



The Federated Church of Hyannis

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Reverend Derek L. White, Pastor

Special Message and Sermon Notes for June 13 ,2021

This Sunday is Scholarship Sunday. We are delighted to present scholarships to Matthew LaCross and Ryan Noonan. These are bright and talented students to whom we wish much success in their studies.

Remember that June 23rd & 30th there will be two light church suppers with the book group at the church. The Author of “Do It Anyway; The Paradoxical Commandments”, Keith Kent will join the church on June 30th for a live discussion via Zoom at the church. Please call to RSVP a spot for the supper. We hope you can attend.

The church is planning a special Blessing of the Animals Service sometime in July. More details to follow.

Please contact the church if you have any prayer requests you would like included in the prayers of the community each week. While some of you may not be able to attend in-person, we look forward to including your prayer requests in the service.

Rev. Derek L. White
Pastor, Federated Church of Hyannis

SERMON NOTES: “That They Shared and Cared for Each Other”

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2,42-47

The first Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Introduction

There is a very common misunderstanding about what Jesus taught and what many Christians think today. I hear it all the time. I believe in God, but I don't need to go to church. Or sometimes it is expressed as I am spiritual, but I am not religious. I don't need church to be a Christian.

But there are a couple flaws with that train of thought. First is the Commandment to keep the Sabbath Day holy. And yes, in Judaism the Sabbath Day is from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Because of the Romans the Sabbath Day was moved to Sunday from a lunar cycle to a solar cycle. The Commandment says that one out of the seven days is to be a day to be kept as holy. It is a day of rest from common labor to commit to the practice of prayer and worship. But the American version of Christianity has shifted away from the global practice of Christianity of honoring the Sabbath and keeping it holy.

The second flaw with the argument that church is not needed is the failure to recognize that what Jesus called his disciples to commit to was communal practice. Jesus taught about the kingdom, which is a community. He called twelve disciples to spend every moment with him in ministry. He ate in people's homes to fellowship with them. He preached in the Synagogues. He broke bread and poured the cup at the Passover Meal. Jesus taught the importance of welcoming people into the kingdom, the community of God. Communion is the center of the communal faith. Last week focused on the importance of making time for others. It emphasized the need to feed the body and nourish the soul with fellowship.

A commitment to follow Jesus is a commitment to being part of a community of faith. It is being baptized and growing together in a community that helps disciples work together communally as followers of Jesus. Faith is a verb, not a noun.

PART I.

In Luke's account recorded in Acts of the early church we see those who came to the faith committed to supporting each other. They spent time together in prayer and fellowship. They devoted themselves to learning the teachings of Jesus. When necessary, they even helped each other out financially. They embodied a strong community that cared for one another and those in need who were their neighbors.

PART II.

The word Jesus used to describe the Church is the word "Ecclesia" which means congregation or community. Jesus says it in Matthew 16:18. Jesus said his followers would be part of this "Ecclesia". That means to belong to a congregational community where all the members are ministers that care for and support each other and the wider community.

To follow the teachings of Jesus and to be a disciple is to be part of an "Ecclesia". Jesus said in Matthew 18:20 "wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them". Being a Christian means to be part of a community of faith.

One does not need to belong to an "Ecclesia" to have a relationship with God, but to be a follower of Jesus means to follow what Jesus taught. Jesus taught his disciples to live communally, to support and care for one another. That is more than being nice to one's neighbors, it is intentional communal relationships that are supportive.

PART III.

Today is Scholarship Sunday. It is a wonderful example of the church coming together to offer support for students to further their education. The sharing of resources has helped establish the scholarship fund, and today we get to bless two recipients with the resources to pursue further education. This is an example of communal support.

Conclusion

A lot of families made a lot of sacrifices over the years to help establish this "Ecclesia" to support the wider community. And a lot of families have been blessed by the communal support of belonging to the Federated Church. By working together today and sharing the blessings of God in our stewardship, we live out the instructions Jesus gave his disciples. Jesus asks us to be an intentional community of faith that cares for and supports one another and others in the community. Committing to being part of a church community is following the teachings of Jesus.