIALLY  
FOR THOSE OF US WHO WERE INTIMIDATED BY THE  
FORMAT OF THE COURSE.**

**EACH CLASS MEMBER WAS GIVEN THE  
RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADING AN ENTIRE HOUR & A**

**HALF SESSION – PREPARING LESSONS FOR OUR  
FELLOW STUDENTS.**

**THOSE – LIKE ME – WHO HAD ENTERED  
SEMINARY WITHOUT A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE  
IN OUR KNOWLEDGE OF SCRIPTURE & THEOLOGY  
WERE REASSURED OVER & OVER AGAIN THAT WE  
WERE ALL IN IT TOGETHER – THAT WE WOULD BE  
SUPPORTED & ENCOURAGED BY ONE ANOTHER.**

**IT MADE FOR A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE FOR  
ALL OF US.**

**WE EAGERLY LOOKED FORWARD TO EACH  
WEEK’S CLASS BECAUSE WE KNEW SOMETHING  
WOULD HAPPEN THAT WOULD DRAW US TOGETHER  
MORE CLOSELY THAN EVER.**

**AND THAT WORD “TOGETHER” SEEMED TO BE  
THE OPERATIVE WORD FOR THAT ENTIRE COURSE.**

**IT WAS, BY NO MEANS, A “PERFECT” COURSE.**

**NONE OF THE SESSIONS TURNED OUT EXACTLY AS  
THE LEADER OF THAT SESSION HAD INTENDED THAT  
IT WOULD.**

**BUT OUR TOGETHERNESS MADE IT WORK.**

**OUR TOGETHERNESS TURNED ONE DISASTER  
AFTER ANOTHER INTO WHAT COULD BEST BE  
CLASSIFIED AS “FLAWED PERFECTION.”**

**WHEN WE LOOK AT THIS PASSAGE AT THE END OF  
THE SECOND CHAPTER OF ACTS, WE FIND  
SOMETHING QUITE SIMILAR.**

**HERE WAS A GROUP THAT ALSO LOOKED  
FORWARD TO EACH GATHERING BECAUSE THEY  
KNEW SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN THAT WOULD  
DRAW THEM MORE CLOSELY TOGETHER.**

**THESE VERSES ARE THE FIRST VERSES IN THE ENTIRE BIBLE THAT TELL US ABOUT THE INITIAL FORMATION OF THE CHURCH.**

**THIS IS IT.**

**RIGHT HERE IN THESE VERSES IS WHERE IT ALL BEGAN.**

**AND, AMAZINGLY, THE VERY FIRST VERSE OF THIS PASSAGE TELLS US ESSENTIALLY EVERY EVERYTHING WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT MATTERS IN THE CHURCH.**

***“THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES’ TEACHING AND FELLOWSHIP, TO THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE PRAYERS.”***

**THERE WAS SOMETHING HAPPENING WITHIN THAT GROUP OF CHRIST-FOLLOWERS THAT MADE OTHERS LONG TO BE A PART OF IT.**

**THERE WAS SOMETHING THAT DREW THEM INTO THAT FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS.**

**THEY SAW SOMETHING IRRESISTIBLE IN WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN THEIR MIDST.**

**THEY WERE FILLED WITH “AWE” AT WHAT THEY SAW & THEY DESPERATELY WANTED TO BE A PART OF IT ALL.**

**IN ESSENCE, WHAT THE DISCIPLES WERE DOING WAS SIMPLY CONTINUING ON WITH THE EXPERIENCE THEY HAD SHARED WITH JESUS.**

**THEY HAD STUDIED TOGETHER, SERVED OTHERS TOGETHER, WORSHIPED TOGETHER & PRAYED TOGETHER.**

**THE DISCIPLES WERE SIMPLY BUILDING ON WHAT THEY HAD EXPERIENCED WITH JESUS IN THEIR YEARS TOGETHER.**

**AND YET, EVEN WITHIN THEIR SMALL BAND OF TWELVE, THOUGH, THEY WEREN'T FREE OF CONFLICTS & DISAGREEMENTS.**

**THEY HAD THEIR PROBLEMS, THEIR DISSENSIONS, THEIR MISUNDERSTANDINGS, THEIR MOMENTS OF TENSION & PERSONALITY CLASHES.**

**EACH ONE OF THEM HAD THEIR OWN FLAWS.**

**THEY WERE, BY NO MEANS, PERFECT.**

**BUT THEY SAW A HIGHER CAUSE TO WHICH THEY WERE COMMITTED AND THEY WORKED TOGETHER IN WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS “FLAWED PERFECTION.”**

