

If you've been here for the last 3 Sundays we've been developing the Biblical idea of renewal, looking at the vital signs of a renewed person and imagined from Acts 2 what a renewed church may look like.

I do like the statements in Acts 2

'Everyone was filled with awe'

'The community enjoyed the favour of the people'

'The Lord added to their number those who were being saved'

God at work

Church community having a good reputation

People being found by the Lord

I. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our gatherings were overcome with a sense of awe, a sense of God among us although I do feel we approach this from time to time? Do you pray that God will meet us in powerful ways when we gather or would that be too much? Business as usual is less demanding – **'Everyone was filled with awe!'**

II. I was listening to the radio as I was driving back from a funeral in Mosgiel on Tuesday. I heard the dreadful story of the widespread and repeated abuse of children and young people in another Christian denomination over many, many years. It was quite sickening both in its extent and the few attempts made to deal with it. Such behaviour affects all who name Jesus as their Lord. We must work hard to claim or reclaim the favour of the community (as the case may be) – this is our task. I feel we've gone some way with this as we co-operate with the school next door, but there are other groups very wary of having church connections – work to do there. How often have I heard, 'I thought you were a Christian?' And I've thought I'm sure, 'but I thought **they** were Christians.' I recall the Principal's PA at school used to say, in jest of course, 'and you, a man of the cloth?' **'The community enjoyed the favour of the people.'**

III. And this picture of the Lord adding to the community fills my heart with hope and joy. **'The Lord added to their number those who were being saved.'** Don't you long to see a steady stream of people welcoming Jesus into their lives? Don't you long to see members in your family say yes to him?

Today we ponder the question, how can a community which is being renewed in the Holy Spirit impact on the world around it. I'm going to take a slightly easy route. At some point in the future I'd like to talk more fully about 'the world' but today I simply want to mention some of the ways in which we can engage with the communities and the people in them around us.

- a. Know the world we live in

Matthew 10:16

'I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.'

The context is when Jesus sent out the 12.

This is an instruction to be aware of the world we're living in – we don't need to be told that largely it's an environment hostile to Jesus' teaching. Not everyone will respond positively towards us, some will try to rip us off. I've lost count of how many people have contacted asking for petrol to go to see their sick uncle in Kew hospital. We need to understand how the world operates, how people operate.

But then Jesus says we're to be as innocent as doves – the idea behind this metaphor is that of being unmixed – what people see is what they get.

b. Pray

1 Timothy 2:1-4

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, 4 who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Pray – never known a move of God that wasn't accompanied by praying. I'm grateful for the two people who join Martin, Trudy and I on Wednesdays at 5 - used to be three others. Of course it's inconvenient but not for everyone. Is it ever convenient to pray? We tried 9:40 before morning service, not really convenient either. Now I know there are other groups and individuals who pray. Thank God there are – the mark of a 'being renewed church' is praying.

Praying for all people, knowing this pleases God who wants all people to be saved and come to know the truth. And also in our prayers take note of Matthew 9.

Matthew 9:36-38

36 When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, 'the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'

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c. Be ready to respond

1 Peter 3:15

15 But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

Have reverence for Jesus

Be ready to answer the question why even though it may never come

The way we speak is important

d. How we act before and relate to those yet to trust Jesus

Colossians 4:5-6

5 Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Wisdom

Taking opportunities

Gracious conversation: I sat next to a young man doing an MA in physiology on Tuesday night at the 'Importance of being Ernest.' I guess I probed, seeing if I could pick up any interest in things beyond Physiology which, incidentally, isn't something I know a lot about. At the end of the night he said 'thanks for the wonderful conversation' – at no point did he ask me a question about me – the price we pay for seeking to bear witness to Jesus – listening and questioning; probing.

