Now that Easter is over, what are we supposed to do next? Shall we get back to how life was before Easter and pretend that Easter was just another holiday that we can cross out on the calendar? Undoubtedly these thoughts might have crossed the minds of many of Jesus’ followers after what they had experienced first-hand through the suffering, the death, and the resurrection of their beloved spiritual leader. Can their lives ever be “normal” again??? So much had changed within the span of the last 10 days and their lives would never be the same again. Events happened so quickly over the past 10 days that many of those disciples had little or no time to process all of this both emotionally and spiritually.

 As we read in our passage earlier from the 5th Gospel aka Acts, we were extended an invitation to be a part of the post-resurrection community of faith. The focus was no longer on Christ and what Christ had done, but the impact and change that Christ had made upon those who followed him. Those disciples would soon realize that their lives would take a dramatic turn when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit enabled them to do extraordinary things that were beyond human measures.

 The post-resurrection community of faith had taken on a renewed sense of mission, hope, and purpose. Many were still traumatized by mixed emotions not knowing that would come next. On one hand, some were scared for their own welfare, while on the other hand, some were jubilant and excited about what was to come, remembering what Jesus had promised them.

 Despite the hopeful optimisms and the promises that Jesus had made to the disciples, some I’m sure had contemplated going back their hometown and returning back to their previous profession, calling it quit. But many chose to stay together no matter what, remembering the commitment that they had made when those chose to follow Jesus.

 However, those who chose to stick together must face the new reality. They were now a changed people whose lives have been transformed by the death and the resurrection of their spiritual leader. Many of these followers of Jesus must learn to relate to one another in a whole new way. **They might have had their share of differences and opinions at times but they shared one common mission, one calling, one purpose and one hope.**

 At the time of Luke’s writing in Acts, this community of faith had reportedly grown exponentially to as many as 5,000 strong. Even though Jesus was no longer with them, but the ministry, the proclamation of the gospel, and God’s mission must go on.

 On the day of Pentecost alone, over 3,000 heard the Spirit’s calling and were baptized by the disciples. Many spoke in **different** tongues, raised in **different** cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and carried **different** ideological and theological perspectives, nevertheless they responded to the **same** Spirit’s calling, shared the **same** faith of the resurrected Christ, and served in the **same** body of Christ. Luke described this phenomenon as a sharing community with “**one heart and one soul**.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

 One of the key characteristics of the early faith community, as Luke described, was that not only did they do things together, they also ate together, lived together, and shared things in common in supporting one another. They function as one and not as individuals of many. Everyone was equal and was willing to contribute what they have with one another (however little or much). Instead of taking and holding on to the resources themselves, they gave and shared with those who had little or none. Verse 34 tells us that ***“there was not a needy person among them.”*** Everyone was satisfied and provided for. They truly lived out to be a **sharing community with sharing faith.**

As one popular saying goes, ***“We may not have it all together, but together we have it all.”*** The post-resurrection faith community truly lived up to this motto reminding how the church then and now must live in a **culture of humility and grace**, and **not of power and authority**. It’s not about **who’s making the important decisions** but **abiding in obedience** to the will of God for the welfare of the entire community.

 On the night when Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Last Passover meal together, Jesus offered them a new commandment not only to **love one another**, but to **wash one another’s feet**. ***“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.”[[2]](#footnote-2)***

 The resurrection appearance of the risen Christ gave the disciples a spiritual boost, renewing renewed sense of hope and purpose that what he promised would be fulfilled. These disciples had kept their faith and devoted themselves in daily prayers and committed to stick together in spite of adversities, challenges, and even persecutions. This new community was empowered to preach, teach, baptize, feed, and embody God’s love for others. Christ has already done his part, and now it was up to them to carry on what Christ had passed along.

 One of the main reasons why the early church was able to flourish was because they shared what they had with others. No one thought highly of themselves over the others. There were no divisions or barriers among the believers, now that their division and separation with God have been removed. Everybody is on the same page, with the same mind and focus. ALL are being called together and equipped to serve. ALL are willing to look after the needs of others.

