

Acts 4:32-35

32 Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. 33 With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. 35 They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need (NRSV).

Introduction

In Acts chapter 3 Peter healed a beggar that was crippled from birth. In Acts chapter 4 Peter and John are speaking to the people at the temple. The priests and the Sadducees are disturbed by this because the apostles are teaching and proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus. So, they seize Peter and John and put them in jail. Then they bring them to the high priest for questioning. The High Priest asks them "By what power or what name did you do this?" Peter gives a very powerful testimony "By the name of Jesus Christ whom you crucified but God raised from the dead." The High Priest and the others could not say or do anything because the man who had been healed was standing there. They could not deny the miracle, the power of the miracle, or the source of the miracle. Everyone in Jerusalem knew about it. So, the High Priest warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Peter's response is that he has a choice to either obey them or obey God and he has to do what is right; he cannot help but speak about what they have seen and heard. Then Peter and John return to the people and pray to God.

This brings us to today's Scripture. In a less than ideal environment we see an example of the ideal church. The whole group was of one heart and one soul. The New Testament church is the way the church should be with everybody of one heart and one soul. The only way that I can think of that will allow us all to possibly be of one heart and one soul is if everyone was committed to and focused on Jesus centered theology. Our doctrine of faith is the preaching, teaching, and action of Jesus. It is our human preferences that keep this from happening. It was also the ideal church because there was not a needy person among them. They shared everything in common. This is the ideal situation because everybody is looking out for everyone else.

If someone came up to you and asked "What is Christianity?" What would you say? You would probably fumble with the answer because that is a hard question to answer. You may start with something like "Christianity is a matter of accepting Jesus as your Savior" or "Christianity is people that believe in Christ." We could build up our explanation from there. "Christianity is a collective religious group based on the Bible and a religious system headed by Jesus the Christ." But it is more. It is based on the divinity of Christ, having full confidence that Jesus is the Son of God. Christianity is a religious system that is committed to the teachings of Christ and requires acting upon his instructions.

So this brings us to the title of this message *Christianity in Action*. Christianity is not belief by itself. Christianity is belief and a response to that belief. Responding to Christ is probably what I preach on the most. Each one of these is a sermon in itself. We respond to our faith when we obey the New Commandment to love one another. It is not just a matter of loving one another but to love each other as Jesus loves us. This is to love others completely without judging and without conditions. We respond to our faith when we live by the Golden Rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That, of course, is easier said than done. But it

is one rule that must be followed. We respond to our faith when we follow all the lessons of Matthew chapter 5, Luke chapter 6, and Matthew chapter 25. These chapters are loaded with valuable lessons on the treatment of others. We respond to our faith when we go and make disciples, not just preach & teach about Jesus, but teach them to obey everything that Jesus has taught us. And we are respond to Christ when we partake of the Holy Communion. So, Christianity in action is you and me working together in harmony for God's glory here on earth, serving the world around us in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.