

## The Acts of the Apostles

Lesson: 3

Topic: The Church Lives from the Divine Service

Reading: Acts 2:36-47

### *Review*

#### Verses 37-41

- QUESTION: Where did Peter direct those who were “cut to the heart” by the preaching of both Law and Gospel on Pentecost?
  - Repentance and Baptism
- QUESTION: What is repentance?
  - To be turned away from your sins, through the preaching of the Law and Gospel, to faith in Christ’s word of forgiveness.
- QUESTION: What does the verb “be baptized” indicate about Holy Baptism?
  - It’s a passive verb. Baptism is God’s word and something He does.
- QUESTION: What does the phrase “be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” teach us?
  - That Jesus is the saving content of baptism.
- QUESTION: According to verses 38 and 39, what is the promise of Holy Baptism and for whom is it intended?
  - The forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness that Christ won for the entire world on the cross is poured out in the waters of Holy Baptism.
  - All people, even children.
- QUESTION: How does the Lord call sinners to faith?
  - The Holy Spirit calls me by the Gospel, enlightens me with His gifts... (Small Catechism, Third Article of the Creed).

### *Scripture Analysis*

#### Verse 42

- QUESTION: Who is the “they” and what did they do?
  - Those who were baptized on Pentecost.
  - They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
  - This devotion wasn’t a one-time thing, but was continual adherence and was done so with persistence.
- “Apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”
  - Apostles Teaching (Doctrine)
    - This individuals remained steadfast in the Apostles’ teaching, which is actually Christ’s teaching.
    - Christ sends out the Apostles to teach all that He commanded them (Matt. 28:20).
    - “The Holy Spirit led the baptized to continue steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles. In that teaching God fed them the new life He had given them in Holy Baptism. The devotion of the baptized to the apostles’ doctrine was not one choice among many, but it was the very means by

which the Holy Spirit continued to bring Christ [and His gifts] to them.”  
(Wieting, Blessings of Every Sunday Communion, 33-34).

- Breaking of Bread
  - This is St. Luke’s way of describing the Lord’s Supper. (See also Luke 24:35.)
  - It would include both elements: bread and the wine.
    - The Apology to the Augsburg Confession states, “Although we do not object if some interpret these passages as referring to the Sacrament, it does not make sense that only one part of the Sacrament was given. According to the ordinary usage of language, naming one part also means the other” (Ap. XXII 7).
    - In the Lord’s Supper, Christ gives us both His body and blood to eat and to drink. He doesn’t intend for them to be separated.
  - “The Holy Spirit led the baptized to continue steadfastly in the Lord’s Supper with devotion equal to their commitment to God’s holy Word. It wasn’t a new law. Nor was it one choice among many. Rather, like the apostles’ doctrine, the breaking of the bread was the very means by which the Holy Spirit continued to bring Christ [and His benefits] to the baptized. In that eating, God fed the new life He had gifted them with in Holy Baptism” (Wieting, Blessings of Every Sunday Communion, 34).
- Fellowship
  - Defined simply as oneness or communion with one another.
  - Apostles’ Teaching
    - Christ’s teaching causes/creates fellowship, that is oneness or communion.
    - No other doctrine is allowed, since that would destroy fellowship.
  - Breaking of the Bread
    - It’s through the receiving of the Lord’s Supper by which that fellowship is celebrated.
    - Fellowship manifests itself at the Lord’s Table
    - We practice close communion because coming to the Altar confesses that you’re in agreement with what the church believes, teaches, and confesses.
- Prayers (See Wieting, Blessings of Every Sunday Communion, 34).
  - The prayers the baptized continued steadfastly in were not divorced from the ordered prayers and liturgy of the synagogue or of the temple.
  - It’s possible that “the prayers” were drawn from “the Prayer” that Jesus Himself taught – the Lord’s Prayer.
  - Yet, the prayers to which they were devoted flowed from and framed the receiving of the New Testament, the risen Christ’s gift of Word and Sacrament.
  - It’s not just that these early Christians were accustomed to pray, but they were accustomed to pray in a certain way, with certain prescribed prayers; in other words, they had a liturgy.
  - Christianity didn’t arrive in a vacuum.

