

**Pastor Paul Bawden**  
**Grace Evangelical Church**  
**Sunday, April 11, 2010**  
**Communion Sunday**  
**"The Breaking Of The Bread"**  
**Acts 2:37-47**

### **"Seeing Is Believing."**

An old saying which I'm sure you are familiar with. Perhaps you have even used those words at different times.

These words are particularly applicable to our text today.

Jesus had established His table during Passover just before His crucifixion, His burial, and bodily resurrection. Then after His bodily resurrection, as Dr. Luke tells us, Jesus showed Himself to His disciples and many others during the 40 days before His ascension into heaven.

The disciples thought that now Jesus had conquered the grave that He would set up His kingdom on earth, which they thought He would do before He died and was buried. Since He was alive, they asked Him when He would restore the kingdom to Israel.

Jesus told His disciples in Acts 1 that it wasn't for them to know the Father's time table but that the Holy Spirit would come upon them, and they were to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the remotest parts of the earth.

Jesus ascended into heaven. Those watching His ascent were told by the angels that Jesus who was taken up would return to earth.

The disciples and those with them returned to Jerusalem to the upper room where they continued with one mind in prayer. Ten days later was the feast of Pentecost, 50 days after the Feast of First Fruits (a type of the resurrection of Jesus Christ). The Feast of Pentecost was the Greek name for the Feast of Weeks, so-called because it fell seven weeks after the Feast of First Fruits. The Day of Pentecost marks the beginning of the church, as the Holy Spirit came that day on the Jews gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. It celebrated the wheat harvest, as two loaves of bread were used for a wave offering and different sacrifices were made along with the grain offering and drink offerings.

What happened on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon those present started a whole new dimension for the Christ's disciples and for the world. For at that time of the Holy Spirit's coming, the church began, with the gospel coming to the Jews as Peter preached on Pentecost and 3000 responded to the message of the gospel, the Christ died, was buried, and conquered the grave bodily. Eventually the gospel of Christ was taken to the Gentiles in Acts 10, to the house of Cornelius, and it was evident that God was starting something new, the Jew and Gentile in one body, the church of Jesus Christ.

But before we get too far into the Book of Acts, let's pick up the text in Acts 2:37 right after Peter preached his stirring and convicting message that risen ascended Christ was the Jews Messiah and Savior.

**Let's read Acts 2:37-47.**

**Note particularly Acts 2:42, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostle's teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer."**

**Then notice as well Acts 2:47b, "And the Lord was adding to the number day by day those who were being saved."**

**What caught my attention in verse 2:42 were the words, "to the breaking of bread." It is used also in Acts 2:46, "and breaking of bread from house to house."**

Let's consider in more depth these words, "the breaking of bread."

### **I. The meaning of the words, the breaking of bread.**

What do these words, "breaking of the bread" mean?" These words have to refer to the Lord's table, as we call it, that Jesus established on the night He commemorated the last Passover with His disciples. When He took the bread, Jesus broke it, and said, "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Then, with the third cup, the cup of redemption, Jesus took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." And they all drank from it.

Jesus continued, "Truly I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). Paul adds in I Corinthians 11:26, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He come."

The "breaking of the bread" was evidently a central part of the New Testament believers when they got together to worship the Lord. As 2:46 tells that this occurred in the temple, and then in the homes as they worshipped together. I had a prof in seminary who thought that whenever they ate bread they were thinking of the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Perhaps so, but the believers when they commemorated the Lord's Table were thinking about what Jesus had done for them in His death, burial, and bodily resurrection, what He was doing for them now in heaven, as their intercessor, how He was affecting their lives presently, and that He would be coming again for them.

Don't overlook here that it is only 50 days or so since Jesus died, was buried, and conquered the grave bodily. It was just ten days or so from His ascension and the promise that He would return for them.

**How awesome this must have been for the disciples of Christ and the new believers in Jesus. Commemorating breaking of the bread had implications that Jesus could return for them at any time.**

**Those who had seen the resurrected Christ were filled with anticipation and joy as they broke bread together. Perhaps they explained to the new believers the meaning of all of this.**

**To them, seeing was believing.**

But there is more in the words, "the breaking of the bread."

### **II. The breaking of the bread was the eternal basis of the other aspects of the church.**

Note again Acts 2:42. This is the classic verse in the word of God for what should be included in the ministry of a local Church. It is the Christian Education proof text for what should be included in the Christian Education of the local church.

#### **1. The apostles teaching (Acts 2:42).**

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching – instruction, doctrine.

### **(1) The meaning of the words.**

The words, “continually devoted,” mean that it is an ongoing continuous experience. Devoted means to engage intently, to persist in the teaching of the apostles. This meant that the people were eager to learn what the apostles had to say about God’s word, perhaps how they explained the Old Testament to them, for the New Testament had not been written as yet. That’s what Peter did in his message on the Day of Pentecost. He explained to them how the Old Testament talked about Christ and how He fulfilled that in His death, burial and bodily resurrection.