**YES, EVEN WHEN THERE WERE ONLY 12 OF THEM, IT WASN'T ALWAYS SMOOTH SAILING.**

**SO JUST IMAGINE HOW MUCH MORE DIFFICULT IT BECAME WHEN THEIR NUMBERS BEGAN TO EXPLODE**

**& THEY GREW EXPONENTIALLY & DID SO IN SUCH A BRIEF PERIOD OF TIME.**

**HOW DO YOU KEEP EVERYONE HAPPY?**

**I WOULDN'T CARE TO GUESS HOW MANY TIMES OVER THE YEARS I'VE HAD SOMEONE SAY TO ME, "*I WOULDN'T HAVE YOUR JOB FOR ANYTHING IN THE WORLD. HOW DO YOU KEEP EVERYONE HAPPY?*"**

**WELL, FIRST OF ALL, I WOULDN'T NOT HAVE MY JOB FOR ANYTHING IN THE WORLD.**

**AND SECONDLY, I HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND & ACCEPT THE FACT THAT WHEN IT COMES TO KEEPING EVERYONE HAPPY, YOU *DON'T* BECAUSE YOU *CAN'T*.**

**BUT YOU TRY TO MAINTAIN A FOCUS ON WHAT REALLY MATTERS.**

**I THINK THAT'S WHAT'S GOING ON HERE IN  
THESE VERSES IN ACTS.**

**I THINK THAT MAY BE THE REASON LUKE TELLS  
US ABOUT THESE FOUR THINGS FIRST WHEN HE'S  
TELLING US ABOUT THE EARLY CHURCH.**

**THERE WAS STUDY, SERVICE, WORSHIP &  
PRAYER.**

**THIS WAS WHAT MATTERED.**

**THIS IS WHAT WOULD DRAW PEOPLE INTO THEIR  
FELLOWSHIP.**

**THE BELIEVERS WERE TOGETHER IN THEIR  
FLAWED PERFECTION IN A COMMITMENT TO THESE  
VITAL ASPECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

**THAT'S WHAT FILLED THOSE AROUND THEM  
WITH AWE & WONDER.**



**THEY SAW A TOGETHERNESS WITHIN THE  
FAMILY OF FAITH & THEY WANTED IN ON IT.**

**THEY SAW PEOPLE WHO LOVED ONE ANOTHER,  
CARED FOR ONE ANOTHER, SHARED WITH ONE  
ANOTHER & SUPPORTED ONE ANOTHER & THEY  
WANTED TO BE A PART OF IT.**

**THAT'S WHAT HAS ALWAYS DRAWN PEOPLE TO  
THE CHURCH.**

**THERE IS A TOGETHERNESS IN JESUS CHRIST  
THAT CAN'T BE FOUND ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE  
WORLD.**

**IT'S A TOGETHERNESS THAT'S OPEN TO  
EVERYONE.**

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE INVITED TO JOIN.**

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO ACHIEVE A CERTAIN LEVEL  
OF FINANCIAL SECURITY.**

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO HAVE SOCIAL STATUS.**

**THERE'S NO REQUIRED LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE  
OR EVEN UNDERSTANDING.**

**THE TOGETHERNESS WE EXPERIENCE HERE IS  
FOR EVERYONE.**

**CARL SANDBURG WAS ONCE ASKED, "*WHAT IS THE  
UGLIEST WORD IN THE HUMAN LANGUAGE?*"**

**AFTER THINKING FOR A WHILE, HE REPLIED,  
"*THE UGLIEST WORD IN THE HUMAN LANGUAGE IS  
'EXCLUSIVE.'*"**

**ON THE FLIP SIDE, PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST  
BEAUTIFUL WORDS IN THE HUMAN LANGUAGE IS  
"TOGETHER."**

**IN OUR INCREASINGLY ISOLATED & FRAGMENTED  
SOCIETY, WE ALL LONG FOR TOGETHERNESS, DON'T  
WE?**

**WE WANT UNITY.**

**WE WANT FELLOWSHIP.**

**WE WANT TOGETHERNESS.**

**WE WANT TO FEEL LIKE WE BELONG.**

**IRONICALLY, TRAGICALLY &**

**HEARTBREAKINGLY, I'M AFRAID THAT'S NOT WHAT  
THE WORLD SEES OR CONCLUDES WHEN THEY LOOK  
AT THE CHURCH TODAY.**

**THEY DON'T SEE UNITY.**

**THEY DON'T SEE FELLOWSHIP.**

**THEY DON'T SEE TOGETHERNESS.**

**AND, IN SO MANY CASES, THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE  
THEY BELONG.**

**UNFORTUNATELY – FAR TOO OFTEN – THE WORLD  
CONCLUDES THAT THE CHURCH IS MORE  
REPRESENTATIVE OF THAT “UGLIEST WORD IN THE**