- God built His New Testament church squarely on the foundation of the Old Testament.
- QUESTION: What is the “apostles’ teaching...breaking of the bread...prayers” a picture of?
  - Christ’s Church gathered around Word and Sacrament.
  - Or to say Word and Sacrament in a different way – the Divine Service!
  - Christ’s Church lives from the Divine Service of the Lord’s preaching and the Lord’s Supper.
  - It’s in the Divine Service where the Holy Spirit continues to be poured out – calling all to repentance and faith in Christ.
- Quote “Lutheranism 101: Worship” (p. 80)
  - “The Divine Service is built around the two great gifts that Christ bestowed on the Church: His proclaimed Word and His Supper. We saw that the apostles followed this pattern of worship immediately after Jesus’ ascension, devoting themselves to His teaching and the breaking of bread, with prayer (Acts 2:42).”
  - “The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lutheran pastor Wilhelm Loehe described the Divine Service as a mountain range dominated by two high peaks. We might think of Word and Sacrament as these two peaks. But “the Word” isn’t just one part of the Divine service; it is the driving force in every part, like a powerful river coursing through the mountains. Loehe pictured the sermon in particular as the first of the two peaks. Or we might see the reading of the Holy Gospel as that first peak, with the sermon flowing from it. Loehe saw the Lord’s Supper as the second (and slightly higher peak, the closest one can get to heaven’s heights in this life.”
  - “In the journey of the Divine Service, these tow peaks are the major waypoints. The rest of the order of service is designed to lead us to and from them, surrounding them with signpost to keep us focused on our destinations...”

#### Verse 43

- “And awe came upon every soul...”
  - Literally – fear came upon every soul.
  - This phrase describes faith in Christ.
  - “Fear, love, and trust” characterizes the gift of faith.
  - It’s a faith that is born in the heart of every Christian through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- “and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.”
  - Luke includes that wonders and signs were connected with this fear, this awe.
  - The miracles were intended to bring fear to those who were unbelievers.
  - While the apostles performed these wonders and signs, they were only the instruments of God.

#### Verses 44-45

- “were together...all things in common”

- While the Temple had drawn them to live in Jerusalem, now their faith in Christ drew them together in a different, deeper, and far truer way.
- Faith in Christ was the bond which made one body of these believers even outwardly.
- They live in mercy and charity toward one another.
- The things of this world that each of them has received from God they understand to be His gifts to be used in loving service to others.

Verses 46-47

- “Attending the temple together...”
  - The purpose for this would have been to call the unbelieving Jews to repentance and faith in Jesus, and to show them that Jesus really was the Christ promised in the Old Testament Scriptures.
- “Breaking of Bread”
  - The Lord’s Supper would have occurred in the houses of Christians.
  - It would not have occurred in the temple since there were many there who didn’t believe in the apostles’ doctrine.
  - The Lord’s Supper is for baptized Christians who believe the apostolic doctrine.
  - Also, at this time we see the home as the primary location of the Church’s gathering around Word and Sacrament.
  - Since they couldn’t do it at the temple and there are no church buildings in which to gather, the natural location would be Christian homes.
- “Praising God”
  - The natural expression of their heart for the blessing they had found in Christ.
  - Praise is outward, telling others what God has done for you.
- QUESTION: Who does St. Luke attribute to those who were saved?
  - The Lord!
  - Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit creates faith in us.
  - God alone builds His church.
  - God alone saves.

***Terms***

***Catechesis Summary***

- On the day of Pentecost, we see those things from which the Church continues to live: “the apostolic doctrine and fellowship, the breaking of the bread and the prayers.”
- The Holy Spirit continues to sustain the Church’s fellowship in Christ by the Divine Service of the Lord’s preaching and the Lord’s Supper.
- Through Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit is call sinners to repentance and faith in Christ.
- The “apostolic doctrine” preached to unbelievers in the temple and proclaimed in the home wasn’t a different faith from that of the Old Testament, but the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures in the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- The “breaking of the bread” was celebrated only for the baptized faithful who had received and confessed faith in the apostolic doctrine.

- The reception of the Lord's grace and mercy in the Gospel and Sacraments manifested itself in the Church's life of prayer and in her acts of mercy

**Learn by Heart Catechism Connection**

- The Lord's Prayer is the first and most important prayer of the Church of the baptized faithful.
- QUESTION: What other tie-ins to the Small Catechism do we see?