 Let’s fast forward to the 21st century church today…particularly among the churches here in North America or in Europe, where the power and the resources of the church are centralized. One of the biggest social paradox today is the **economic disparity** among the churches that “have” and “have not”. This is a systemic problem not only on the local level, but across the board in the regional and national levels. This is also not just a Presbyterian Church issue but also among other mainstream denominations as well. I don’t think this is quite what Jesus had in mind.

 As a church, we must confess that we have NOT done our share of being good stewards of God’s resources that we are entrusted with. We have systemically exploited our human and financial resources and failed to meet God’s missional mandate of ***“just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”*[[3]](#footnote-3)** All of us have fallen short of God’s grace and have missed the mark of Christ’s commands to share what we have and what we believe with others.

 As we read from our 1 John passage earlier, we make a fool and a liar of ourselves if we declare our own righteousness. We do NOT hold God’s word in our hearts through our actions and in truth. For this, we must repent and confess of our sins and ask for God’s forgiveness and mercy.  **We have failed to honor Christ’s command for us to upbuild this beloved and sharing community of faith.**

 Earlier this week, many around the country paused to remember the 50th Anniversary of the death of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.. at the time of the assassination back in 1968, as some of you might remember, the entire nation was very much in turmoil. The country was very much divided domestically and also in the midst of global conflicts around the world. No one really knew what was going on and what was going to happen next.

 The King assassination became a rallying point among the communities that were crying out for social injustice that has systematically plagued this country for centuries. The community was at a tipping point ready to explode. **One man’s sacrificial blood became the inspirational sweat of others for his legacy and dream that were left unfulfilled.** They might take away his life and silence his voice, but King’s vision and dream of a more “beloved community” live on even to this day.

 Come to think of it, the early church community and the community during the Civil Rights movement both had something in common. They did not let their trials and adversities abandon their hopes and dreams. They have kept their dreams alive. In fact, they became even more unified in fulfilling and advocating for a common cause.

 We have come so far since the days of the assassinations of Christ and that of Martin Luther King, Jr. however, we still have ways to go. There are still works left undone for us, in bringing God’s kingdom closer to fruition and fulfilling one’s dream.

 So what does this all mean for us today? Well, as Christ’s ambassadors, we have a new commandment to embrace and honor – **not only to love God, but to love one another and to wash one another’s feet.** We are challenged to make a difference and transform the society around us in a whole new perspective, however big or small it can be contextually, even if it means putting a smile on someone’s face and offering a glimmer of hope on someone who’s struggling with his or her faith. Christ has removed our barrier of fear, so that we can all participate in God’s Kingdom.

 As one theologian put it, **“*the sign of God’s reign in Jesus’ ministry was healing and the restoration of the broken to life in community. The sign of God’s reign in Acts is the creation of a new community where life for everyone is sustained. The resurrection is the demonstration of the power of God over all the powers of sin, death, and destruction in the world. It is also the power to transform the lives of those who believe.”*** *”[[4]](#footnote-4)*

 This is the essence of this new community in which we are being called to live today. As Martin Luther King once poignantly pointed out that the **11 o’clock hour on Sunday morning is the most “segregated” hour here in America**. Friends, we’ve got our works cut out for us in the upbuilding of this beloved and sharing community. ***“We’ve got some difficult days ahead…but I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountaintop. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land.
I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land.”* [[5]](#footnote-5)**
How have our lives been transformed as a result of our faith and our hope in Christ’s resurrection? How have we lived up to Christ’s new commandments by living as one sharing community of faith? Do we see the needs of ourselves more than the needs of others around us?

 Jesus said, ***“From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required.”[[6]](#footnote-6)*** Friends, what does the LORD required of us but ***“to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.”[[7]](#footnote-7)***  Let us be a community identified by not only what we share with others through our faith but also through our actions and in truth.

 **No longer shall we live in separation with our neighbors or in a broken relationship with our God, but instead, we shall live in full communion and fellowship with one body and one Spirit. Easter isn’t over, in fact, it is just the beginning. Christ’s resurrection lives, through our witnesses and proclamations by faith of what we have seen, heard, or touched, one life at a time.** Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

1. Acts 4:32 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *John 13:14-15* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Matthew 25:40* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Campbell Cynthia M. *Feasting on the Word*, Year B, Volume 2 p. 386 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Martin Luther King Jr., “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” Memphis, TN, April 3, 1968* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Luke 12:48* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Micah 6:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)