

The Christian's Faith Takes No Holiday Rather It Moves Him To -

Text: Acts 2:42-47

Suggested Hymns:

Tan: 304, 345, 346, 294 ,300

Ade: 304, 773, 345, 346, 300

1) Regular Church attendance

2) Steadfastness in godly virtues

3) Persevering service of Christ and His Church

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Acts 2:42-47, ⁴² *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

⁴³ *Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.* ⁴⁴ *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,* ⁴⁵ *and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

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.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

With this Sunday we are entering upon a season of the church year in which the Christians' faith and steadfastness are often put to a severe strain.

The Festivals of the Church Year, which help to revive the lagging and drooping, and to arouse new life and enthusiasm, do not occur for some six months. One Sunday will be much like the other. All this is a temptation for the Christian to begin to lag in his devotion, to become less faithful in his church attendance and in meeting his obligations as a Christian.

This temptation, however, is increased by the external conditions at this time of the year. Many people from the south often go for holidays to the warmer

northern parts of our country. And holidays usually separate the Christian for a time from his home and his home church.

Many holiday resorts are designed not only to make the Christian forget the toils of his workaday life, but also his church and his God. Then, too, nearly every Sunday, the highways beckon the Christian to sacrifice the quiet hour with God for some new tourist sights, some new pleasures, and some new friends.

As a result many a Christian's life in Christ and with Christ lacks vigour and strength. In some instances the Christian's spiritual life may sink to the point of suspended animation. In other cases even a shipwreck of faith may be suffered and spiritual death follow.

Surely we all realise that this ought not to be. Our faith and steadfastness and perseverance must never be made dependent upon days and seasons.

Let us make sure that we are Christians all the time, every day of our lives, and all seasons of the year. Let us then, on the basis of the history of the church at Jerusalem and under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, remind ourselves that the Christian's faith does not take a holiday. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Christian's Faith Moves Him To Regular Church Attendance

At the time of which the words of our text were spoken, the stirring events of the first Christian Pentecost were past. The sound as of a rushing, mighty wind which on that memorable day had called the multitude together was no longer heard.

The cloven tongues like as of fire, which had been symbols of the power and authority of the apostles to preach the Gospel of Christ, were no longer seen upon them. These visible marks, which had served to draw attention to the wonderful works of God, had ceased.

Undoubtedly many of the pilgrims and strangers who had been stirred by Peter's Pentecost sermon and had received Jesus as their Saviour had returned to their distant homes.

For the Christians at Jerusalem all this meant the return to the uneventful, humdrum existence of their workaday lives. What a temptation for them to lose the enthusiasm which they had received at their conversion and baptism. It would

have been so easy to lapse into their former ways, their former habits, their former associations which had filled their past lives, and to forsake their fellow-Christians for the sake of the friends and the companions of former days!

But none of this happened among the members of the church at Jerusalem. The faith which had been implanted in them, by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and strengthened in them by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism was in them a living, active moving force. Our text says, ⁴² *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

It could not well be otherwise. The preaching of the apostles had taught them the truth, and the truth had made them free. They had learned to know the true source of their discontent, their misery, and their unhappiness. They knew the evil of sin.

But now they also knew the remedy. They knew what alone removed the blight of sin from their lives. It was the life, the suffering and death and the resurrection of Christ which the apostles preached. They were fully persuaded that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleansed them from all sin.

They knew Jesus as their Saviour. They trusted and believed, rejoiced and found comfort in Him. Thus the Gospel of Christ continued to be for them the sweetest story ever told.

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in other words, *"they continued in the apostles' teaching."* The members of the church at Jerusalem were apt and willing pupils, diligent and attentive hearers. Their faith in Christ, their confidence in the Gospel, their reliance upon the merits of Christ, made them desire what the apostles told them about the wonderful works of God as hunger and thirst make people desire food and drink.

It was unthinkable for them to absent themselves deliberately from those gatherings of the Christians where the story of Jesus, their Saviour, was spoken and heard.

"They continued steadfastly ... in fellowship." Their common faith and knowledge of Jesus was to them a stronger bond than ties of family and blood, of business association and material interests. Christ, their personal Saviour, was the magnet which drew them away from these earthly distractions and united

them in the common purpose of growing in faith and knowledge and in the service of God and His kingdom.

