

Acts Pt.3: Ac.2.42-47
Sermon of 2021-06-06

By Major Brian Coles

Based on TSN's top 50 players' poll, this year's #1 ranked player in the NHL, for the 4th year in a row, is... drumroll please [slide 1] Edmonton Oilers Captain, Connor McDavid.

Granted, Connor has a lot of talent as a hockey player, but how does he make it look so easy?

If you asked him, I'd bet dollars to donuts he'd tell you he **continually devotes** himself to the game he loves to play - whether it's practicing face-offs, puck handling, skating, or off-ice conditioning.

By **continually devoting** himself to these skills and practices he models the **lifestyle** of a professional hockey player.

[slide 2] What does all that have to do with our message today from the book of Acts? Glad you asked!

On the day of Pentecost, Luke tells us in 2.41 that about 3,000 people put their trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Luke then goes on to show us what the **lifestyle** of these new Jesus followers looks like. He shows us how these new followers of Jesus **continually devoted** themselves to 3 important practices.

These are the same 3 practices we can continually devote ourselves to in order for us to model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus.

What then, is the 1st important practice we can continually devote ourselves to for us to model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus?

[slide 3] **The 1st important practice is to learn together.** Look at v.42, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.” This was the lifestyle modeled by these followers of Jesus.

Note that they were not enjoying some mystical experience driven by emotion only, which led them to disdain the study of God’s word.

Nor did they imagine that, because they had received the Holy Spirit, he was the only teacher they needed and thus, they could dispense with human teachers.

On the contrary, they continually devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.

And at the core of the apostles’ teaching was the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom of God – about God’s kingship and saving reign,

which brings forgiveness of sins and God’s salvation to all who will believe in God’s Messiah, Jesus.

We discover that message of the kingdom throughout the book of Acts – Ac. 1.3; 8.12; 14.22; 19.8; 20.25; 28.23, 31.

And the message of the kingdom of God, which made up the bulk of the teaching of the apostles, and which the followers of Jesus devoted themselves to, was continual. How do we know that?

The Gk. verb Luke uses for ‘devoted’ - προσ-καρ-τερο-οῦντες [**pros-kar-ter-ountes**] - is in the present tense with an active voice.

That means you can translate 'devoted' as 'they continually devoted' or 'continued persistently in' the teaching of the apostles.

They continued persistently in, or were continually devoted to, the teaching of the apostles in order to grow in their r'ship with the risen Jesus.

This continual devotion to learning together is an important part of the lifestyle modeled by followers of Jesus.

And the teaching of the apostles', to which they were continually devoted, was authenticated by miracles. Luke tells us in v.43, "...many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles."

This reference to their teaching being authenticated by miracles was no accident. As the apostle Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 12.12, the things that marked a true apostle were signs, wonders, and miracles."

Since the teaching of these apostles has come down to us in its definitive form in the NT,

we are to continually devote ourselves to studying and applying its teaching to our own lives to grow in our r'ship with the risen Jesus and become the people he desires we become,

which, as Luke is careful to point out, focuses on being Spirit-empowered witnesses for Jesus; witnesses not only in word but also in deed, as modeled by our lifestyle.

One of the best ways to continually devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching is by participating in a small group.

We can best learn together in a small group. If you've hosted a bible study in your home before the pandemic, then in step 1 of our provincial restart plan, you can have up to 5 people in your home for an event like a Bible Study.

One of the ways we can model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus is by learning together, by continually devoting ourselves to the apostles' teaching not just on Sundays, but also in our small groups.

What then, is the 2nd important practice we can devote ourselves to in order for us to model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus?

[slide 4] **The 2nd important practice is to share together.** Look at v.42, "they [continually] devoted themselves to, ... the fellowship."

The word Luke uses for fellowship is κοινωνία which comes from the root word κοινά, which means 'in common'.

It's a word that expresses how we can share together. This is what Luke is referring to when he describes, in v.44, how all the believers had everything in κοινά, or, in common.

And having everything in common they **shared** their possessions and goods. Look at v.45, "Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as they had need."

This was the lifestyle modeled by followers of Jesus.

What's important for us to note here is that this sharing was voluntary not compulsory. We know this because the tense of both verbs in v.45 is imperfect,

Which means that the selling and giving were occasional in response to particular needs. It wasn't just a one-time thing and it wasn't an all the time thing either.

What we can take away from this is that we are all called to share the things we have, especially towards those less fortunate than us, without expecting anything in return.

For example, you can consider giving to the new Harbour Light building. Your single act of generosity can change a life.

