**The Fellowship of the King**

**Acts 2:37-47 (ESV)**

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Pastor Daniel Sheaffer

Good morning to you who are here in the auditorium and those of you joining us online. My name is Daniel Sheaffer. I’m the new Children and Family minister here. I just want to say thank you to Ritch and Josh for this opportunity to preach the Word this morning. We’re going to be in Acts 2:37-47. This is what the Word of the Lord says.

***37*** *Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”* ***38*** *And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* ***39*** *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* ***40*** *And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”* ***41*** *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

***42*** *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* ***43*** *And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.* ***44*** *And all who believed were together and had all things in common.* ***45*** *And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.* ***46*** *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,* ***47*** *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

In the 1760’s, a man by the name of John Fawcett was converted after hearing the preaching of the famous evangelist, George Whitefield. A few years later, John Fawcett was called to a small, insignificant Baptist church in Yorkshire, in a little town that probably no one has ever heard of called Wainsgate. He was called to be its young pastor. The people were relatively poor. It was located in the middle of the country and John preached there for seven straight and happy years, until one day, he received a call from this large, influential church in the city of London. This church would be able to afford to pay John a salary to support his family. So he accepted the position and began to make the necessary arrangements. Several months later, the day of his departure for London had come. So the church, the few that were there, gathered around. The horses were loaded. The wagons were packed. And the people began to say good-bye. During the middle of their tear-filled good-byes and farewells, John’s wife, Mary, turned to him and said, “John, I cannot bear to leave.” And John said, “Neither can I. We will remain here with our people.” John and Mary stayed at that same small church for the next 50 years, until he retired from ministry. Because of the love that he had for this seemingly insignificant church, he was inspired to write the famous hymn that many of you know, *Blest Be the Tie that Binds*.

Now, sometimes I hear that hymn and I think there has to be a better melody to it. It sounds maybe to some, at least it does to me, (singing the lyrics) “blest be the tie that binds.” It doesn’t sound that exciting. So if someone, maybe Isaac could work in his spare time on finding a different melody, that would, I think, reflect better the blessed union that we have not only with our Lord, but with each other. There are a few other verses to that hymn that go like this.

Before our Father’s throne,

We pour our ardent prayers;

Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,

Our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,

Our mutual burdens bear;

And often for each other flows

The sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part,

It gives us inward pain;

But we shall still be joined in heart,

And hope to meet again.

This glorious hope revives

Our courage by the way;

While each in expectation lives,

And longs to see the day.

From sorrow, toil and pain,

And sin, we shall be free,

And perfect love and friendship will reign

Through all eternity

In reflecting on this hymn, I hope you can see the intertwining of our lives, of our hurts, of our joys, of our pain, of our sorrow, our suffering, our gain. When we’re joined to Christ, we’re joined to each other. We’ve seen even in the last few weeks and months the hurts and the pain that many members in our body have experienced. Scripture calls us to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice. We get to see in Acts chapter 2, these blessed ties that have bound us to Jesus, bound us to His Spirit, bound us to each other, where they were begun. As I was studying this passage, there are four essential elements or ingredients, however you want to say it, of how we can experience true fellowship, and all four are necessary. You can’t have one without the other. All four have to be present if we’re going to enjoy this fellowship.

***37*** *Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”*

This word “cut to the heart” is the only time it’s used in the New Testament. It’s one word even though we translate it as four. It’s used to describe this piercing inward, this thrusting through. This is crucial because this is the exact place where you and I need to come if we would believe in Jesus. For those of you who are here and are listening today, if you have trusted in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you know exactly what I’m talking about. You come to this understanding that you have this

**1. Genuine Sorrow for Sin (v. 37)**

That is the first element. There is a genuine sorrow for sin that must happen before a Holy God before repentance and faith takes place. It has to be so! Who can come to God without having sorrow over his own sin? Beloved, if we’re going to come to Christ, we must call sin what He calls it. We can’t blame-shift like Adam did with Eve and Eve did to the serpent, like Cain and so many others. We have to call sin what Jesus calls it. We can’t justify it. We can’t rationalize it. We can’t disregard it. We can’t minimize it. We have to call it what it is; rebellion against God and worthy of His judgment.

