What is Vital to the Christian Life?

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They 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. 44 *All who believed were together and had all things in common;* 45 *they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.* 46 *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,* 47 *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*. (Acts 2:42-47)

1. Internet Connection

How many hours the average internet user spends online? How many hours do you think I am connected with the internet every day? I notice that I spend about 12 hours with the internet. These days, the internet has become a more important part of my life. It is because without the internet, we can't hold Sunday worship services and meetings.

We rely on the internet for news, maps, banking, music, movies, information, and now even for worship service and meetings. We do so many things with the internet. Without the internet connection we will be in big trouble.

2. The Early Church

How did people 2,000 years ago connect with each other? There definitely was no internet connection. Acts 2:46 says, "***Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.***" Acts chapter two talks about the earliest Christians' lives. Who are "they" in this verse? They are those who became the followers of Jesus after Peter preached the Good News about Jesus. Verse 41 says that there were "about three thousand" people. Before Peter preached, there were only 120 Christians. Now, the new believers were 25 times more of the earliest believers.

Although the entire group did not meet, many of the new Christians would gather on a daily basis. Of course, there was no social distancing at this time. Verse 42 says, ***they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers***.

The new believers wanted to know more about Jesus and Jesus' teachings. The breaking of bread was a common meal and the Holy Communion. The activities of the earliest believers can be divided into two

functions, an aspect of worship and of community. By participating in the apostle's teaching and prayer, the people were connected with God. By participating in fellowship and the breaking of bread, they were connected with other people. There were many signs and wonders through the apostles.

One thing that surprises us is that the first believers sold their possessions to give to those in need. What made these people so generous? There would be two reasons. First, the people had the perspective that everything in life was given by God and was to be shared with others. Second, many believers expected the return of Jesus and the establishment of God's kingdom. The early Christians were excited about Jesus' return.

This was part of the radical lifestyle many of the early believers had. What happened to the non-believers when they saw the radical lifestyle? Verse 47 says, "***day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.***" The people in Jerusalem were overwhelmed by the love of the Christians and their love was contagious.

Although Jesus was not physically with the disciples, the followers of Jesus were full of love, joy, hope, excitement, and unity of Christ. Through the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the earliest Christian community was strongly connected with the Lord and with the people.

Those who did not belong to the community of faith wanted to join the early church. Many people wanted to experience God's love and enjoy their lives within the early Christian community. The earliest Christians practiced what Jesus taught to his disciples: The Greatest Commandment.

3. The Greatest Commandment

In Matthew 22:37 through 39, one expert in the law asks Jesus, "***Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest***?" Jesus says to him, ***"'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"***

What is a commandment? The dictionary defines a commandment as "a rule to be observed." We tend to think that God forces us to love the Lord and love our neighbors. However, that is not the case. Then, why does the Lord want us to love God and our neighbors? It is because we can't be happy without loving God and our neighbors.

Our current situation reminds us that God has designed us to be connected to the Lord and to other people. Our lives are built to be loved by God and to love others. The Greatest Commandment isn't given to keep God's people close to the Lord, but for our existence.

4. The Birth of a Child

This Wednesday my wife, Christine, leaves for San Francisco to welcome our first grandson. Have you ever thought about the meaning of the birth of a child? Why do you think a baby is born? Certainly, the birth of a baby is a God's gift to the parents, grandparents, and great grandparents. But from the baby's perspective he or she is born to be loved by parents, grandparents, great grandparents and others. The baby is also born to love the family, friends, and others. We are born to be loved and to love God's people. If we are not loved and if we do not love others, we can't be happy at all.

5. What is Vital to our Life?

Today's sermon title is "What is Vital to the Christian Life?" Before we talk about this, let us think about "what is vital to life?" Our bodies rely on food and water to survive. About 60 percent of an adult body is made up of water that is needed to function. Most people can go about three weeks without food. But without water we can survive only 3-4 days.

God's love is like water for our Christian life. 1 John 4:9-10 says, "***God's love was revealed among us in this way:***
God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him.
In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and
sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." God created us to love us and sent Jesus to forgive our sins and save us so that we can now have eternal life. So what? 1 John 4:11 says, "***Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another."*** When we love one another, *w*e are reminded of God's love. God's love is vital to the Christian life.

6. Conclusion

Today's scripture, Acts 2:42 and the following, confirms that God's love is vital to our Christian life. As water flows in our body, God's love flows through our connection with the Lord. To be filled with God's love we need to be connected to the Lord constantly. How can we be connected with God? When we pray and read the Bible and meditate on it, we learn how much God loves us and takes care of us. When our hearts are filled with God's love, we can love others with God's love.

7. Application

Our weekly service is one way to connect with the Lord and with other people. From this Wednesday, we will also have a Bible study class through Zoom. Susan Scott, our lay leader, will lead the group. I would encourage you to participate in the study to experience God's love.

The coronavirus, our shelter in place, social distancing, and isolation have become a central part of our current lives. How can we find happiness in this situation? No matter what is going on around us, as long as we remember that we are all created to be loved by God and to be in community with others, we can find happiness. As many people struggle through the pandemic, God wants us to make it through by being connected with the Lord and by staying connected with others.

I am sure many of you already knew what our church had done for the community. We raised funds to assist Beth Israel Deaconess Plymouth. I want to thank you for your contribution. I am also grateful to our mission commission for sending cards and plants to First Responders, Essential workers, the Post Office, and the Fire Station to thank them and let them know we are praying for them. I pray that this pandemic gives us the opportunity to reach out to many people in our community so that they can come to Christ Jesus through our sharing of God's love. Amen.