

Topic: Communal living in the early church.

Communal living involves living in a relatively small community where the members share a common interest and ideals. Before Jesus ascended into heaven he instructed the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem until they receive the Holy Spirit who would give them power to carry out their message mission.

After the ascension of Jesus into heaven the eleven apostles and some other members up to one hundred and twenty were waiting in the upper room. Peter explained to them the need to fill in the gap created by Judas Iscariot who had committed suicide after betraying Jesus. Judas bought a field with the blood money called "Akolalama" meaning field of blood. Peter explained the conditions for the person to replace Judas which are;

The person must have been an eye witness of Jesus' early ministry from the baptism, death and resurrection and ascension. Based on these requirements two men got forward, there were Joseph called Barabbas surnamed Jostles and Mathias, after prayers, they cast lots and the lots fell on Matthias's and he was elected to replace Judas.

Characteristics of early Christian community

There was a spirit of oneness of heart, soul and love unity.

They stayed together and had everything in common, they shared whatever they have according to the need of each and every one of them.

They stayed together and devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles

They prayed and worshipped in the temple together according to the Jewish time of prayer namely the third hour (9am)

Sitting (12noon) and the night hour (3pm)

They had a common purse those who added properties sold them and brought the proceeds to the apostles for the welfare of everybody

They shared bread together.

Problems

Dishonesty

Discrimination in food distribution

Ananias and Sapphira (act 5:1-11)

Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold their land and conspired to present part of the money to the

church and keep back some part of it to themselves, after much interrogation by Peter he rebuked Ananias for lying to the Holy Spirit. Peter reminded him that the land was his before it was sold and after sold, the proceeds (money) still remain his own. Peter added that he had not lied to men but to God. While Peter was speaking Ananias fell down and died and was taken away for burial. Three hours later Sapphira his wife came in, ignorant of what her husband has fallen into. Peter asked her if what her husband said was the amount they sold the land. She confirmed that it was all. Peter condemned her attitude for conspiring to tempt the spirit of the Lord. Peter informed her that she would face the same punishment as her husband. This incident instilled fear into the believers and also served as an example to others.

Problem of Discrimination in Food Distribution

The early church was made up of the Jews, Greek and people from other nations. Problems arose when the Hellenists (not Jews) complained that their widows were neglected in the distribution of food, to solve this problem, the apostles summoned the elders for a meeting and explained that it was not proper for them (apostles) to abandon the preaching of the gospel in order to serve food. They agreed to appoint seven men of good reputation full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to take charge of food distribution and other necessities of the church. These seven deacons were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicholas.

The apostles prayed and laid hands on them. They brought peace and rapid spread of the gospel.

Significance / lesson learnt

1. The replacement of Judas shows that God can always raise people to do his work.
2. The characteristics of people should be considered before electing them into church offices.
3. Dishonesty and lies are evil in God's sight and attract severe punishment.
4. The church of Christ should live as a community of one body.
5. The poor and less privileged should be cared for in the church.