**Acts 2:41-47**

**Theme Sentence (what is the passage saying to us now):** The Christian life means joining a community devoted to learning, relationships, and to God

**Aim Sentence (why is the passage saying it):** That we live out the Christian life in a church community

*Passages which could be referenced:*

* Matt. 16:13-19 and Matt. 18:17-20
  + The first membership interview?
  + Jesus is interested in a right confessor (what about you?), and a right confession (who do you say I am?)
  + Passes the authority to make these judgements on to Peter, and then on to the church as a whole
* Matt. 18:17-20
  + The ability of the local church to exercise the keys
  + See elements of devotion to the apostle’s teaching and devotion to God
* 1 Cor. 5:4-5
  + The circumstances for making a declaration that someone is not a Christian
  + When assembled…in the name of Jesus (Matt 18)…the spirit is present…with the power of the Lord Jesus
    - …For the purpose of the individual’s salvation
* 1 Cor. 12:12-31
* 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1
  + There is a dividing line between the church and the world
* Ephesians 4:1-32
  + Living out the Christian life
* Philippians 2:1-18
  + The mindset and relationships of individuals in the church

**Tee-ing up discussion**

* Heard from Mark the message of the gospel, of Jesus as a forgiving king
* The people who hear, respond – many are baptised and enter the community of believers
* **Read Acts 2:41-47**
* Living out their Christian profession means being part of a Christian community
  + Worth noting that this is a divine community, orchestrated by the spirit
  + People are saved personally and individually, but they start forming groups
    - 3000 people – must have been a range of different people!
    - Only possible by the spirit
* Three things which characterise the community
  + Devotion to Learning
  + Devotion to Fellowship
  + Devotion to God
* A community devoted to Learning
  + A group of people who, as a community, are striving to understand what the apostles are teaching
  + We have an example of the apostle’s teaching in the section Mark preached on
  + Key thing is that this teaching did not originate with the Apostles, but with God
    - They are passing on what they learnt from Jesus himself and are inspired to teach by the spirit
  + Living out the Christian life means joining a community committed to a right understanding of God and guarding the truths of the gospel
* A community devoted to Fellowship
  + Fellowship – shared life, shared task
  + These people spend a lot of time together
    - Every day in the temple courts, but also at home
    - At least 3,000 of them – clearly they are meeting in smaller groups on a personal level
    - They eat together
    - They have glad and sincere hearts – honest with each other, supporting one another in their Christian life, accountable to one another
  + Being a Christian means giving over our entire lives to Christ
    - This includes our possessions – supporting each other where there is need
      * Hospitality (as we’ve seen) – opening up their homes
      * Selling possessions to support those who had need
  + Living out the Christian life means joining a community committed to building relationships – sharing life and the gospel task together
* A community devoted to God
  + Of course devotion to learning and devotion to fellowship are an outflowing of a devotion to God
  + But there in the community of believers of God there is a special commitment to the ‘vertical’ relationship with God
    - …and this is expressed in prayer and praise
  + There are 2 contexts in which this happens: The Temple and their homes
  + The Temple represents the formal meeting of God’s people
    - Don’t want to take the Jewish idea of the Temple any further than talking about the formal meeting of God’s people, but by committing to prayer and praise when we gather as the local church on Sundays and in the whole church prayer meeting, we live out the vertical relationship to God as a community
  + Second context is in our homes – in Matt. 18:20 Jesus tells us that where 2 or 3 gather in his name, there he will be also. God is especially present when Christians gather as a group of believers, whatever their context
  + Living out the Christian life means joining a community committed to prayer and praising God
* So these are the signs of a healthy church (conclude)
* With that in mind, we’re going to go through to the Auditorium and spend some time thinking about what it means to be student member of the local church here at Eden
* Stack plates, make way thorough, etc.

**Questions for discussion**

* What is the difference between the church we see in Acts 2 and other gatherings of people with a common cause (things fan clubs for a sports team or a political society)?
* What does it mean for a group to be devoted to something?
  + More specifically, what does it look like for a church to be devoted to the apostle’s teaching?
* ~~Is it possible to be a ‘lone-wolf’ Christian, apart from the community of believers?~~
  + Starting from Acts chapter 2, how might you respond to a friend in Cambridge who says they are a Christian, but do not want to be part of a local church?
  + *(want people to reason from the example of scripture, not the institution of the church) (sola scriptura not sola ecclesia)*
* What is the relationship between the individual Christian, and the local church as a community of God’s people devoted to right reaching, fellowship, and God?
  + *(the relationship I’m thinking of is one of submission, in which the church affirms and oversees a Christian’s profession of faith and discipleship, and a Christian submits to that church’s affirmation and oversight)*
* In what ways can we as individuals have a wrong view of the church and our place/role/relationship within it?
* As student members of the local church here at Eden, how can we live out the Christian life as a part of the community of believers?