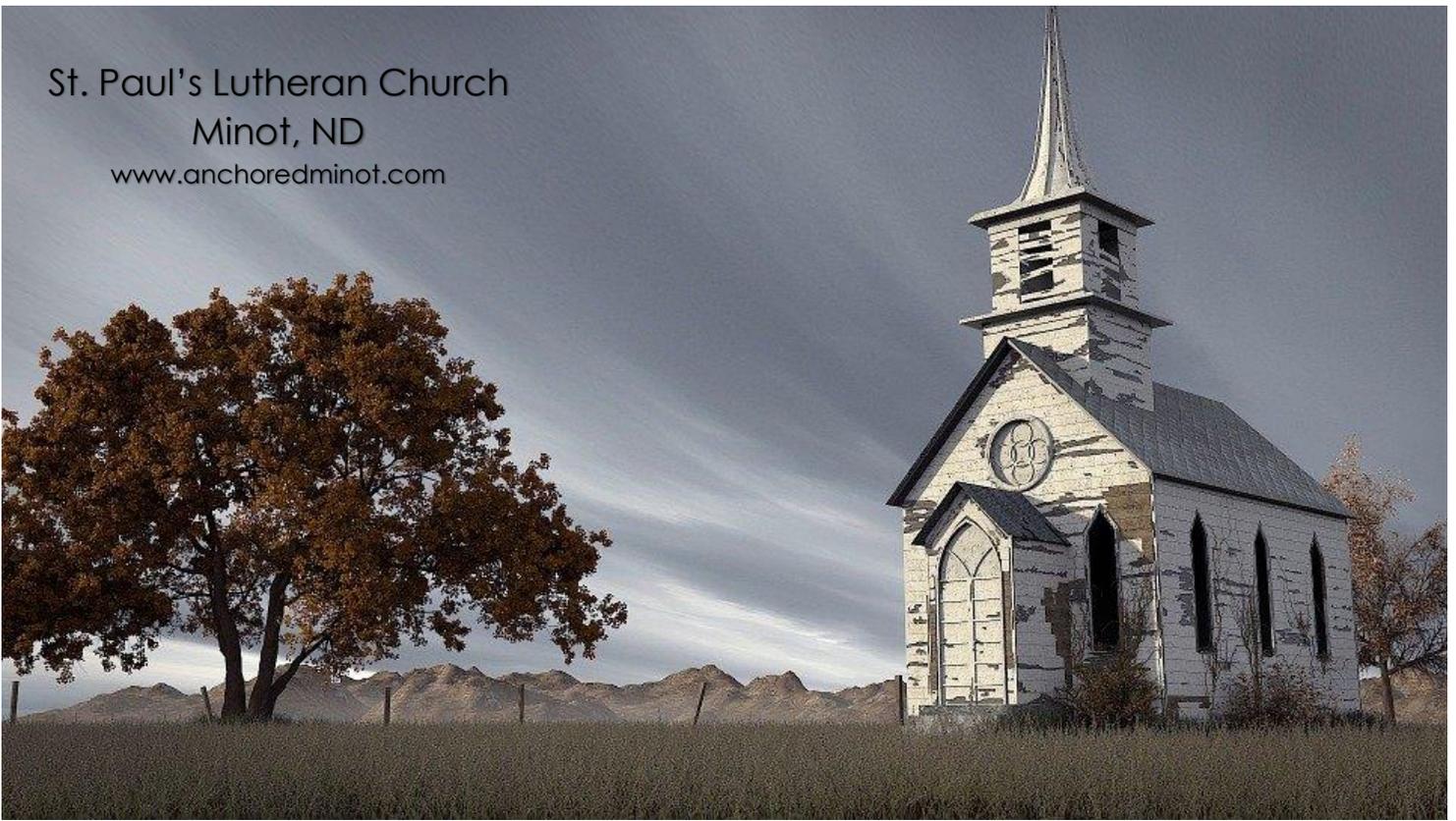


St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
Minot, ND  
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# The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church & Conflictive World

Acts 2:43-47

It is important to take note that Acts 2:43-47 is not advocating socialism or communism. These verses are not advocating the abolishment of private property or the mandatory surrender of goods for the less fortunate. Take a special look at the words that are being used. They had 'property' and 'goods' that they 'sold.' They disposed of merchandise/property/possession for a price. And after they acquired money for the possessions that were sold, they gave it (divided it) to everyone as they had need. They gave it according to everyone who had necessities. That is to say: 1) they clearly owned personal property, 2) they sold their property for a price, 3) they freely gave away money, 4) and they gave it to everyone who had necessity (i.e., need – not want).