Once this new facility is completed, they will be able to offer people with addictions the life-skills they need for long-term success, the spiritual guidance and healing they need, as well as significantly expanding their community meals program.

As John wrote in his 1st letter 3.17, "if we have material possessions and see a brother or sister in need,

but do not share what we have with him or her, how can we claim that God's love dwells in us."

We can model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus by continually devoting ourselves to the fellowship,

as we share together our goods and possessions, so far as we are able, with anyone in need.

In addition to sharing our goods and possessions, we can also share meals with others. Why do I say that?

[slide 5] I say that because “the breaking of bread” in v.42 is so closely connected grammatically with “the fellowship,” it seems likely that part of the disciples’ sharing also included sharing meals together,

as Luke indicates here in v.42 and again in v.46, where “They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”

So “bread” is used by Luke here as a metaphor for a common meal.

Sharing meals with others, whether with several people or just one person, is something many of us can do as followers of Jesus.

Grounding this common meal in the same *κοινωνία*, or common fellowship, that produces the sharing of possessions and goods is how we can model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus.

What then, is the 3rd important practice we can devote ourselves to in order for us to model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus?

[slide 6] **The 3rd important practice is to pray together.** Again in v.42 Luke writes, “They [continually] devoted themselves to... prayer.”

Their *κοινωνία*, or common fellowship, was expressed not only in terms of their continual devotion to the

apostolic teaching and the sharing of possessions, goods, and meals together, but also by praying together.

The corporate prayers, in which the largest number of believers gathered together, were probably held in the temple courts, as v.46 indicates.

And, as the latter half of v.46 and on to v.47 implies, they supplemented praying together in the temple courts

with praying together in smaller groups in their homes, as they gathered to share meals together.

Like those first followers of Jesus, we can model that same lifestyle by devoting ourselves to prayer, individually, in our small groups, and in our corporate meetings together.

[slide 7] And what is the outcome of modeling this lifestyle as a follower of Jesus? Look at v.47, "... and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Modeling the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus is an effective way to evangelize, to share the good news about Jesus.

Note that evangelism, or sharing the good news about Jesus, frames this whole paragraph.

Luke begins in v.41 telling us people were being saved through the Spirit-empowered preaching of Peter

and ends in v.47 with the Lord adding daily to their number those who were being saved.

People were being saved *from* sin and death, and saved *for* life eternal as a citizen in God's kingdom

as they heard the word and as they saw the lifestyle of Jesus' followers. No wonder thousands were being saved!

[slide 8] Imagine what might happen here, in Greater Vancouver, if all of us began modelling the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus

by continually devoting ourselves to learning together from the Bible and applying its teaching to our lives,

by sharing together and giving what we can of our possessions and goods to anyone as they have need, as well as sharing meals together with someone,

and by praying – individually, in our small groups, and corporately together?

It's important for us to understand that we cannot separate these 3 lifestyle practices or leave one of them out without damaging the all of them.

If we paid no attention to the bible's teaching, we would quickly revert to the worldview or mindset of our surrounding culture

and end up with minds shaped by whatever social pressures are most persuasive now. Jesus would become a weak influence or dim memory in our lives at best.

If we ignore sharing our possessions and goods with others in need and sharing meals together, we will become isolated and find it difficult to sustain a living, vibrant faith.

If we disregard praying together, we are forgetting that as Jesus' followers we are heaven and earth people.

Prayer makes no sense unless heaven and earth are designed and destined by God to be joined together in a renewed creation, as Rev. 21 and other bible texts makes clear,

and that we have a part to play in that; in fulfilling the pray, "your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."

To model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus, continual devotion to these 3 important practices is vital. They are foundational to our very existence as believers.

And we can model this lifestyle through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

There is an attractiveness to a life in which we are putting into practice what the Bible teaches.

There is an attractiveness to a life in which we stop clinging to everything we have and start sharing them with others.

There is an attractiveness to a life in which we pray for others and for one another. And that attractiveness will draw people to Jesus.

Let's sing together song 317 / 318 "Burning, burning" as our united prayer this morning as we seek, with the Holy Spirit's empowering presence, to model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus.

Prayer: Father in heaven, we ask for your Spirit to fill us and empower us that we might model the lifestyle of a follower of Jesus;

a lifestyle whereby we continually devote ourselves to learning together from your word and putting into practice what we learn,

to sharing together, as we are able, our possessions and goods as well as meals with others, and by praying together.

As we model this lifestyle may those who watch us be attracted to you, Jesus, and be saved and added to our number. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.