

## **“Go to Church or Be the Church”**

**Acts 2:42-47; John 13:31-35**

**Do I have to go to churrrrch?**

**Is a question parents are sometimes asked.**

**And the answers vary.**

**Sometimes the answer is “As long as you are living in my house...**

**Other times it might be “You can sleep in this one day...”**

**Still another might be “If you go to church we will go out to eat.”**

**I heard an interesting approach from one set of parents.**

**They told their children if they didn’t want to go to church**

**Then they had to be the church-**

**So these little kids would work up a worship service,**

**And they would be the worship leaders for their family.**

**It seemed like a good parenting to me but also good theology.**

**I think that our heavenly father might also share that sentiment.**

**I think God would also says to us:**

**“I don’t want you to GO to church...I want you to BE the church.”**

**Just look at today’s scripture lesson.**

**Some have taken this passage in Acts of the early church**

**As a template for Christian worship:**

**There is the gathering of the community in Fellowship of Christ;**

**There is Apostolic teaching-**

**that's the reading of Scripture and sermon;**

**There is the breaking of bread in our shared communion meal;**

**There are prayers that surround every part of the service;**

**There is the offering- "sharing all that they had";**

**And there is the going out to serve-**

**"Signs and wonders being done by the apostles."**

**It does give us a pretty good outline for worship**

**But that's not the purpose of Acts 2:42-47.**

**The purpose is not to create a place that would substitute**

**For the temple worship that they were still doing.**

**The purpose was to bring their faith alive in their everyday life.**

**The beginning phrase "They devoted themselves..."**

**Is the Greek word "proskarterontes" means: " to be devoted to;**

**to continue steadfastly; remain constant; continue faithfully"**

**It is not something you do once a week or even twice a week,**

**It's not a place you go to every once in a while;**

**It is something you do, a people you are ALL THE TIME.**

**And it makes all the difference in the world.**

**We don't go to church to be entertained or to be taught.**

**We go to worship God. God is the focal point.**

**If there is an audience at worship- it is God**

**And each of us is an active participant.**

**Michael Lindvall made this point in his book "Geography of God"**

**"What did you get out of that service?"**

**Is the wrong question to ask.**

**The better question Lindvall challenges us is:**

**"What do you lose in that service? What burden did you drop at  
the foot of the cross? What pride did you shed?**

**What gnawing anger are you going home without?**

**What lie do you no longer believe?**

**Worship is the ultimate reality show because it is the new reality that**

**God offers in Christ and us as supporting actors**

**coming face to face with that new reality.**

**It is us being changed, transformed by the Holy Spirit.**

**And so when someone asks you "Do you go to church?"**

**The answer is: "No, we are the church." That's a bold thing**

**but that's what Acts 2 really is about- being the church,**

**Being the Body of Christ, as the Paul would say.**

**We are constant learners and teachers in the faith;**

**We are an active part of the Koinonia of the church which is the:**

**“fellowship, partnership, sharing, community of Christ”;**

**The word implies that we are participators not spectators-**

**Being the church is a “full participation sport.”**

**Our eating is part of our being the church- thank God!**

**Since our fellowship dinners are legendary here,**

**But it has other dimensions as well- our eating**

**Is where we form community and like Jesus**

**We don't always eat with the same folks**

**But we break bread with strangers**

**Who become friends in Christ;**

**And our eating is part of our being the church so every time**

**we eat we remember Christ in prayer and fellowship,**

**“Do this in remembrance of me” wasn't a call**

**To only remember Jesus at church but**

**Whenever and with whoever we break bread.**

**I even came up with a catchy bumper sticker way to remember**

**How to be the church according to Acts 2:42, 43:**

***“In Prayer we Dare to Share and Care”.***

**I think it speaks about the mission and ministry & heart of this church.**

**The preaching and teaching is our daring to listen to Jesus**

**And to take Jesus call seriously and to act prophetically.**

**“Not as the world says, say I unto you...”**

**The Prayer is the realization that worship and prayer are a part**

**of every meeting we have, every meal we eat, every**

**mission we do and every healing we experience.**

**The sharing is our fellowship in Christ that binds us together**

**As a community; we’re not alone;**

**And our caring is our breaking bread, making sacrifices for**

**Those in need after the image and model of Christ.**

**Sadly we’re good at being undercover Christians.**

**We had incredible and moving Holy Week services**

**that only we knew about, and only we attended.**

**I was talking to our worship chair about getting the word out**

**about our summer contemporary worship**

**“Sunday Night Live at Five”;**

**OR how do we get the word out about our K-plus program that**

**reaches out to kids in need or the summer feeding program**

**that our church is spearheading his summer;**

**OR our trips to Peru or our Hungarian sister-in-Christ, Hiena,**

**Who is visiting us this summer;**

**OR our ecumenical Day Camp that brings people from 4 churches**

**To reach out in our community in Christ;**

**This is how “Through Prayer we Dare to Share and Care”.**

**Do you go to Church? No, we are the church!!**

**And yet the only headline we seem to get as Presbyterians is**

**When our Ordination Standards are restored to their**

**Historic language and intent- to allow God’s call**

**To be discerned and encouraged in the church.**

**Jesus gave us pretty good guidance about recognizing true disciples.**

***“By this everyone will know you are my disciples...***

***if you have love for one another.”***

**Jesus boils down my bumper sticker:**

**IN PRAYER WE DARE TO SHARE AND CARE**

**To one word, one commandment,**

**and that commandment is- LOVE!**

**You got it, now DO it or better yet BE it.**

**And if someone asks you “Are you going to church?”**

**You can say: “NO, we ARE the church”      Amen**