So, what does this look like applied? Very simply, the early Christians had property. But

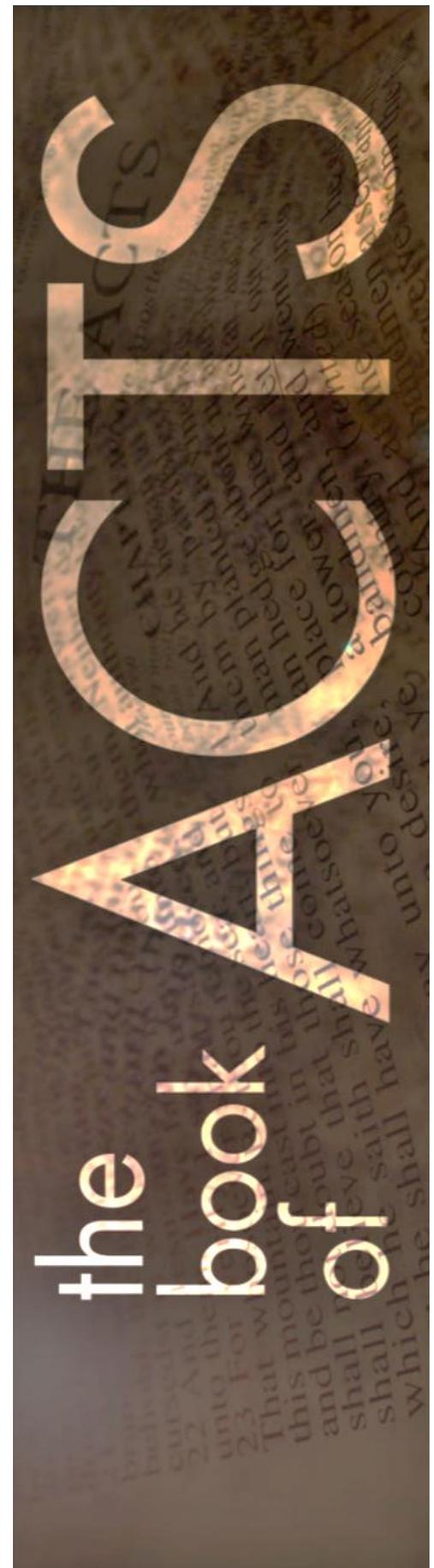
when another Christian was in need, they would gladly allow other Christians' use of the property to meet their needs. This would be like loaning a snowblower to another member of the church during a blizzard. Giving apples or berries to another Christian in need would be another example. There was free use of property for other Christians because the other Christians were considered like family. Every member of the church considered their property as a gift that they were given to use for themselves and also a gift that could be used to bless their fellow Christian brothers or sisters.

In many cases, this love for one another brought some to sell their possessions, goods, and/or property to help those in need. This was *not a law* commanded by the

Apostles, but instead, it was a free and joyful work of charity of some to help another Christian in need. This would be like a farmer selling a load of grain at the market to give it to a family where a child is struggling with cancer. Or, perhaps a family is donating things to a raffle or silent auction to benefit a family whose house just burnt down. Again, they gave according to *needs*, not according to *wants*. We Christians can error when we fail to give to those in need, and when we give to those who are abusing charity – pretending to be in need when really in want.

It is important to remember that property is not evil but a gift. This is why the Lord has a whole commandment on protecting property – thou shall not steal. We must always remember that the love of money is evil, not money itself. Money and possessions are tools – gifts – to be used for sustaining our livelihood and blessing our neighbors. Keep in mind that when Jesus said, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,” that the disciples did not forsake their property. Where did they get the boats from to sail back and forth over the Sea of Galilee? Also, after Jesus was crucified, what did the disciples do? They went back to their boats to fish. Where did Jesus and the disciples stay in Capernaum? Peter’s house!

Besides property, these verses show us that they were together with commonality in hearts and minds. (Again, we must be careful how we understand this.) They met together as often as possible (either in a temple or in a private house) for public services and social gatherings. But why? In verse 42, it says, “*They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching.*” And in verses 42 and 46, it says, “*They broke bread.*” The term most likely is a reference to ‘Communion,’ as early church history has also shown us as well (*Note Corinth: they consistently met for the reason of Communion*). That is to say, they met together not because of the unity of friendship, personality, or common interest but unity in/with/by the resurrected Lord via the Word and Sacraments.



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