7-13 April 2024 Living as a generous community

Acts 4: 32-35

### The Believers Share Their Possessions

**32**All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. **33**With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all **34**that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales **35**and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

**Bible notes**

After Peter and John are threatened by the authorities and told ‘not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus’ (4:18), the believers pray that they may speak with boldness while ‘signs and wonders are performed’ in the name of Jesus. They were again ‘filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness’ (4:30-31).

This second outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in response to prayer, encourages us to think of Pentecost not only as a past event but also a present experience for a people of prayer. The first outpouring in Acts is particularly associated with evangelism (2:41,47), and this second outpouring is associated with the generous sharing in today’s passage that follows on immediately. Noted by many early Christian writers, there is a strong connection established here between evangelism, speaking with boldness, and healing, performing signs and wonders. This is not surprising given the squalor in which so many people lived. Poverty and disability, pollution and sickness, social exclusion and malnutrition, unemployment and mental affliction are interlinked.

This is the important social context of the wondrous signs of the healing power of God. They are securely rooted in the common life of the apostolic community. The preaching of God’s word is accompanied by the embodiment of God’s generosity. So, isolation gives way to time together, hunger is satisfied by shared meals, and basic needs are met by the distribution of possessions.

### ****Reflection****

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

A family was moving into a new home. The husband went down with bronchitis. The wife was overwhelmed with the unpacking, the needs of two boys under five, a sick cat, piles of washing and getting meals. The local church stepped in with food and practical help. The washing was taken away and was returned clean and ironed. They immediately felt loved and welcomed. Hospitality isn’t just food; it is love in action, in any and every way required. What might this mean in practice, and in this place, for us?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* In what practical ways does your church community show God’s love and generosity to others?
* What challenges come with sharing?
* What needs could your church help to meet in the local community?

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## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

#### **A prayer of praise**

Praise to God who from the birth of time has enriched the world and all its people.
Praise to God whose love is poured out in abundance for each and every one of us.
Praise to God who calls us and guides us as a shepherd to his sheep.
Praise to God for unending patience and perseverance.
Praise to God for forgiveness and renewal.
Praise to God for the world around us, rich and diverse.
Praise to God for the community of people around us who make us the people we are.
Praise to God for the gift of insight and hearts feeling strangely warmed.
Praise to God for the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell with us and within us.
Praise to God, Praise to God.

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Lord, your generous love was showered upon us in Jesus.
Help us to be generous to those among whom we live or meet.
Guide us in building and becoming a generous community, as we seek to put our faith into action.
We ask this in Jesus’ name and for his sake.
**Amen.**