



Week 4
April 22-28

"Community & Fellowship"

Sunday

Acts 2:42 *"The disciples devoted themselves to ... fellowship"*

This week we focus on the community assembled around Jesus. The fellowship of Jesus consists of an amalgam of people who share their love for Jesus and each other. Jesus is the center. As we proceed, we will touch upon the centrality of Jesus Christ in the community.

You may be doing these devotions on your own. These devotions can be additionally effective when shared and discussed with others.

Pastor Keith

Thanks be to thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which thou hast given us; for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for us. O most merciful Redeemer, friend, and brother, may we know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, for thine own sake. Amen.

Richard of Chichester, England, 13th century.

Monday

John 10:11-18

Jesus calls himself the "Good Shepherd."

Like a flock of sheep, communities of people are gathered by the Good Shepherd, protected by the Good Shepherd, fed by the Good Shepherd and led by the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd devoted himself to provide for his people and, when needed, sacrificed himself for their welfare.

When you ask him, Jesus will become your Good Shepherd. You may sense his care for you even before you agree to follow him. Ask Jesus to do for you what the Good Shepherd willingly does for all his people.

How could you help another person find his or her way to the Good Shepherd? As we help others discover Jesus, the fellowship of Jesus grows.

Prayer: Good Shepherd, thank you for caring for me. Help me to trust your care for myself and those I love. Let me see the flock you are gathering and celebrate with all you come to you. Amen.

Tuesday

1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 33-34.

Fellowship is respectful and inclusive of others. It is never kept to ourselves or, by definition, it ceases to exist. Pride and selfishness destroy fellowship. We read in today's text several complaints Paul lists to the Corinthian congregation. As you read them, note the motive that leads to the criticized behavior. Do you see pride and selfishness? Disregard for others? Spite?

Prayer: As you pray today, ask Jesus to show you where you are prideful or selfish. Does your attitude hurt the church? Ask him to change your attitudes where needed. Ask God to forgive and heal that attitude and the hurt relationships it has caused. A community that heals others experiences the Lord's healing itself.

Wednesday

Luke 23:32-43

The arrogance of sin is on full display as people gather around Jesus on the cross. Sounds and silences of mocking, cursing, indifference, callousness, and false accusations fill the air. Yet one person is different. The repentant thief correctly assesses his own situation and asks Jesus for help. Imagine asking a dying man to remember you when he gets his kingdom?

Many people heard and experienced the events of Good Friday as Jesus died on the cross. Very few grasped the gravity of the situation or the possibilities of the moment. At least one person did. When the door of opportunity is open, some unlikely people will show up.

Do you grasp the possibility of Jesus intersecting your life today?

Jesus hung on the cross for the thief. And for you. Ask him, he will bring you into his kingdom. His kingdom is an eternal fellowship that begins at the cross.

Prayer: Savior and King, I am unworthy to be in your presence. But, trusting you, I dare approach. Please cover me with your forgiveness and allow me a place in your kingdom and fellowship with you and your followers. Amen.

Thursday

John 13:21-35

Judas' disobedience resulted in his own death, isolation and infamy.

Jesus' obedience resulted in his death and his glory. By obeying the Father out of love, he gathered community around himself.

Christian community is characterized by (obedient) love. Love one another!

Ask God to help you love him so much that you quickly and completely obey him. Obedience demonstrates love. Obedient love will change a community.

Prayer: Loving Brother, help us love one another as you love us. Help us to love you as you love the Father. For you glory, we offer our love and obedience. Amen.

Friday

Luke 24:1-12

The women were looking for the living Christ among the dead. Jesus Christ is alive! The Living God will surprise us.

When Jesus does something, we may not understand what happened. People in Jesus' community will run to see what Jesus is doing and will investigate. We never stop learning and experiencing more of Jesus.

Prayer: Dear Resurrected Living God, how often am I looking for you in the wrong places! Help me remain open to you and to welcome everyone of your surprises. Amen.

Saturday

Jesus is revealed, made known and experienced in the community of his followers.

The community is gathered by the crucified and resurrected Good Shepherd. He brings us together, teaches us to love, and gives us the gift of fellowship and community.

Some followers in Jesus' community seem undeserving and unlikely. Others are unruly and ungrateful. Still others are arrogant or too lazy to understand. The Good Shepherd invites them to himself. Those who come are welcomed into his community, which is the Church. There we learn and behave as people who are loved and love, and who have a people to belong to.

Pray for continuing growth of love in our congregation.

Thank you.