**HUMAN LANGUAGE” – EXCLUSIVE – THAN THE  
BEAUTIFUL WORD TOGETHER.**

**NOW WE CAN ARGUE ABOUT THAT ALL WE WANT  
& TRY TO CONVINCING OURSELVES IT ISN'T TRUE, BUT  
THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT A  
SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PEOPLE PERCEIVE THE  
CHURCH AS BEING A PLACE WHERE THE MOST  
NEGATIVE HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS THRIVE.**

**WE'RE ARROGANT, BIGOTED & CLOSE-MINDED.**

**THAT ABOUT COVERS IT – UNLESS YOU WANT TO  
ADD JUDGMENTAL, EXCLUSIVE & HYPOCRITICAL –  
AND, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE  
WHO *WOULD* ADD THOSE TO THEIR LIST OF REASONS  
WHY THEY DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO  
WITH THE CHURCH OR WITH CHRISTIANITY.**

**I TALKED TO A YOUNG PERSON RECENTLY WHO SAID, “YOU KNOW, I USED TO BE REALLY OPEN ABOUT MY CHRISTIAN FAITH. I’D SHARE MY COMMITMENT TO CHRIST WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM. BUT I FIND I’M NOT SO WILLING TO DO THAT ANYMORE BECAUSE IF SOMEONE THINKS I’M A CHRISTIAN, THEY AUTOMATICALLY DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT ME THAT AREN’T AT ALL WHAT I THINK IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN.**

**BUT THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE WHO CLAIM TO BE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WHO SPEW HATRED, FEAR & BIGOTRY AGAINST ANYONE WHO’S DIFFERENT THAT I DON’T STAND A CHANCE OF CONVINCING SOMEONE THAT’S NOT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN.”**

**I PRAY THAT YOUNG PERSON WON’T GIVE UP.  
AND I HOPE YOU WON’T GIVE UP EITHER.**

**THE WORLD DESPERATELY LONGS FOR WHAT  
LUKE TELLS US IN THESE WORDS WAS THE ORIGINAL  
FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH.**

**THERE IS A DEEP HUNGER FOR LOVE &  
ACCEPTANCE WITHIN EACH OF US.**

**WE WANT FELLOWSHIP.**

**WE WANT TOGETHERNESS.**

**THE CHURCH – AT ITS FINEST – CONSISTS OF  
THOSE WITH A “FLAWED PERFECTION” WHO ARE  
DOING THEIR BEST TO LIVE OUT THOSE EARLY  
IDEALS.**

**A RECENT SURVEY REVEALED THAT ONLY ONE IN  
FIVE AMERICANS CLAIMED THEY HAD A REAL FRIEND  
IN WHOM THEY COULD TRULY CONFIDE.**

**THAT’S WHAT MADE THE CHURCH SPECIAL IN ITS EARLIEST DAYS & WHAT CAN STILL MAKE IT SPECIAL IN OURS.**

**IN A WORLD THAT BASES ACCEPTANCE UPON WHAT ONE CAN ACQUIRE, ACCUMULATE & AMASS, THE CHURCH CAN STAND APART.**

**THE CHURCH CAN SHOW BY ITS FELOWSHIP – BY ITS TOGETHERNESS – BY ITS “FLAWED PERFECTION” – THAT THINGS ARE DIFFERENT HERE.**

**IN THE CHURCH, THERE CAN BE LOVE, ACCEPTANCE & FORGIVENESS.**

**NO ONE NEEDS TO FEEL LONELY OR UNWELCOMED OR UNWANTED OR UNLOVED.**

**WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.**

**EVEN THE COMMON & SEEMINGLY MUNDANE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE CAN BECOME *UNCOMMON* &**

**EVEN SACRED WHEN SHARED TOGETHER BECAUSE  
WHAT WE SHARE TOGETHER IS THE POWER AND  
PRESENCE OF THE RISEN CHRIST.**

**WHEN WE STUDY TOGETHER, SERVE TOGETHER,  
WORSHIP TOGETHER & PRAY TOGETHER, WE DO SO  
WITH CHRIST IN OUR MIDST.**

**MAY HIS PRESENCE AMONG US FILL US WITH  
SUCH LOVE & ACCEPTANCE THAT OTHERS WILL BE  
SO IRRESISTIBLY DRAWN TO US THAT THEY, TOO,  
MIGHT EXPERIENCE THE AWE & WONDER OF OUR  
“FLAWED PERFECTION” IN JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.**

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