As I as studying this, I had to ask the question: Why were they cut so deeply? Just imagine being present, hearing Peter saying this message. You are in Jerusalem at the Feast of Pentecost and you’re hearing this Jew from Galilee saying this message. “You murdered your own Messiah! The very one that you have been waiting for all this time, you murdered Him!” If you glance back, last week, Ritch preached on this section, but I just want to read it one more time. Look at verse 34.

**Acts 2:34-35** For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”’

This is a famous passage, Psalm 110, that the Israelites would have known well. It teaches that when the Messiah would come, God would take His enemies and make them His footstool. In other words, those who were Jesus’ enemies had no chance. If you’re sitting there listening to Peter and Peter says, “This Messiah, you murdered,” who else would be the Messiah’s enemies than the people that murdered Him? There is nothing worse than this! They murdered their own Messiah, and then secondly, not only that, but God gave the right to Christ to execute judgment.

**Acts 2:36** Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Lord and Christ. You can’t get any higher titles than that. Not only did they murder their Messiah, but God gave Christ the permission to exercise all authority on the Father’s behalf.

**John 5:26-27** For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

**Acts 17:30-31** The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

**Psalm 2:7** As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.

Now look at this!

**Psalm 2:10-12** Now therefore, O Kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son,

In other words, submit to His rule and reign.

**Psalm 2:12** lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

God has put the scepter of authority in Jesus’ hand, and who else would the Messiah want to execute judgment on more than the ones who killed Him?

Now, even though some in this crowd that Peter was preaching to, individually, did not have a specific hand in crucifying Jesus, they needed to understand that they were just as guilty before God as the Romans who put in the nails and the Sanhedrin who gave the guilty verdict. No one is neutral before Jesus!

**Matthew 12:30** Whoever is not with me is against me,

Now, as I was studying this passage and thinking about the Old Testament, I couldn’t help but think about the story of Joseph. If you remember in Genesis chapters 37-50, Pharaoh gives authority to Joseph to rule and to reign, and what Joseph says goes. You know that Pharaoh believes it as well. Well, Joseph’s brothers, during a famine, come down to buy food. After several tense back and forth exchanges, Joseph finally revealed who he was to his brothers. And what was their response? They were afraid. They realized that the very one that they sold into slavery, they lied about his death, and they assumed by now that Joseph was dead after these twenty or so years. They now realized the predicament that they find themselves in, that their fate lay in the very hands of the one that they left for dead. And worse, Peter’s hearers were at the mercy of the one they killed, but who rose from the dead.

Well Joseph, if you know the story, showed his brothers mercy. And Christ has shown them and shown us even more. What man meant for evil, God meant for good. So today, if you’re listening, whether it’s here in the sanctuary or listening online, if you do not know Christ today, if you have not bowed the knee to the rightful reigning king, you are just as guilty as these because you have sinned against a holy God. You are in rebellion against His Son and I pray that this same genuine sorrow that Peter’s hearers experienced pierces your own heart and that you would turn to Christ. Trust in Him. Ask for the forgiveness of your sins and He will do it.

I pray that you wouldn’t turn to Him just because you fear the consequences of sin, even though there is an element of that. Not just sorrow for getting caught or know that you will, but a sorrow for the sin and the offense itself and the breach that it’s caused between you and God. But for those of us who do know Christ, those of us who have been redeemed and purchased by His blood, your sins are forgiven. Your sins are washed. What joy and what hope is yours this morning! And even still, sometimes our joy in this can be diluted. Sometimes we don’t enjoy this abundant life in Christ that He offers us here and now, whether it’s through disobedience, a lack of belief, or the reality that we are still living in the flesh. Hopefully, we sin less and less as our spirit and our soul and our body, we are all wholly being sanctified, and that we would trust in Christ’s saving work. I love Romans 8:1! It says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Well, genuine sorrow for sin is the first element in order to have true fellowship. The second is

**2. Genuine Repentance and Faith (v. 38-41)**

***38*** *And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* ***39*** *For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* ***40*** *And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”* ***41*** *So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.*

This is the best question to ask! This is the best question, if you would be saved, what shall we do? Now, sometimes this question gets a bad reputation because some will suppose that you contribute or you do something to your salvation. Maybe in some sense there is some of that. But this question “what shall we do?” actually is a great question because it gives the person who is proclaiming the gospel the chance to say you don’t do anything. You simply repent and believe.

