

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Easter - 4/25/10 – Acts 2:41-47; Luke 6:17-26 – Following First Lutheran’s Mission Trail**

How many of you have seen the Fidelity advertisement about following their investment trail? It’s an interesting ad that touches on our need to plan ahead, make wise decisions about what we invest in so that we’ll be able to have a more secure and enjoyable life.

That got me to thinking about what we invest our lives in: relationships, jobs, material things, volunteer service, and Christ. So this morning I want to talk about investing in Christ as we walk our First Lutheran Mission Trail. It’s based on our lesson from Acts 2:41-47 and speaks to our need to build our lives on Christ, center our lives in the Scripture, invest ourselves in continuing the work of Jesus, discover our passion for sharing Christ’s love, mentor children, care for each other, and bring Christ’s love in tangible form to those in need.

In this text from Acts, we catch a glimpse of what we might call “the emerging church.” The fertile soil of the church’s beginning was in “cell groups.” These were small groups of perhaps 12-24 people who gathered in homes. The text indicates that when they came together they studied the Scriptures and the teachings of the Apostles, prayed, shared pot luck suppers, and concluded with worship and the Lord’s Supper. They were amazed at what the Risen Christ was doing in and through the community as they continued the work of Jesus. Finally, they pooled their resources so that they could care for each other and those beyond the community as they lived out the Lord’s Prayer to “provide each other with daily bread” or the basic necessities of life. In this small group they experienced the presence and power of the Risen Christ. Christ’s love was made tangible, encouragement felt, and passion for service fired up. Love for Jesus and what they experienced in this community led these first Christians to invest in following Jesus’ mission trail. This is what gave meaning and purpose to their lives. This is where they discovered the abundant life.

Let’s go back to our opening question: What are we most invested in? Given all the changes and uncertainties of life, what gives us security and hope? Is God truly our refuge and strength, a very present help? Given the hectic pace of life and the competing demands for our time and energy, at the end of the day, what gives us a sense of satisfaction, a feeling that we’ve made a difference? What brings us joy? As followers of Christ, it is our relationship with our risen Lord that grounds us, gives us purpose, and leads us to give our lives away in love. We are passionate about changing the world one person at a time. So we invest ourselves in living out Jesus’ command to love our neighbor, provide daily bread so all might experience God’s provision, and forgive as we’ve been forgiven.

As I roll out the First Lutheran Mission Trail, I want you to think about your life in Christ. (Begin unrolling green paper down the aisle.) How are you deepening your relationship with Christ? How invested and passionate are you about that relationship? How has that led you to gather in small groups to study God’s Word and share faith, pray for each other and gather for weekly worship, encourage one another and pool our resources, and share Christ’s love within and beyond the congregation? I’d love for volunteers to step onto the green mission trail and share your passion, tell what you’re invested in, and how this has brought joy to your life. (Pause for comments.) What I’d really love is for everyone to step on this mission trail of discipleship and reflect on where Christ has led you, how Christ has worked through you, and how that has enriched your life. As we tell our stories of faith and share our passion, we, too, will be amazed at how Christ is working in and through us as we continue his mission. God is doing great things. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help. Therefore we will not fear, though life should change. God’s love is greater than anything else in life. That’s why I’m invested in building my life on Christ, and I hope you are too. At the end of the day, there’s nothing more satisfying than sharing Christ’s love with another person. That’s why we invest in the mission of this congregation. God’s work: Our hands.