### **(2) New Testament times.**

The apostles were teaching the new believers that the Old Testament was true because Christ came as foretold, died, was buried, and conquered the grave to demonstrate that Christ is not only the true Messiah and Savior, but also the very Old Testament that talked about Christ prophetically was true as well.

### **(3) For us today.**

Today we have the completed Word of God in the Bible. Why do we believe that the Old Testament is true? Why do we believe that the four Gospels are true? Why do we believe that the Epistles are true and the Book of Revelation? There is only one reason. Jesus Christ foretold in the Old Testament has come. He died, but that wasn’t the end of Him. If it were the end of Christ, the Old Testament would not be true, and there would be no need of the four Gospels, the Book of Acts, the Epistles, or the Book of Revelation. But the great news is that Jesus Christ has come, as foretold in the Old Testament, He lived on earth, He died, was buried and conquered the grave so now we know that the Gospels, the Book of Acts, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation are true.

As we break bread together today, we are not just commemorating the reality that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice for our sin, but that His death, burial, and bodily resurrection substantiate the historicity and validity of God’s Word the Bible.

### **(4) The challenge.**

The challenge for each of us is to have continual intent and persistence to read the Bible and let it speak to us, and to study the Bible and to learn more of what it says to us in our personal lives, our family lives, our church life, our neighborhoods, at work, and at school.

Paul wrote this to the Romans, “Whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance (endure, keep going in the grind), and the encouragement (parakelo – cheer us on to serve the Lord) of the Scriptures we might have hope” (15:4). Hope is believing that God has something good in mind for each of us, His will for our good and His glory.

That is basically referring to the Old Testament. But in the New Testament we are told that “We are to be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the Word of Truth’ (II Timothy 2:15).

God’s word is our anchor in the storm, our beacon in the dark, our hope in death, and our daily life and joy. I trust you are in the Word of God each day. Yes, the Scripture exhorts us to come together for praise and teaching of the Word of God. I also encourage you to be part of the Christian Education Classes. There are classes for the children and the youth. There are also two adult Bible Classes. Check them out. Be challenged to learn and grow in your walk with the Lord where you can discuss and pray for one another.

**But this is all possible because of the “breaking of the bread.” Seeing is believing.**

## 2. Fellowship (Acts 2:42).

**The word for fellowship is koinonia. It means to have things in common in a relationship.**

**Believers in Christ have many things in common in their relationship with Jesus Christ in His Church. We have the same head who is our Authority and Director (Ephesians 1:22-23). We have the same life, for we all believers in Christ possess His resurrection life. Yes as Paul told the Ephesians, we are apart of one body, have the one Spirit, have one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all (4:1-6).**

**This means that our vertical relationship with the Lord should cause us to have a positive experience horizontally in our individual lives, in our family lives, our church life, and whoever we have contact with.**

That's why Jesus stated that if we love Him we will obey Him, or keep His commandments. Love is not a feeling that is here today and gone tomorrow. Rather it is a commitment to Jesus to do His will in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Are you in fellowship vertically with the Lord? You can check up on your relationship with Him as to whether or not you do His will. Certainly, we will fail Him at times, but He is there to forgive us as we confess our sin, and go on in fellowship with Him. On the other side of the coin, if we have constant struggles in our personal and family relationships horizontally, we need to check up on how we are doing in our relationship with the Lord.

Koinonia is much more than coffee and donuts, although that maybe part of it. It is encouraging one another in the Lord. Standing in the gap in prayer for one another. Forgiving one another if need be. Yes, koinonia is enjoying each other's company.

It's in essentials unity.  
In non-essentials, love.  
In all things, Jesus Christ.

**But I would note here as well that there would be no real koinonia without the breaking of bread, the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

Again, in the Old Testament there was fellowship with God through the Mosaic worship system, but that was a temporary system. It looked forward to a fulfillment in the Savior. If He hadn't come, died, was buried, and rose bodily from the grave, there would be no direct access to God through Christ as the New Testament teaches. The veil in the temple would not have been rent. There would not be a new way to the Father through faith in Jesus. But praise the Lord, there is the remembrance of the breaking of the bread, so we know there is true fellowship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, and true fellowship with each other in the body of Christ.

**Seeing is believing.**

## 3. Prayer (Acts 2:42).

The word for prayer is used of prayer to God. It is beseeching God the Father in intercession for God's work in the church, for the needs of others, and for one individual and family needs. Prayer certainly is vital part of our lives individually, for our families, and our church family. Pray binds us together to beseech God to act in our lives for the progress of His kingdom in this world. When we pray, God works. When we work, we work. Something happens when God's people pray. That's why I encourage us to keep praying for those in our family, those in the church family. Yes, for God to work in our neighborhoods and communities, yes, in our government, and for our military.

Christ told us to continually pray (present tense – to God) and not lose heart (Luke 18:1).

### **Things looked bleak for the children of George Muller's orphanage at Ashley Downs in England.**

It was time for breakfast, and there was no food. A small girl whose father was a close friend of Muller was visiting in the home. Muller took her hand and said, "Come and see what our Father will do." In the dining room, long tables were set with empty plates and empty mugs. Not only was there no food in the kitchen, but there was no money in the home's account.