Now in verse 38, it says repent and be baptized. So just for a second, I want to mention that baptism, the act in and of itself, going down into the water and coming out, that physical act does not have any saving value. If we compare Scripture with Scripture, if you look at Romans 10:9-11, many of you know this.

**Romans 10:9** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, (and be baptized) you will be saved.

No. It says to believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead and you will be saved. There is no reference to baptism in Romans 10. What about Acts 10? Well, you have the Gentiles and this is what Peter says.

**Acts 10:47-48** “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized…

So you have salvation, the gift of the Spirit, and then they are physically baptized. The Philippian jailer as well. Paul and Silas say, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”

And Paul says in

**1 Corinthians 1:17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel,

So baptism does nothing for someone if they have not repented and trusted in Christ. It has no saving value, but that doesn’t mean that it’s not significant, incredibly so. Baptism is the outward symbol of this inward reality that our old self has died and went into the waters of baptism, identified with Christ in His burial and then in His resurrection. It’s the visible that is portraying the invisible. It displays our union with Christ. It displays our renunciation of the world. And it is a public identification with Jesus.

So we have to ask if we’re looking at this passage, what would this have meant for Peter’s hearers? If you are Jewish and Peter is saying to repent and be baptized, we have to understand how they would have heard this. Well, Jews were used to the concept of water as a means to purify yourselves. If you remember in the Old Testament, you had all of these cleansings and washings and more were added as you kept going throughout the centuries. So they would perform washings, whether it’s going into the temple or before a festival or as a means of washing themselves for specific sins. But what was so different about this one is what a full immersion was for. Now, in the 1st Century, there was only one thing that a full immersion was for, and it was not for the Jew. It was for the Gentile that was proselytizing from whatever they were following before, to accept the faith of Judaism. So if you were a Gentile proselyte and you wanted to become a Jew, if you wanted to be grafted into the Jewish people, you had to go through a full immersion. And Peter here demands a conversion that is no less radical than a pagan that is coming to the Jewish faith. And get this! What Peter is saying is that Jews must come to Jesus the same way as Gentiles. Jews needed the same amount of cleansing as Gentiles did.

There is no distinction for how you come to Jesus. You and I are in desperate need of cleansing no matter who you are, no matter what you’ve done. Everyone comes equally to the foot of the cross. It doesn’t matter what ethnicity you’re from, what culture, what family history, what social status or otherwise. No one can claim anything to earn or merit their acceptance. Only Jesus! So hopefully, you begin to see what Peter is asking of his Jewish brothers to do. This would have been an extreme and a public conversion. It would have demanded that they take on a new identity. It didn’t mean that they lost their ethnic heritage, but it meant that they have now found something that takes preeminence as to what is their primary identity; Jesus. Jew and Gentile alike had to humble themselves in the exact same way and claim nothing other than that they belonged to Jesus, publicly. Do you remember what Paul says? He gives a list in Philippians 3 about being a Hebrew of Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, and he says that it is all worthless apart from Christ.

**Matthew 10:32-33** So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

**Matthew 10:38-39** And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

John MacArthur, a pastor in Los Angeles, says in regards to this passage that there are no secret disciples. If you are to claim Christ, you must claim Him publicly. Jesus demands the same of you and the same of me. If we want to come to Him, we must come to Him the same way. We can’t hold onto our previous life, our previous ways, our sin, our love of the world, the love in worship, of anything else. One thing that I’ve learned time and time again and that Christ keeps working in me is that He will have all of me or He will have none of me.

