

With One Accord

Acts 1:12-14

I have chosen the key phrase in our text this morning as the title of my sermon. It is found in verse 14, “With one accord.” We will come back later on to look at that phrase more closely, but I want to begin there because that simple phrase tells us so much about the early church. As the church begins its existence, with the promise of the Holy Spirit and Jesus’ ascension into heaven, we read of that church that they were “with one accord.” That Greek word is used only 12 times in the whole of the New Testament, and 10 of those occurrences are here in the book of Acts. Here are some of those references...

Acts 2:1 “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”

Acts 2:46 “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people.”

Acts 4:24 “So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.”

Acts 5:12 “And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.”

Acts 8:6 “And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.”

Acts 15:25 “...it seemed good to us, being assembled with

one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

That’s the church as it ought to be, “assembled with one accord.” And that is what stands out as we begin these early verses of the book of Acts. The church was together, assembled together, in this very special sort of way. The disciples were, of course, acting together in obedience to what Jesus had told them.

v.12. “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey.”

A sabbath day’s journey is a Jewish expression for how far the law would allow travel on the sabbath, not that the trip actually took place on the sabbath. The reference is to about 3/4 of a mile. The ascension took place on Mount Olivet, and they returned to Jerusalem as Jesus had instructed them.

v.13 “And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying.”

That isn’t necessarily the same room as they occupied for the Last Supper, but it could have been. At least, it’s a comparable setting, and the emphasis remains on the fact that they were staying together. And Luke identifies all the apostles by name, providing obvious emphasis upon the place that the apostles would occupy in this new church. So let’s look first at the apostles,

I. THE APOSTLES TOGETHER.

Listed by name,

v.13 “Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James.”

There are, of course, only 11 names listed, for Judas Iscariot is not longer joined with them. He is the betrayer, and we will study next week what would become of him, and how he was replaced. But even with him missing, even one short, the apostles are still identified together, with one accord. And they bear much significance, and, together are later referred to simply as “the twelve.” For example,

Acts 6:2 “Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples...”

1 Cor. 15:3 “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.”

I should note, that the number 12 is symbolic, and representative. Sometimes there were less than 12 apostles, like at this point when there are only 11. And Paul would emphasize that he was added to the band of apostles later on, and James the Lord’s brother is also included. We understand that John was the last of the apostles to die, thus ending the apostolic age, but the details of who died when and who might have been added at what point are not to be found in the New Testament, so we don’t know those details. But we do know,

A. The significance of “the twelve.”

The symbolism of twelve in the Bible is a clear reference to the fullness of God’s people, it’s a number that has reference to all of God’s covenant people, together. And that symbolism is obvious in both the Old Testament and the New. In the Old Testament, the reference would be to the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve sons of Jacob. In previous generations, God had chosen his representative from among all others—He chose

Abraham, then he chose Isaac not Ishmael, then Jacob not Esau. But with Jacob’s sons, they were all included and the nation of God’s covenant people is established, the twelve tribes.

And so we read things like this, first regarding the breastplate to be worn by Jewish priests,

Ex. 28:21 “And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.”

And when the people of Israel crossed over the Jordan to escape the bondage or Egypt, we read,

Joshua 4:1 “And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: 2 “Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, 3 and command them, saying, ‘Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.’ ” 4 Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; 5 and Joshua said to them: “Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, 6 that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ 7 Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.”

The fullness of the New Testament church would likewise be

represented by the twelve, now called apostles. And the book of Revelation joins those two groups of twelve, Old Testament and New, with the twenty four elders sitting upon twenty four thrones in heaven. And so we read,

Rev. 4:2 “Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. 3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.”

Rev. 11:15 “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” 16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.”

So the twelve represent the fullness of God’s covenant people, and as there were twelve tribes in the Old Testament there would be twelve apostles in the New Testament. And just to add a bit of understanding to biblical symbolism, you should also note the 144 is an even more significant number of fullness and completeness, which 12 times 12 for all you math scholars out there! And 144 is, in the Bible, joined with that great number of 1000 representing totality, which is 10 times 10 times 10. Ten itself also a representation of fullness and completeness. And 10 squared, 10 times 10, is just that much more of an emphasis. And then multiply it again, for the ultimate number representing the highest number imaginable in that language, 1000. Then, for the ultimate, grand finality, join that measure of 1000 with the

fullness of 144, and you get the greatest imaginable number for all of God’s people, the 144,000.

Rev. 14:1 “Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.”

All of that built upon this significant number of 12. And getting back to Acts, the twelve would be,

B. The foundation of the church.

So this is the church, in the fullest definition given in the New Testament,

Eph. 2:19 “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

So the eleven men Luke identifies in our text this morning, together with the twelfth whom we will study next week, are established as the foundation upon which Jesus would build his church. So we come to,

Rev. 21:9 “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s

wife.” 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. 12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. 14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

Thus the building was being established, the foundation was being laid. The apostles were together, in Jerusalem, waiting for the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was soon to come. And then Luke sought to emphasize was that this gathering, this fellowship which would become the church, was,

II. AN INCLUSIVE FELLOWSHIP.

It wasn't just the apostles who were gathered together in one accord. For we read,
v.14

It is striking that Luke sees fit to mention,

A. The inclusion of the women.

This certainly a patriarchal society, and it is not wrong to mention and identify just the men, husbands and fathers. The women are not left out of such an accounting, even if they aren't mentioned by name. There is no slight nor any sense of inferiority in identifying the men, anymore than there is any such thing attached to the very appropriate practice of a married woman taking her husbands name. A husband and wife become one, and the significance of their one name is in its obvious

reference to their singular identity. And their children are included with them, so we give our children our surname, and they, too are identified by that family name. All of that is very good and appropriate and we shouldn't dismiss any of that significance even today. And my point here is that the women were already included, but Luke the faithful historian sees fit to mention them specifically. The identification of those who are gathered together of one accord include the women, and even though that would have been evident obvious, Luke identifies them specifically.

