

**Greenways Benefice Weekly Devotional (No 31)**  
**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**Authentic Community**

**Bible Readings: 1Thess 5: 12-28      Acts 2: 42-47**

Aesop's fable reminds us of the importance of community and its benefits summed up by a popular phrase: "United we stand divided we fall!"

*A lion used to prowl about a field in which four oxen used to dwell. Many a time he tried to attack them; but whenever he came near they turned their tails to one another, so that whichever way he approached them he was met by the horns of one of them.*

*At last, however, they fell a quarrelling among themselves, and each went off to pasture alone in a separate corner of the field. Then the lion attacked them one by one and soon made an end of all four.*

Whilst recent Covid lockdowns in the UK continue to make it difficult or impossible for people to access social groups, the bible reminds us that true community exists within the unity of the trinity of persons in the Godhead Father, Son & Holy Spirit. The first clue to this wonderful revelation is first mentioned in the book of Genesis.

Then God said, Let us make mankind in our image in our likeness. Gen 1:26

United to God we stand – divided we fall!

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonian's Paul distinguished what made the early Christian community so unique from any other. They had entered into a relationship with God by turning and trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. 1 Thess 1:9. These early Christians were united in their faith together.

They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42

They were united in fellowship described by the word *koinonia*.

***Koinonia*** – koy-nohn-ee-ah The Greek word for fellowship describes a deep special connection that we can have with each other because we are connected to Jesus.

No Jesus no *koinonia*!

It's a relationship that is more than surface deep or engineered by planning and collaboration. Neither is it a relationship that is merely based on who you like and get on well with. *Koinonia* is a unique relationship because it is brought about by the Holy Spirit.

It is this special relationship that explains why those early Christians in the book of Acts were so united in their lives together. It also explains why they were so united in prayer, in power, in preaching, in possessions, and in praise.

This is not normal community but rather extraordinary. It is authentic because community exists in the heart of God and is communicated to us by His Spirit. It also formed the basis of the work and witness for which Paul commended the Thessalonians. 1 Thess 1:3

Paul's final instruction in his letter towards the end of 1 Thessalonians is an exhortation towards one another. Here he tells them to help and comfort the weak; not to pay back wrong for wrong; to pursue good things for one another; to rejoice and give thanks at all times; and to remain open to the Holy Spirit, His gifts and presence.

So even during these challenging times let's focus on the truth that our fellowship exists in God and because of who God is and let us take the opportunity to experience *koinonia* together.

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

God bless,

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