Do you remember the rich young ruler? He comes to Jesus. He thinks that he is righteous and he says, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” It’s the right question. Jesus says, “Take all you have, give to the poor and come and follow me.” Now Jesus isn’t saying here to everyone that they must give up and renounce their personal property if they’re going to follow Jesus. What Jesus is saying is that if there is something standing in your way, no matter what it is, Jesus will have full reign and authority in your life. Anything that you hold dear, you can’t hold it more dear than following Jesus. You must be willing to give up anything to follow Him. Beloved, He is not a God who shares worship. You must repent. You must deny yourself. You must take up your cross and follow after Him.

There is a great cost to following Jesus, but there is a great reward. Those of us who have been following Jesus, whether it’s a few months ago, a few weeks ago, or for fifty years, think of what you receive; salvation, redemption, blessing, cleansing. You are declared righteous. You’re given a new family, a new faith, a new home, fellowship with God, the gift of His presence. If you look in your Bibles down at verse 38, after repenting and being baptized in the name of Jesus, you receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. The Jews have been longing for that for decades and centuries.

If you’re listening this morning, whether here or online, and you don’t know Christ, you might say, “You don’t know what I’ve done. You don’t know where I’ve been. You don’t know what I’ve thought or said or done.” Jesus offers forgiveness to the very same people, the very same nation that killed Him. So you have no excuse. There is hope.

Well, I want to mention something real quick today. Look at verse 41. There were added that day how many souls? 3,000. That’s a massive amount of people. That’s double of what we have in our church. However, if you look back and you see what the amount of people is who would have been in Jerusalem at this time of Pentecost, at this great feast, there would have been upwards of over a million people in Jerusalem. Those of you who are mathematicians, or at least more gifted in math than I am, which is probably most of you, that averages out to less than one percent. It’s actually a quarter of a percent of people who were in Jerusalem or around Jerusalem at that time, that believed the message. So even though the church grew in leaps and bounds this day and days afterward, there are not very many who actually believed Jesus’ message. It’s true that narrow is the way to eternal life, and there are few who find it.

God is concerned with the quality of believer rather than the quantity. If Peter would have maybe made his message more digestible, you are able to swallow it a little bit better than “you murdered your own Messiah.” You were maybe able to swallow it a little bit better than, “wait a minute! I have to come to Jesus just like a Gentile does?” Maybe he would have had more people come to get wet, but he wouldn’t have had true, genuine believers. 3,000 souls!

Well, there is another story, and for the sake of time, we won’t go there today, but in Exodus 32, you remember the story of the golden calf. Moses goes up onto the mountain and receives the words of the Law. And he comes down and he sees the people had made a golden calf and were worshiping it and saying, “This is the god that took you out of Egypt. This is the god who brought you out from Pharaoh. This is the god who cares for you. This is the god who is with you.” Moses comes down and he sees what is happening and there is judgment that must take place. So Moses says anyone who is on the Lord’s side, come to me. The tribe of Levi comes to Moses and Moses tells them to go and kill your fellow brothers, your Israelite brothers, because of their wickedness. And it was rightly deserved. And there fell that day how many souls? About 3,000.

Now, if you compare the two stories, you have the Passover in Egypt. You have about fifty days or so until they get to Sinai. And then you have 3,000 perish. But this time, what we have is we have the Passover where Jesus says, “Wait a minute! This is my body. This is my blood.” Fifty days later, Pentecost comes and instead of 3,000 dying, you have 3,000 being saved because the new covenant has come. Forgiveness has come. Instead of God looking at us and seeing our sin, now for those of us who repent, he says, “mercy.”

**2 Corinthians 3:6b** For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The letter, which is the Law, kills, but the Spirit gives life. We know that the Law was good. The Law itself was not evil, but our own hearts. Christ has saved us and has redeemed us. Well, let’s look at the third essential for true fellowship.

**3. Genuine Devotion to God’s People (v. 42-44)**

***42*** *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.* ***43*** *And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.* ***44*** *And all who believed were together and had all things in common.*

There is a current belief that you can have Jesus without His church, that you can have Jesus whether you’re on the golf course or whether you’re at the beach or whether you’re at the coffee shop, and have nothing to do with the life of other believers. It’s just you and Jesus. This is very clearly individualism of the proudest kind and it has no place within authentic biblical Christianity. The Bible’s clear witness is that I need you and you need me. You can’t belong to Christ without His Bride. As they say on television and commercials, it’s a package deal.