“And they continued steadfastly ... in breaking of bread.” There can be no doubt that these words have reference to the Sacrament of the Altar. In the church at Jerusalem, as probably in all the church of apostolic times, the Lord’s Supper was observed with great frequency, usually every Sunday.

It was one of the most impressive features of the Christians’ divine services. At this holy Sacrament the Christians were united with their blessed Saviour in body, mind, and spirit.

As they received the true body and blood of Jesus under the consecrated bread and wine and were thus united with Him in body, their minds dwelt upon the events of the night in which He was betrayed, and their spirits rejoiced in the forgiveness of their sins and the blessed hope of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

These blessings were so inestimably great and desirable that the holy Sacrament, as historians relate, was also regularly brought to the ill and invalid who were unable to attend the public services.

Finally we are told, *“And they continued steadfastly ... in prayers,”* or, as it may be more exactly translated, *“they continued in the prayers.”* It would seem that even these early Christians had certain prayers which became a fixed part of their public worship. Aside from their individual needs, the protection, the progress, and the success of the Church were always current reasons for common prayers and intercessions.

Thus it is evident that these Christians were no part-time Christians. They were always Christians, every day of their lives and at all seasons of the year. Their faith did not take any holidays but moved them to regular church attendance. Their faith impelled them to hear the Word of God regularly, diligently, and attentively.

Their faith in Christ separated them from the distractions of the world and united them in the common purpose to know and serve their Saviour. Their confidence in the Gospel led them to partake of the holy Sacrament frequently for the strengthening of their faith and in testimony of the communion of faith with their fellow-Christians. And finally also the joint prayer with their brethren

imposed upon them the welcome necessity to join with them regularly in public services.

Let us, then, take the example of these early Christians as a guide for our conduct during the coming weeks and months of this non-festival part of the Church Year. The reasons for our doing so are no less compelling for us than they were for them.

At Christmas we rejoiced at the angel's message that unto us was born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. During the Lenten season we saw in solemn awe the suffering and the death of our Saviour for the sins of the world and for our individual sins. At the glorious Easter Festival we saw our triumphant Saviour prove Himself the Resurrection and the Life.

Having heard and seen these wonderful works of God, let us not lightly turn away from them, forget them, or neglect them. Let us rather, like those early Christians, continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers.

The fathers of the Lutheran Church truly walked in the footsteps of that early church at Jerusalem. In their homeland many of them had to trudge weary distances on foot in order that they might hear the Word of God preached in its truth and purity and be united in worship with those who were of the household of faith.

2. The Christian's Faith Moves Him To Steadfastness In Godly Virtues

The Christian's faith takes no Holidays. As it moves him to regular church attendance, so it leads him also to steadfastness in every godly virtue.

When the mighty signs and wonders of the first Christian Pentecost had ceased, less astounding but almost equally compelling occurrences attracted attention to the Christians. Their faith in Jesus transformed their life and their conduct. The Christians differed so much in words and in actions from their unbelieving fellow-men that they became marked people. We read of them in our text. ⁴³ *Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.* ⁴⁴ *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,* ⁴⁵ *and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

Before we object that this example of the early Christians cannot be followed and imitated in our modern age, let us examine these words of our text more closely. We are first told that *“fear came upon every soul”* and that *“many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.”* The last words are plain, for these wonders and signs were done by the apostles in confirmation of the Gospel according to Christ’s promise in Mark 16:17. We read ¹⁷ *“And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues.”*

But not only these signs and wonders, all of which of course are not duplicated today, but also the conduct of Christians in Jerusalem, their words and actions, constrained every person who observed the Christians’ life to stand in fear and reverence and awe of them.

Yes, fear came upon every soul. Whenever and wherever the Christians mingled with their fellow-citizens of Jerusalem, the conversation of the unbelievers became subdued. They did not dare to hold the Christians up to open mockery and scorn.

The lie, that is, that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus from the grave,¹ was possibly less often repeated and even less often believed. The life and conduct of the Christians testified too forcefully that they were worshipping a risen and a living Christ.