Muller prayed, "Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat." Immediately, they heard a knock at the door. When they opened it, there stood the local baker. "Mr. Muller," he said, "I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you had no bread for breakfast, so I got up at 2 o'clock and baked fresh bread. Here it is." Muller thanked him and gave praise to God. Soon, a second knock was heard. It was the milkman. His cart had broken down in front of the orphanage. He said he would like to give the children the milk so he could empty the cart and repair it.

**Someone has said,**

**If the request is wrong, God says, "No."**

**If the timing is wrong, God says, "Slow."**

**If you are wrong, God says, "Grow."**

**But if the request is right, the timing is right and you are right, God says, "Go!"**

**If you are praying for something, and still have no specific answer, I encourage you to keep praying!!**

**Again, prayer is the vehicle that God has given us based upon the "breaking of the bread."** There was prayer in the Old Testament, but David looked toward Jerusalem when he prayed outside the city. Daniel looked toward Jerusalem when he prayed in the Babylonian court. Why? That is where the temple was, where God would come in His glory.

If Christ had not come as prophesied in the Old Testament, lived on earth, died, and conquered the grave, there would be no direct access to the Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. Since He came and died to pay the penalty for our sin, was buried, and conquered the grave, the believer has direct access to the Father through Jesus Christ. We come boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy and help in the time of need. We don't have to bring a bullock, a lamb, or a turtledove. The Lamb of God has come, fulfilled and terminated the Old worship system, so now we come directly to God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Seeing is believing.**

#### **4. Service (Acts 2:47b).**

**"And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."**

Evidently believers were reaching out to others needing the Lord and sharing with them the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were not sitting around in a holy huddle saying how wonderful it was to know the Lord, study His word, and pray.

The believers had a vision beyond themselves. Evidently, their prayers were not just for the body of believers but for those who lived around them, and those with whom they came in contact. Doing evangelism is not easy. It means building friendships, being open to where people are in their thinking, and being available to the Lord to say a word for Him with the opportunity comes.

Have you handed out a tract recently, or prayed for someone you know who needs to experience the love of Jesus Christ?

**Notice as well that the New Testament believers helped each other as they shared with those who had needs (Acts 2:44-45). This** was not communal living or “communism” as some have thought. Rather, since they were all attached to Jesus, when needs were recognized, those who could help sold some of what they had to minister to them.

**Again we would have no gospel to share, that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again from the grave without “the breaking of the bread.” We have no lasting service unless there is “the breaking of the bread.” We serve a risen Savior.**

**The validity of the Bible, fellowship, prayer, service, all have their eternal basis in “the breaking of the bread.”**

Yes, seeing is believing!

**III. The breaking of the bread gives the eternal reason to celebrate (Acts 2:46:b, 47b).**

**“They were taking their meals with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with the people. Acts 2:43 says that there was a feeling of awe, and God did different miracles among them.**

When the Lord transforms the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit, one’s life is given an entirely eternal meaning. There is gladness (extreme joy) of heart. There is sincerity of heart (that is not a rough heart, but a genuine heart). Indeed a heart that is filled with the Spirit, that has a song in its heart of praise to God, knowing that it is more blessed to give than to receive. A heart that reaches out to others for they found favor with the people.

Why can we celebrate God’s love for us? Why can we rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice? Why can we bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name?

**Again, there is the “breaking of the bread.” Jesus has come has promised. He lived on planet earth. He died to pay the penalty for our sin. He was buried, and He rose again from the grave bodily.**

We can rejoice today in the Lord, be in awe of Him, because of “the breaking of the bread.” The “breaking of the bread” is the eternal reason we can celebrate today as we partake of these elements before us on this table.

Many there at Pentecost in the Book of Acts had seen the risen Christ. To them **seeing was believing.**

Many there had not seen the risen Christ. They only had the words of the eyewitnesses that Jesus had died for them, was buried, and rose again for them. Yet they believed. In the physical sense they had not seen the Lord, yet they believed for they saw Him through the eye of faith.

Still the breaking of the bread was the physical evidence that Jesus had come, died to pay the penalty for their sins, and conquered the grave to give the believe His eternal forgiveness and life. Through the eye of faith Jesus was alive and well.

To them, **seeing was believing.**

We are in that same situation today. We believe the eyewitnesses, although we have not seen the risen Lord physically.

Still we have these elements before us today, the breaking of the bread, and the cup, the physical representations of Jesus Christ as Savior.

Through the eye of faith we believe.

**Seeing is believing.**

**“The Breaking Of The Bread” tells us that Jesus is alive forever more and is our Savior through faith in Him. The word of God, fellowship, prayer, service, and joy are real and eternal because they are based on the ‘BREAKING OF THE BREAD.’**

This cartoon certainly depicts what the “breaking of the bread” is all about.

**Let’s enjoy living with Christ’s life within us this week knowing that seeing is believing!!!**