

Prayer of the Holy Spirit

Good Morning Friends!

We ARE TRANSITIONING in our series focused on a Wonder-full life here within the Saint James faith community... where we are loving and serving God and God's people. We are invited to look around WITH GRATITUDE.

Throughout this series many brought in photos of LOVED ONES OF THE CHURCH OR YOUR FAMILY WHO NURTURED AND SHARED THEIR LOVE OF GOD IN YOU. We have many of the photos displayed because we are surrounded by these treasured people and memories of them. However, we are reminded by scripture that we are called to be awake to what God is doing, a new thing, can we not see it? (Isaiah 43: 18-21)

We are called to be alert to God's work in the world and IN EVERYTHING to give thanks. We are to be grateful people...to look out into the world in gratitude, with gratitude, through gratitude.

We live an "incarnational" faith – the belief that, like Jesus, our faith is not just an idea, but it gets lived out in our actions in the world. So our scripture today gives us scene of a day in the life of God's people looking and living with gratitude.

The Acts of the Apostles is thought to be written by the writer of the gospel of Luke. So the apostles are leading the 5000+ people that received the Holy Spirit in the days of Pentecost. They are living out the post-resurrection mission 'in Jerusalem, in Judea & Samaria & all the earth (1:8). With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit their hearts, minds, and ears were opened to signs and wonders, including healing and preaching. BUT, not everyone was happy... the religious leaders were upset. But in spite of temple opposition, the Mission is proclaimed and lived out: care for one another! Love and serve God and God's people!

In fact, this is the essential commandment heard in Matthew, Mark & Luke (Love God & neighbor...) just applied to a new context.

And those were the days, weren't they? 'of one heart & one mind'... 'no one claimed ownership'... 'not a needy person'. This passage serves as a summary & a reminder of Jesus' key preaching concept about the 'reign/kin-dom of God'. This is what it looks like lived... embodied! This

'snapshot' gives connection between Jesus ministry & mission and the early church as a sign of God's reign here and now. Be grateful... see the new thing that God is doing in our midst!

In the movie, George is caught up in the swirl of chaos that is life. Looking back demonstrates the positive impact George's life had... or didn't have. His life's work transformed lives in the immigrant community in Bedford Falls.

The work of resurrection in our world is more than looking back and wishing to go back. The work of looking with gratitude is reflecting on the past to inform and inspire our work for the future... unity & generosity.

One heart & one mind in the midst of diversity; A community unified in purpose, mission & values. The neighbors saw them living in gratitude and wanted to be connected to...' they added to their number daily.'

How will we be 'in unity'...what will this look like as transformed lives transform lives?

Maybe it looks a lot like providing an afternoon of fun, food, & fellowship for grandparents & grand kids...listening to good music, painting pumpkins, bowling pumpkins and racing to fill buckets with squirters.

Maybe it looks like baking breads and cookies and pies and such to earn money to support a children's reading project, or selling chicken salad & sloppy joes and Christmas decorations to cover costs for mission trip to repair homes...'so no one is in need.'

Maybe it looks like crafts and hotdogs and mac n cheese and bible songs. It will look different than it did 15 years ago, or 25 years ago, or 225 years ago, but the purpose, mission & values will be loving and serving others because we are loved beyond measure and we are grateful for all that has been done. May we be awake to what new thing God is calling us to do. May it be so. Amen.