

INTRO

- Have you ever been the recipient of someone's radical kindness and generosity? Share.

The story of Jesus does not end with Jesus. It continues in the lives of those who believe in and follow him. The book of Acts continues his life and mission through his Spirit and his Church.

READ

Acts 20:36—21:14

REFLECT & RESPOND

In Acts 1:8, Jesus declared to his followers: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

As we look at the final chapters of Acts, taking place some 25 years and more after Jesus said those words, we see just how true they've become.

At the end of his third missionary journey, Paul is on his way to Jerusalem. It is a sobering journey for him and his companions as he has been forewarned by the Spirit of what awaits him (cf. Acts 20:22-24).

The passage gives us a glimpse of three characteristics of the church at that time.

#1: DIVERSITY

What began as a Jewish messianic movement has now become diverse: Jews/gentiles, men/women, old/young, all treated as equals. The gospel breaks down human barriers creating equality while celebrating our distinctiveness.

Qu: A core part of the vision of our church is what we see in the early church: a multi-ethnic, diverse community. In what ways can you help towards this vision? Where do you find it challenging?

#2: HOSPITALITY

Along the way, the Christian community rallies around him in various ways: practically, emotionally, spiritually, and materially. One of the greatest impacts of the gospel on the surrounding culture was the radical hospitality of early Christians. The church welcomed people regardless of cultural, national, and socio-economic backgrounds out of love and was characterized by self-sacrifice.

Qu: How can we practice hospitality today in a city like Toronto?

#3: CENTRALITY

"Let the will of the Lord be done." (21:14)

Finally, despite the well-intentioned care and concern for Paul, the church community kept love for God and his will central, even if it meant Paul's suffering and death for the sake of the gospel.

Qu: In what ways can we help one another keep love for God and love for people central to our lives? What does that look like practically?

RESPOND & PRAY

- Pray for needs in your group, and see how you can practice hospitality to meet those needs
- Pray over our church's vision:

As a church we envision being a multi-ethnic people of all ages who passionately follow Jesus together on His mission to bring gospel transformation to the people and culture of Toronto and, through it, to the world.