Such conduct and behaviour on the part of believing Christians is altogether possible today and with the same telling effect as in Jerusalem. Let the Christian consistently reserve his Sunday morning for the quiet hour with his God and Saviour in His sanctuary. Let the Christian consistently resist the temptation of gambling and lotteries. Let the Christian consistently avoid the entertainments and the amusements which taint the soul. Then the unbeliever will respect him, will stand in awe of him, and will hold him in fear and reverence.

For a consistent Christian is almost as great a miracle in this godless world and age as were the signs and wonders which were done by the apostles. A sincere and consistent Christian, who is known for his faithfulness and steadfastness, will seldom have his ears assaulted with filthy stories by his worldly associates. He will rarely be asked to join in questionable business deals, nor will he be invited to pleasures and amusements which would compromise his

Christian convictions. Thus also in this respect the Christian's faith does not take holidays, but leads him to steadfastness in every godly virtue.

This steadfastness in every Christian virtue the early believers practised especially toward one another. Some people appeal to our text to prove that Socialism has a Scriptural basis and is simply applying Christian principles to everybody. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We indeed read here, ⁴⁴ *Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,* ⁴⁵ *and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.* But if we compare these words with what is related in the fourth and fifth chapters of Acts, it becomes evident that this practise of the church was not a form of Socialism but rather a charitable co-operation of the rich with the poor.

There was nothing compulsory about it but all was done voluntarily. No one was compelled by the church to contribute all that he had. But it is indeed true that the faith of these early Christians took no holidays; for it lead all to have charitable regard for the needs of the brother. No one held that his property was for his own use only. Each one looked upon his possessions as a trust upon which the needy had a just and constant claim.

Here, then, we have again a praiseworthy example of the early Christians which we can and should follow. Let us, too, have due regard for the needs of our brethren, and also for the needs of our church. Where the Christian's faith does not take any holidays but is an active, moving, living force, and that is the only real and true faith, it leads him to steadfastness in every virtue pleasing to God.

3. The Christian's Faith Moves Him To Persevering Service Of Christ And His Church

Once more we say that the Christian's faith takes no holidays. From the church at Jerusalem we learn that it moves him to persevering service of Christ and the Church.

We read in our text, 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. In these words we have a brief description of the daily conduct and behaviour of the Christians in public and in private.

So long as the Temple authorities permitted it,² the Christians went up to the Temple at the hour of prayer,³ and possibly met in the Porch of Solomon,⁴ to hold a service in which the apostles preached the Gospel to the assembled people.

For their more solemn services and for the celebration of the Lord's Supper there seems to have been a number of houses available with large upper rooms,⁵ where a large number of Christians could congregate. These gatherings must always have been a source of strength, the Word of God proclaimed to them increasing their faith and establishing them in true godliness.

Meanwhile their activities in shop and market reflected the strength and power of their faith. They went about their tasks with such evident joy and gladness, their every act and word manifested such calm confidence and trust in God, their Saviour, and every favour was received by them with such sincere praises of God, that the Christians found favour with all the people.

The citizens of Jerusalem simply could not help liking the Christians. And so it also came about that daily some were added to the church. God blessed the steadfastness and faithfulness and perseverance of the church members and increased their joy and gladness by adding daily to the church such as should be saved. The Christians were indeed a blessing to themselves and to others, persevering in the service of Christ and His Church.

So let us also during the coming weeks and months persevere in the service of Christ and His Church. Let us make this season of the year a time when we confess Christ and bear testimony that we are the redeemed children of God.

If we happen to be away from our home, our home surroundings, and our home church, let us not forget our God and Saviour. If at all possible, let us seek our recreations in the company of fellow-Christians.

But we shall also need the services of our home church and regular and frequent participation in the Sacrament of the Altar. Then our lives will also reflect the living faith and the glorious hope that is in our hearts. We, too, shall have true joy and gladness and amid the perplexities of life have the calm assurance and the unshaken confidence in the grace and mercy of God, our

Saviour. The bounties of this season will be an ever-recurring cause for thanks and praises to God.

Indeed, dear friends, the Christian's faith takes no holidays. Christians are always Christians, every day of their lives and at all seasons of the year. God grant that this may be true of all of us. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Matt. 28:15

² See Acts 4

³ Acts 3:1

⁴ Acts 3:11

⁵ Luke 22:12