

Acts 4:32-35

Living as a generous community

Luke gives a brief description of life in the new Christian community. No one claimed exclusive ownership of their possessions or wealth; everything was held in common. Property and land was sold to make sure no one was left in need. And, supported by this, the apostles were able to preach powerfully the message of the risen Christ.



Bible notes



After Peter and John are threatened by the authorities and told 'not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus' (4:18), the believers pray that they may speak with boldness while 'signs and wonders are performed' in the name of Jesus. They were again 'filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness' (4:30-31). This second outpouring of the Holy Spirit, in response to prayer, encourages us to think of Pentecost not only as a past event but also a present experience for a people of prayer. The first outpouring in Acts is particularly associated with evangelism (2:41,47), and this second outpouring is associated with the generous sharing in today's passage that follows on immediately. There is a strong connection established here, and noted by many early Christian writers, between evangelism, speaking with boldness, and healing, performing signs and wonders. This is not surprising given the squalor in which so many people lived. Poverty and disability, pollution and sickness, social exclusion and malnutrition, unemployment and mental affliction are interlinked. This is the important social context of the wondrous signs of the healing power of God. They are securely rooted in the common life of the apostolic community. The preaching of God's word is accompanied by the embodiment of God's generosity. So, isolation gives way to time together, hunger is satisfied by shared meals, and basic needs are met by the distribution of possessions.

First impressions

- In what practical ways does your church community show God's love and generosity to others?
- What challenges come with sharing?
- What needs could your church help to meet in the local community? challenge or encourage you?



LISTEN



Play 'Do Something', Matthew West on *Hello My Name is: Greatest Hits*. Reflect on your response to the lyrics.

ACT



Think about how you can show generosity to someone you know – perhaps make them a card, send a cheery text, or invite them round for a coffee.

EXPLORE



Find out about child sponsorship schemes run by Christian organisations, e.g. Compassion: compassionuk.org. Consider how you might get involved.

A prayer for others

Holy Spirit,
help us to have eyes to see those who are in need,
hearts that know what it is to care,
and hands that are open to share what we have.
Amen.

DRAW



Draw a map of your local area with your house, or your church, at the centre. Draw lines to show where your home or the church are linked to the local community through acts of kindness or generosity. Pray for God's help in developing these links.