

God's Story – Our Story
First Church – Keeping Christ in Christian
Nov 3, 2024

Overarching Theme: 2024 – A Year in God's Story

Instructions:

When using this resource as teacher, feel free to discern the points you want to emphasize in the lesson. See "The Grand Sweep" material for additional information.

Core Point: 2024 can be a year of living into God's Story as we journey from Genesis to Revelation together.

Reflect on this Scripture: Acts 2:1-4; 42-47; 11:26b (CEB)

When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

⁴² The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. ⁴³ A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were united and shared everything. ⁴⁵ They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. ⁴⁶ Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. ⁴⁷ They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

"It was in Antioch where the disciples were first labeled "Christians.""

Commentary: Acts chronicles the remarkable transformation of a handful of fearful followers into a bold, confident, growing, multi-ethnic movement of Spirit-filled disciples. What made the difference? These earliest followers of Jesus began seeking to live up to the name given to them in Antioch (perhaps originally in derision) – Christians - literally meaning 'the King's People.' Whatever the origin of this term, these believers discovered the power to live up a name associated with Christ - the power of the Holy Spirit experienced in a community of resurrection hope. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit, they began bearing the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control –

Galatians 5:22-23) and became more like Christ and began to influence the world in Christ's name. In their best moments, the saints we remember on All Saints Sunday did the same. What this world needs most today is not more people whose deepest identity is in their ethnicity, or their socio-economic condition, or in their politics. What the world needs most today is more people whose deepest identity is in Christ, the King of Kings. People who keep Christ in Christian.

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. On the day of Pentecost, the Disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and declared the wonders of God in the various mother tongues of the Jewish pilgrims who had traveled to Jerusalem from various parts of the world. Why it was significant that the message proclaimed was in their various mother tongues?
2. Peter's message at Pentecost about Jesus was bold and direct. What accounts for his boldness given that he had just fearfully denied even knowing Jesus just 50 days before?
3. Luke's account of the earliest community of Jesus followers – *"Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved"* (v. 46-47) demonstrates a remarkable sense of community among people who might not have known each other prior to Pentecost. What accounts for this quality of their life together? How can the church today experience more of this sense of community?
4. In cosmopolitan Antioch, the disciples of Jesus were first labeled 'Christians' (literally 'the King's People') likely as a term of derision. They were seen as being more than a little 'off' for following a crucified king. How do you think they would have responded to this indictment? What does it say about these disciples that they would have embraced this label?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Acts 11:26b
"It was in Antioch where the disciples were first labeled "Christians.""