And he identifies one woman in particular, expressing,

B. The honor given to Mary.

Mary is worthy of such honor, identified by Luke most clearly as “the mother of Jesus.” Not only does she have the honor common to so many women, the honor of conceiving and bearing a child, but, of course, her child, her firstborn, was the Son of God incarnate. So her honor is in her faithfulness to that distinctive, God-given female privilege of motherhood, and in her humble and godly willingness to accept the role which God assigned to her. Remember what she was told before she became pregnant, and how she responded to that promise of a unique supernatural miracle to be performed by the power of the Holy Spirit with reference to her own reproductive organs. I will refer to Luke's previous volume of history we call his gospel,

Luke 1:26 “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” 29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold,

you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” 34 Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” 35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.” 38 Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.”

Such is her godliness, and for such she is honored by the mention of her name by Luke here in Acts 1. The woman who had said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word,” is among the faithful of that very early church as they waited for the promised Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them.

Notice one more reference to this inclusive fellowship of the church, as Luke expresses,

C. The recognition of Jesus’ brothers.

v.14 “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”

The rather obvious implication of that reference to brothers, in this context especially, is that the reference is to Jesus’ human brothers, the later children born to Mary. The Roman idea that

Mary remained a perpetual virgin is absolutely ridiculous, and clearly contrary to the laws of nature with reference to a normal human marriage between a man and a woman. Mary was a normal, ordinary woman. And Joseph was a normal, ordinary man, and to impose a doctrine of her perpetual virginity is a blatant contraction of the very definition of marriage itself.

And it is also a contradiction of Scripture, including Acts 1:14. Luke the historian notes for the record that Jesus’ brothers according to the flesh were present in Jerusalem. Matthew adds this reference as well,

Mat. 13:54 “When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, “Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? 55 Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? 56 And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?”

Four specific brothers are mentioned, including James who would become a significant leader in the church and the author of the book of the Bible bearing his name. And Jesus’ sisters are mentioned as well, so we know of their existence by the infallible authority of the Matthew’s gospel. There is little doubt that Matthew also is referring to blood brothers and sisters, obvious by what we read in,

Mat. 12:46 “While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. 47 Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” 48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is

My brother and sister and mother.”

Again, my point, this fellowship of the church as they waited in Jerusalem did so “with one accord.” And I now want to focus more specifically on upon the meaning of that expression. Most broadly, we could say, it was,

III. A DEVOTED FELLOWSHIP.

They were devoted together, devoted to one another. Specifically, they were,

A. Devoted to being of one accord.

We read in the NKJV,
v.14 “These all continued with one accord...”

They “continued.” I’ll make reference to the actual Greek word here, because it is quite significant. The word means to persevere or to be constantly diligent, continually. It is a word of great intensity, perhaps more fully translated, “they persevered diligently and continuously.” There is reference to great effort, great commitment, great intention. It didn’t “just happen.” They worked on it. They focused on it. They were devoted to begin “of one accord.”

Another interesting Greek word there. One accord has reference to passion, one passion, a shared passion. The word also can imply a fierceness or indignation. The focus here is not at all wrath or anger, but still the passion implied by those words is applicable. They were passionate about sharing together their purpose and their function. They were passionate about preserving the unity or oneness of mind, hence the translation, “of one accord.”

One dictionary comments that this word “is a compound of two

words meaning to "rush along" and "in unison". The image is almost musical; a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonize in pitch and tone. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's church.”

That’s one accord. That’s what is to be of one mind, not necessarily that everyone agreed about every detail of thought, but together they harmonized into a great symphony of music. I read at the beginning of the sermon the many uses of this word in the book of Acts. This was a big deal! This was a central focus and characteristic of the church as a whole. And it took effort, to which they were wholeheartedly devoted.

I say all of that to make a very obvious point. That is always how the church is supposed to function. Consider, for example, Rom. 15:5 “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, 6 that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Also, Romans 12:16 “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”

And then, 1 Cor. 12:24 “But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

That is what we are to pursue, today, in our own church, with one accord, and with diligence, perseverance and passion. This is the goal we are to pursue, according to...

Phil. 2:1 "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

And Paul makes perfectly clear what is necessary if we are to do so.

Phil. 2:3 "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

Let there be among us a shared passion and commitment, an earnest zeal and devoted perseverance, to be one accord. Which means, as Luke continues in verse 14, that we are to be,

B. Devoted to praying.

v.14 "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

All of what I have been describing this morning is the foundation upon which practice what it means to pray for one another. Not as a channel of gossip. Not as an invasion of privacy nor violating any sense of personal boundaries and propriety, but the very simply idea that if we are going to dwell together with one accord, we must be committed to the practice of caring for one another so greatly, so completely, that we are devoted to praying for one another. As we studied not long ago in the book of James,

James 5:16 "Confess your trespasses to one another, and

pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit."

Pray for one another. Be devoted to it. Persevere in it, with a heart of brotherly love. That's the church. That's the church that was waiting for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost. And that is to be our church, this day and every day.

I'll end with the great encouragement of that description I read earlier from Acts 4, that these words may describe us just as they did that fellowship of God's people in the book of Acts.

Acts 4:46 "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."