There are four ways that this early church showed their devotion. The first is the apostles teaching. They submitted themselves to Scripture. You can’t expect to grow in your faith without submitting to and obeying the Bible. Show me a church that undermines God’s Word and says that His Word actually doesn’t say what it says, but is godly? That’s not possible. Jesus says, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.” I’ve seen, and my wife Lindsey has seen such a desire in this church to know the Scripture and to love the Word. It is such a joy to see and we’re so excited to be here. Well, they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching.

Second, they devoted themselves to the fellowship. They were united with the same mission, the same bond of unity.

**Ephesians 4:4-6** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Do you see what Paul is doing? He is showing all of the ways that we are united, and so we are to share and to show that. Fellowship!

Third is the breaking of bread. They showed no partiality. How do I know this? Well, breaking of bread together meant that they shared meals together and they shared the Lord’s Supper together. It’s in reference to both. So these meals, especially during this time, were to show what kind of people you hung out with. It’s similar today, but maybe not as apparent, but you only shared a table with those of similar status and beliefs as you. For the church to show table fellowship no matter who you were, no matter where you were from, wasn’t based on the societal status or anything else, but on the unity with Christ.

Fourth, they expected God to work; the prayers. This would have been psalms. This would have been prayers they learned at synagogue and spontaneous prayers all offered up to God, but now through Jesus Christ. We see what happens in verse 43. There is awe, fear, holy reverence at what God was doing. And we see God work. There are many ways we see God work today, and that should instill within us a sense of awe that God is really among us. God is truly among us, saving people, transforming people. This is a model for you and for me to ask, am I devoted to the Word? Am I devoted to true fellowship and bonding with brothers and sisters over what God has done? Am I eager to love and identify with people who are different than me, who may not have the same social status, maybe a personality that I don’t necessarily like, maybe a different background or a different history or make different decisions than I would make. We are united in Christ.

**4. Genuine Love (v. 45-47)**

***45*** *And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.* ***46*** *And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,* ***47*** *praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Now, this is not supporting the kind of communal living of where we take all of our personal property, throw it in a pot, and then see what happens. The point is that believers who had their private property, had their possessions, if they saw a need, no matter who it was, no matter what believer, if they named the name of Jesus Christ and were following Him, they held all their things with an open hand. “You need food? You need shelter? You need lodging? You need this? You need that? Great! I’ll go sell this field. I’ll sell this house. I’ll give you food from my table. Here’s an extra bed.” They were not stingy. This is such a good reminder for me. Sometimes I’m tempted to hold onto these things because I think I’ve earned it. I deserve it. It’s my private property. It’s my money. It’s not! We’re just a steward. What you see in these last few verses with the remaining time that we have, is the generosity, the gladness and joy, and the growth that God gave. I have already seen and my wife has already seen the generosity that you have provided for us, the generosity between each other, the gladness and the joy that you experience. And Lord willing, the growth that we’ll experience of many coming to saving faith. So I pray that this is our continual experience of church life. Don’t you want that?

Brothers and sisters, I pray that this would be our experience. I know that especially right now, it is difficult and it is hard to have fellowship sometimes. It is hard when we’re stuck at home. It is hard when there is a pandemic happening. But I pray and hope that we would hold onto this promise that this is how the church is supposed to be. I pray that we can experience this to the fullness of where we are at right now. Whether it’s going and visiting each other outside of the home, whether it’s being in homes, whether it’s being at church, I pray that we would experience this generosity, this gladness, this growth, because Christ has redeemed us. He has given us His Spirit. He has given us forgiveness of sins and we can enjoy true fellowship with each other. If we have sorrow over sin, genuine repentance and faith, devoting ourselves to these very things that this first church devoted themselves to, I promise God will work. God will work and He has already been working. And we will be a church just like John Fawcett in *Blest Be the Tie* *that Binds*, who turns something down in order to have something so great and lasting.