

“Awe” A sermon by Lee Ireland  
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church  
May 7, 2017 Fourth Sunday of Easter  
Acts 2:42-47

Prayer: Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.

What words or ideas stood out to you as you listened to me read these verses from the Book of Acts? For me, one word and one idea captured my imagination. I was intrigued by the word awe, **awe came upon everyone**. The idea - selling possessions and sharing the proceeds as **‘they had need.’** Let’s take a closer look at these two.

Awe came upon everyone. Awe, a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder. When was the last time you had a feeling of reverential respect mixed with fear or wonder? Have we become so sophisticated that we no longer feel awe? I hope not!

Our recent kayaking trip down the Colorado River starting at Hoover Dam. As we kayaked by brown and red stone cliffs that soared 300 foot straight up from the river’s edge, I felt awe for God’s creative power. That morning we beached our kayaks and hiked into a couple of canyons with streams that emptied into the constant 58-degree water of the river. The water flowing in the canyon streams was warm and got warmer as we hiked deeper into the canyon. What made the water so hot that folks dammed up the streams to create natural hot tubs? Again, wonder at God’s creative power. Further down the river our kayaks slipped into a shallow cave called Emerald Cave. Inside the cave, the roof glowed emerald green, a glow created by the sun’s reflection on the emerald green bottom of the river. Awe, reverential respect for God’s creative power. So many times that day I was taken by the beauty and immensity of God’s creation that we enjoy.

You’ve had those moments in your life where you couldn’t help but feel God’s stamp on the world you were experiencing at that moment. Some of you have told me of such experiences. How you were in awe of God’s creative power.

But these ‘God’ experiences are not limited to the out-of-doors, to nature. Many of you who attended the Wednesday Lenten Services related in your survey response that the services opened a new experience of God to you. The word awe wasn’t used, but you indicated that you felt God’s presence each evening. Practically all of the surveys indicated that you wanted to continue meeting. You didn’t want to lose this intimate feeling you experienced. That’s why we’re continuing this type of service beginning on June 7<sup>th</sup>.

Perhaps those of you who attended the Wednesday Lenten services can relate to the feelings of the new Christ-followers mentioned in Acts. The scripture says that awe came upon everyone. That awe led them to share all in common, to spend time in prayer in the temple, to share meals together. Like many of you Wednesday worship folks, these early Christians wanted to continue their time together. Their behavior was so unusual, in a good way, that it attracted the attention of many in the Jerusalem. As the scripture says, they had **the goodwill of all the people**.

As Christ-followers, following the example of these early converts to Christianity would be ideal. They prayed together in the Temple. They listened to the apostle's teachings. They enjoyed fellowship. They ate together. They shared everything.

Now, the idea of selling possessions and sharing the proceeds.

Some of you probably question how that could happen today. Interestingly, this description of sharing is mentioned only in this chapter of Acts, unless, of course, you want to consider how Jesus' ministry was maintained. Jesus didn't have a job, he and his disciples always had enough. Jesus lived in such a sharing community.

Let me say to you right now that I'm certainly not going to tell you to sell your possessions and donate the money to the church. What I do want us to look at is what motivated this sharing. Why were the disciples and the early Christ-followers sharing so generously? Why were their numbers being added to day by day? Why were they in awe?

The last verse of our reading answers that question. **And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.** Early in verse 43, we learn that many signs and wonders were being done by the apostles. This isn't quite the correct translation. The correct translation would be that many signs and wonders were being done through the apostles. The motivation for the sharing and the awe, the origin of the signs and wonders – the Lord.

The Lord, through the Holy Spirit that had arrived at Pentecost, inspired and motivated these first Christ-followers. It was because of God acting through these folks that they sold their property and shared the proceeds, that they eagerly listened and learned, that they shared meals, that they were in awe of God's action in their lives.

Is that same Holy Spirit still around today? Yes, I believe the Spirit is still here. Otherwise, how would I be so taken by God's creation on our kayak trip? How would you have these feelings of wanting to continue the Wednesday evening services? It's through God's action in our lives through the Holy Spirit.

I'm often in awe of God's actions in our lives through the Holy Spirit. I am in awe when I see the Holy Spirit at work on those days we fill 100 food bags, during discussions at Tuesday Bible study. I am in awe when I see the Holy Spirit at work in our Sunday worship, when I hear of the ladies sorting clothing for folks down valley. I see the Holy Spirit at work in the pictures of the children's faces when they dig in the dirt in the children's garden. Yes, I am in awe when I see the Holy Spirit at work when we pray together on Sunday morning and share fellowship at our First Sunday Meal.

God through the Holy Spirit inspires us to help others, to spend time together praising God and praying, to break bread together here at the communion table and in the coffee hour. God through the Holy Spirit is alive and well in our community, just as we read about that first Christian community.

This week, look around and see and how God through the Holy Spirit is working in your life and in this community. Does what you see inspire a bit of awe? I certainly hope so!