

Title: “Radical”

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Acts 4:32-35 & 1 John 1:1-4

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Service Readings: Acts 4:32-35, 1 John 1:1-2:2, John 20:19-31

Lesson: *When you realize, when you understand that your identity is anchored in the resurrected Jesus, you understand that your life has been radically transformed. And because you have been radically transformed, you can't help but live a radically transformed life.*

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Acts 4:32-35

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

It almost sounds fictitious, doesn't it? Like someone describing a Hallmark movie they just watched. You can picture the rainbows and sunshine and butterflies, but you know that once the credits roll it's all over and the world will be back to the way it always has been. On the other hand, you know that Scripture is inerrant and so it *has* to be true. So, something happened that caused them to transform how they lived in community with each other. Something caused them to live so radically. What was it? Before we go on, I have just a few words of caution. This passage is not prescriptive. It is not dictating that we must sell our homes and sell our land if we are to call ourselves Christians. Not at all! This passage simply provides us a glimpse of what their experience looked like within their own community of believers. We are called to extrapolate this glimpse and apply it to our own daily lives. If we do that, what might it look like? That last question is really a hard one to answer. Your head tells you that you *should* want to live a radical life for Jesus, but your heart tells you that you couldn't live *that* radically. Maybe there is a semi-radical or sub-radical lifestyle that you could adopt, instead. My goal this morning is to impress upon you this reality: When you realize, when you understand that your identity is anchored in the resurrected Jesus, you understand that your life has been *completely* transformed. The very root of who you are, the very foundation of your identity has been changed because of Christ. And because you have been completely transformed, you can't *help* but live a radical life. I use the word *radical* because it means the fundamental nature of something, the foundation of something. And this *something* is you. And when you are changed so completely, so deeply, when the very core of you is transformed, your actions are transformed as well. And there is no going back to your old way of living.

John describes this head to heart connection in the opening sentences of his letter that we read. Starting in verse 1:

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. **2** The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. **3** We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. **4** We write this to make our joy complete.

You see, they *knew* who Jesus was and they *knew* that Jesus died and rose again. And they *knew* that he did it all for them. But that knowledge itself wasn't enough to make a connection from their head to their heart. Their knowledge wasn't enough to transform them into anything. They needed something more. They needed Jesus himself. And not just the knowledge of Jesus, not just a friendship or relationship with Jesus. They needed something even more than that. And they found it - right there in his resurrection. Not the knowledge of his resurrection; not the belief of his resurrection. No. They found it in his *actual* resurrection. You see, when Jesus gave his life on the cross, he became sin, their sin and *our* sin, and he received their punishment and our punishment. And when God raised Jesus from the grave, he declared that full satisfaction had been made for their sins and ours. Death had been defeated! And since death had been defeated, the disciples had hope - hope in their own resurrection and hope in eternal life. This was the connection between the knowledge of their head and the hope of eternal life that was now in their heart.

You see? Jesus connected them to him when he rose from the grave, and it was with *this* connection, this intimate fellowship with Jesus that they could enjoy fellowship with the Father. And when they had fellowship with Jesus and the Father, they couldn't *stop themselves from* extending this fellowship to the world around them. It was what made their joy complete. And who could blame them? Their identity was anchored in the resurrected Christ. Their identity was found in him. They had become *adopted* into the family of God. How could they *not* express their joy in this way? How could they *not* share this joy with others? You see, they had *no choice* but to live a radical life that reflected their radical transformation!

And this brings us back to our passage in Acts. They were living in a way that reflected how Jesus had radically transformed their lives - both the present and the eternal. They were no longer focused on the things of the world. Their focus had shifted to bringing Jesus' message of hope and salvation to anyone who would listen. And it seems from this passage that those who would listen were the same people that Jesus had reached out to: those who were crushed by sin, those who were cast out of society, those who were hungry and poor. These were the people that they were in fellowship with. They were the people that were hungry to hear this message of hope. But they also were people that had real, worldly needs. They were hungry, they were homeless, they were sick. And so, the community did what it had to do: they met the physical needs so that these people could be open to hearing how Jesus could meet their spiritual needs.

Radical living is not about giving your time and your treasures for the sake of giving your time and your treasures. It's not about setting a goal to tithe 10% so that you can sleep comfortably knowing

that you tithe 10%. The early church wasn't giving their homes and land and food and money so that they could be called good Christians. Radical living is not about any of that. What it *is* about is being changed, being transformed because of what Christ has done for you. And because you are transformed, it is about sharing that transformation with others. What it *is* about is bringing the message of Jesus to the world. It's about sharing the same hope that you have with others. It's about bringing people into a relationship with Jesus. And *hear* this! It is about doing anything and everything that you can to remove every obstacle that keeps a person's ears and heart closed to the Gospel message. Are they hungry? Then feed them first! Give them your own food if that's what you have! But after that, tell them about Jesus. Are they homeless? Then give them shelter - your own if you can't give them any other. But after that, tell them about Jesus. *This is why it is important to give to the church, also - because the church meets the needs of the people that you cannot reach. It feeds the community, it clothes them, it visits them. But after it meets these needs, it tells them about Jesus!*

This is what radical living is all about. This is the radical living that the early church was experiencing, and it is the radical living that we are called to participate in. Are you living this radical lifestyle? If you are not maybe it is because Jesus hasn't yet made that connection between your head and your heart. Or maybe you are blocking him from doing so. In either case, St. Mark is here, and we want to walk with you on your journey. We want to meet you where you are, right now and help realize, help you understand that your identity is anchored in the resurrected Jesus, and that your life has been radically transformed. And when you realize that, just watch how you live radically.

Please pray with me.

Lord,

The early church lived out their radical transformation through selfless giving and serving. We read this passage and use it as a measure of our own generosity. But you have reminded us today that it is not in *what* we give or *how* we serve but is in *who* we serve and *why* we serve. We serve you - the one who gave us hope for eternal life. You have transformed us, and we are a new creation. Continue to remind us of this and motivate us to reflect this reality out in the world around us. In your name we pray. Amen