

09.25.11 / Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37

PLEASE NOTE:

For the foreseeable future, the Curriculum Guide will be a little different from our typical format. We are trying some new approaches as we make the shift to match the schedules of the Durham and Raleigh East campuses in our weekly study of Scripture. The guide will be closely linked with the actual sermon and will include sermon notes, application questions, and a section on prayer.

Sermon Notes

A kingdom always reflects the desires of the king's heart, not the hearts of the people in the kingdom. In Acts 2 and 4 we see an incredible picture of the kingdom of God taking shape. God's kingdom is where God is King, and as He moves in the hearts of those who have confessed Christ as Lord and who are learning to desire what their King desires, what we see is an ever clearer picture of God's heart, a heart that sacrifices, that gives, that loves, that unites, that welcomes, that saves. Beautiful.

God is sovereign, doing what He wants to do when He wants to do it. We'll look more closely at what God desires shortly, but for now we can say that God desires that every wayward human, which is all of us when we are without Him, would return to Him. For those of us who have been saved, we will be asked how we conducted ourselves as part of God's kingdom, how we stewarded the new life that has been given to us, and our hope here is that we would steward well this gift of participation in the kingdom of God.

Church consumerism is simply looking for the perfect church environment that we can enjoy. At the heart of this is selfishness, which is very much in opposition to the servant heart of our King. As agents of God, ambassadors sent into a broken world to bring hope and good news from the King, we have been offered the remarkable privilege of having God actually work through us and manifest His goodness and gifts to those who, like us, need to hear the message of His goodness and actually taste His provision firsthand in a very human way. This can and should drive us to work heartily right where God has us to love and serve the body of Christ. Again, a kingdom always reflects the desires of the King, and our actions will ultimately reflect who and what it is that we love most. Loving Christ will lead us away from self-centered church hopping for the sake of our own pleasure and instead point us toward hearty engagement in our local church, seeking restoration, redemption, sound doctrine, and everything that comes with being a healthy church, doing so with great humility (because our King, who is the picture of humility, desires for us to be humble as He is humble).

There is a tendency to treat Acts 2 like we would treat a recipe, believing that if we simply do all these things, then we'll get the outcomes we're looking for. But the truth is that because people will do anything and everything necessary to protect the central desire of their lives, we can take any number of actions, but the fruit that will actually come to bear will be a reflection of our hearts' desires. For example, if growth is the central desire of a church, that church will do anything to protect growth. If being hip and trendy is the central desire of a church, that church will do anything to protect the hip trendiness of their church. The same goes for tradition, financial prosperity, speaking in tongues, or anything else. In fact, things that may be very good can often be either destructive or fruitless if they are central desires that replace God's central desires. So, we can follow the recipe in Acts 2 and 4 all we want, but unless or until our central desires are in line with God's desires, the fruit borne will not be the fruit we see in these passages. In other words, what truly IS central must be what is ACTUALLY central in our church.

In Acts 2 and 4, these things were being done not because they just thought they were good ideas and that they would be beneficial. Instead, they were being done because the people doing them were part of a KINGDOM, ruled by

their KING, and a kingdom always reflects the heart of the KING, not the heart of the people – they lived these things out because they knew the KING, and they knew that these ways were the ways of the KING Himself.

At Vintage21 Church, we too want to see these things happen. We truly want to create an environment where things look like what we see in Acts 2 and 4. But how can we do this without treating these verses as a recipe, and why on earth would we suppose that the same things we see happening in Acts 2 and 4 can happen right here, right now? Because we believe the same thing the early followers believed – we believe that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, and with this faith as a central value, we live with Jesus as our KING, in other words, reflecting the desires of our KING's heart, not our own.

This brings us to ask the question, "What does our King Jesus desire?" A short, non-exclusive list from Scripture shows us that He desires that no one who's ever been created would be apart from Him, that He desires that every person who doesn't know Him might see that He has done all the work to bring them home to the Father, and that He desires to see those who love Him as KING be used to bring others into His Kingdom. He desires life, light, order, unity. He desires healing, restoration, redemption, provision. He desires wholeness, inclusion, advocacy, and peace. Jesus desires that we would love one another as He has loved us and that we would share the King's good news with those who don't yet know it.

While we can't treat Acts 2 and 4 like a recipe, we can live like Jesus is our King, and when we do, as His Holy Spirit changes us, HIS desires start to become our desires, and we live like Him all the more, abiding in Him, seeing Spiritual fruit born as we become more and more like HIM. The early church opened the Scriptures because JESUS had opened the Scriptures, and so do we. The early church listened to the teaching of those who had been with Jesus face to face because their words brought life, and so do we. The early church sold their things and gave away the proceeds to those in need because JESUS gave everything so that others could have life, as a remembrance of what Jesus has done for them, and again, so do we. In all these cases, the desires of those in the kingdom of God are reflecting the desires of the KING. The Father desires for this city to be transformed, the Son has already done everything for the transformation of the city to be received, and the Spirit comes as a missionary Spirit to send you into the city so that the completed work of Jesus might be known and the desire and the will of the Father might be accomplished. May the work of our hands reflect the desires of our King.

Application Questions (these suggested questions are in no particular order)

- Where do you see one another's lives most clearly reflecting the desires of the KING?
- Where do you see your life reflecting your own desires instead of God's desires?
- How have you tasted the Lord's joy when living by His desires?
- How will you personally respond to the greatness of Jesus this week (prayer, finances, sharing the good news with someone) – remember, this is not a recipe; it is a response to the greatness of Jesus?
- Where is there the most room for your Community Group to grow in desiring what our King desires?

Prayer

- That God would build our church into a people who truly reflects the desires of our KING
- That God would plant churches throughout our great cities that reflect the desires of our KING
- That the Father would draw people to Himself through His church
- That we would see great numbers of people being saved