

Since February I've been writing about what the church (this church) ought to look like. We're the body of Christ so we ought to look like Jesus. We talked about how Jesus grew (*Luke 2:52*) "In wisdom, and in stature and in favor with God and man." We've looked at the portraits of the infant church and have seen that it grew just like Jesus to look like Jesus. (*Acts 2:42-47* and *4:31-35*) They grew in wisdom because they "devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers, (2:42) "awe came upon every soul," (2:43) and "all who believed were together." (44) and . . . "praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their numbers day by day those who were being saved" (Vs 47). So! - wisdom, stature, favor!

We saw how Jesus established a new covenant in His Blood, (*Luke 22:20*) and gave them a New Commandment (really summarizing the Ten Commandments, (*John. 13:34*) to love one another as He had loved them. He basically summed up what the church would look like in: 1) believing in the sacrifice He made to cleanse us from sin and make us "right" with God and to 2) live out faith by "working itself out in loving others." (*Gal 5:6*)

Sounds simple! However, it is the most demanding "faith" of all! All religion has a code to live by-places to go -sacred texts to believe and religious leaders to follow and obey. And in every religious system there are loopholes because the rules and rituals, (which all religions have) will always be broken. Living by faith in grace alone (which means since we're never gonna measure up to a perfect standard (*Romans 3:23*) Jesus did - then paid the punishment for our shortcomings and if we will give Him our lives, He (by grace) gives us His righteousness). So this is Him, doing in us what we can never do. I.e. Be right with God and Love others like He loves us! This new thing that Jesus did with His followers and the early church was way different than the religion they came out of and that of all the religions around them. Last Sunday we looked at some history to see how we got back to being very religious looking once again, and we will look at in the next couple weeks what course corrections need to be made to get back to looking like Jesus!!

Pastor Mark