

WEDNESDAY 08 June 2022 "Contagious Christianity" (Acts 2:46,47)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

In most periods of 'transition' into a new job or joining the military or other similar major life transitions, there is often an orientation process to help you learn a new culture, new value systems, sometimes even a new language. A fairly modern term for this is 'onboarding'. It means helping a newcomer fit as quickly as possible into their new group or assignment or location. Yesterday I left you with a large group of people experiencing all the adjustments of transition as they had trusted Jesus to be their Savior and were 'onboarding' into a rapidly expanding group of Jesus followers. *In fact, they were the first wave in the "Jesus movement" which would sweep across the Roman empire in the first century and eventually all around the world... to where YOU live today!*

Dr. Luke gives us the record of those days in Acts 2. Today let's rejoin the phenomenon... ***"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the LORD added to their number daily those who were being saved."*** (Acts 2:46,47) Does it sound surreal my friends? Remember many of these were pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem from far distances for the annual Pentecost Festival. While for some this was an every year trek and reconnection with friends, for many others we can assume they were strangers to Jerusalem. For all of them, residents of Jerusalem or travelers from far away, I think we can conclude they are jubilant in their experience with trusting in Jesus to be their Savior Messiah, but also in their baptism and their fresh anointing by the Holy Spirit. But the description Luke gives us sounds more like a large extended family reunion or perhaps a homecoming of alumni who haven't seen each other for a long time but have so much in common with each other and simply love being together. Have you ever been part of something like this, my friends?

Luke reports that they met in the **'temple courts'**. As you may know the 'Temple mount' was in those days similar in size to what it is today. It was a huge area having been massively expanded by King Herod about 30 years before. The Temple itself was large but on that huge Temple mount it was actually quite small. The Temple was only entered by priests daily. It was not open to the general public. The great courtyard area and Solomon's colonnades around the Temple were the areas where those of the public were welcome to gather for specific religious rituals like bringing sacrifices, but also these areas were open for people to meet for prayer or discussion. Here is a picture of a current 'to scale' model of the great Temple area in the first century, as you would see it if you visited Jerusalem today:

Also, if you visit Israel today the area known as the "Western wall" or "Wailing wall" provides a similar gathering experience to what these first century Jesus followers were experiencing as they gathered in the Temple courts area.

What, you might ask, did these 3000 new Jewish believers DO when they gathered each day in the temple courts? Well, we know they were desperately hungry to learn from the apostles and others who had been with Jesus. *Remember friends, nothing of the New Testament had yet been written.* The only things known about Jesus were either those things you saw or heard Jesus say or do as an eyewitness, or things you heard from those who had been with Jesus. So, look around the vast temple area and I think you can see clusters of the 3000 people gathered around each of the disciples, and other close friends of Jesus, asking them all types of questions, trying to learn all they can about Jesus, as quickly as they can! Jesus had promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would help them remember all He had said, so they could teach others, (John 14:26) and that was now happening, every day, all day, in the Jerusalem temple area!

Do you see Luke reports "**They broke bread together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God...**" Then as now people love to talk over meals or with a cup of beverage in their hands. But I am amazed as I think about how eclectic these gatherings of people over the meals were. These were people from all over the known world. Their common language would likely have been Greek, but they would all speak other dialects. Their skin colors would be different, the cities from which they came were very different. But in their common experience with Jesus, they were united as one big, happy family... the family of God! *This was what God had designed for the entire human race, from the beginning!!*

Did you notice Luke records they "**enjoyed the favor of all the people.**" Oh, my how different our world is today in the reaction to followers of Jesus in most places, right? The truth is this '**favor**' didn't last long in Jerusalem. The Pharisees and Sadducees and other religious leaders were fully opposed, in every way, to Jesus and these followers of Jesus. And very soon a certain Pharisee named Saul was determined to quench the spiritual hunger and destroy this new movement of Jesus followers. But at least for a few days God protected this new 'great awakening' and Luke reports: "**The LORD added daily to their number those who were being saved.**" (Acts 2:47) We don't know exactly how many, but 3000 became 3200 and they became 3500. We have no record that there was another great response of thousands of people as we saw with Peter's message, but here we see DAILY, individuals are being drawn to Jesus. How did it happen?

*This is what I call 'contagious Christianity, my friends. People in Jerusalem were watching...' as they are watching in every city all around the world. Then and now they are watching to see who are the people who can handle the stress of life, the disappointments of life, the broken promises, the injustices, the real life problems we all face... **but who are those people who do so with contentment and confidence?** Who are the people who are not shaken to the core by the unexpected circumstances of life?*

The people who don't turn to drugs or alcohol or other such things to dull their pain. The people who had trusted Jesus were finding the power of the Holy Spirit in them so real, and the love of their fellow Christ followers so genuine, *that they were living a contagious Christianity and many other people were being attracted to Jesus simply by watching them live life!!*

May I ask, is this happening in your city? *Are people finding themselves drawn to Jesus, almost irresistibly?* If so...let's rejoice! If not, why not? What would it take for Acts 2:41-47 to be the reality of the Jesus follower movement in your city and mine? Let's pause right here and ponder that. Let's talk with Jesus about that, let's read and re-read these six or seven verses. And here's a song to help us consider what it would take for "contagious Christianity" to be the norm, the 'contagious norm' in your city and mine?

Today's Scripture is Acts 2:46, 47.