**Acts of the Apostles**

**Chapters 2-8**

**Acts 2:14-41 – Peter’s Pentecost Sermon**

**Summary:**

Peter responds to the crowds who have gathered by letting them know that what has happened is not drunkenness but an act of the Holy Spirit. Peter quotes the prophet Joel telling them that this movement has been long in coming. Peter then summarizes the story of Jesus using several references to King David and OT scripture that enforce that Jesus is the messiah.

The main point Peter is trying to convey is reveal in verse 36: **Acts 2:36**  36 Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

The response is one of fear and contrition. Peter encourages the crowd to repent and be baptized and 3000 people were added to their numbers that day.

**Read Acts 2:42-47**

**Discuss:**

What affect did the Holy Spirit have on this community?

What should this mean for our church?

**Acts 3:1-4:4 – The Apostles Heal the Sick and Lame of Israel**

**Summary:**

While on their way to the temple to worship Peter and John are stopped by a crippled man who they heal. This healing provides them an opportunity to tell the story about Jesus telling them that Jesus had been sent to the children of Abraham so they might turn from their wickedness. This preaching disturbs the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees who had Peter and John arrested.

**Read Acts 4:5-31**

**Discuss:**

Peter is described as uneducated and ordinary but he is able to speak powerfully and do extraordinary things because of the Holy Spirit. (Jesus had told them this would happen in Luke 12).

**Luke 12:11-12**  11 When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say."

Who are the “ordinary” people that have inspired your faith?

**Read Acts 4:32-5:11**

**Discuss:**

What was the community’s understanding of how people should live in this Christian life?

What would you say was the “sin” of Ananias and Sapphira?

**Acts 5:12-42 – The Apostles vs. the Sanhedrin Round 2**

**Summary:**

The apostles do great signs in the presence of the people some even more miraculous than Jesus (he said that would happen). People are even cured by Peter’s shadow passing over them. All of this disturbs the High priest and the Sadducees who put some apostles in prison.

That night an angel opened the prison doors for the apostles and told them to go preach in the temple again. The next morning they preach in the temple and the Priests and the guards expecting to find them in their cells are surprised to find them in the temple.

They are brought before a trial of the religious elite and it is determined that if the apostles are not from God then their ministry will fail in due time (the people will see through this hoax). So they have the apostles flogged and released.

**Read Acts 6:1-15**

**Discuss:**

What are the problems this young church is facing? How do the apostles solve this problem?

Stephen gets in trouble. What is the charge against him?

**Acts 7:1-53 – Stephen’s Speech (sermon)**

**Summary:**

In the most complete telling of the narrative of Jesus in the Bible Stephen goes all the way back to Abraham and tells the story of salvation through the descendants of Israel. This familiar story is concluded by Stephen arguing that the Israelites always kill the prophets of God and that is what “You” have done with Jesus becoming his betrayers and murderers.

**Read Acts 7:54-8:3**

**Discuss:**

What is the response to Stephen’s sermon? Who is orchestrating the punishment?

What does Saul do in further response?

**Acts 8:4-25 – Philip’s Mission to Samaritans (outcasts of Israel)**

**Summary:**

Persecution scatters the church but God uses this as an opportunity for spreading the good news. Phillip went from Jerusalem to Samaria and preached to them. The crowds were impressed by his message and the signs that he did.

Phillip preached about:

1) the kingdom of God (8:12),

2) the resurrection of Jesus Christ (8:4-5,12), and

3) the gift of the Holy Spirit (8:15-17).

A magician, named Simon, who had great sway in the community is converted and stays close to Phillip after he sees the miracles that are being done. Peter and John are dispatched to Samaria to help in the church growth effort and laid hands on the converts so that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Simon offers to pay for this gift and is chastised by Peter who calls him to repent of this wickedness.

 **What is the problem with Simon’s offer?**

**Read Acts 8:26-40**

**Discuss:**

What are the issues that would exclude an Ethiopian Eunuch from participating in the Jewish rituals?

In what ways does the message of Jesus connect with this man?

The message of Jesus has many elements that connect with our lives. Which elements are most important to you right now?

Think of a neighbor who might need to hear good news, what part of Jesus’ story might be most important for them?