



REFLECTIONS

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They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:42

Church Under the Bridge

Sunday mornings, rain or shine, sizzling heat or freezing cold, hundreds gather at an unlikely place to worship God. Above the place, sounds of eighteen wheelers rumble across the concrete ceiling; and below, chairs spaced on the graveled floor await the deprived, the wealthy, the loved and the lost to gather in fellowship, to share a meal, sing hymns of praise, and pray together. The place found beneath U.S. Interstate 35 through Waco, Texas is appropriately known as Church Under the Bridge.

The walk to the worship setting moves past a circle of 25 or so homeless looking people seated on folding chairs sharing their troubles. One by one each of them stands before this uncommon support group to share the problems they faced during the week—altercations, addictions, incarcerations—assured that no matter the nature of their wrongs, confessions are safe. The love of Jesus Christ, his compassion and forgiveness are present there.

Several concrete pillars away a line forms to receive a free meal. For most it is likely their only meal of the day. It seems though, that no matter how long the food line might grow, there is still enough to feed those who have no place to lay their head.

Then a few steps away a handful of musicians begin to gather on a small platform to prepare for worship. They set up drums, electric guitars, a bass, and a washboard. The music begins with an upbeat tempo to energize the gathering crowd, but no one tops the energy of the lead singer who gleefully strums and dances to words of worship and praise.

With fervor in every stroke he strums his guitar, his head dancing from side to side in rhythm with every word. He steps from the platform after singing a few bars of a hymn to move about and shake hands with people in the growing congregation. When in closer range, one can hear his voice off key and see his guitar has no strings. Those things don't matter here. He came to glorify God. And he does it with all his heart.

Those familiar with the picture of the first church gathering two thousand years ago will remember how Peter's powerful sermon led many to Christ and how they all came together in fellowship to break bread and to pray. Surely the 3,000 baptized back then included a mix of deprived, wealthy, loved, and lost souls just as those found worshiping at Church Under the Bridge. It's a place where people from all walks of life join as one, with no pretense, to *form one body, and each member belongs to all the others* as they praise God and share the love of Jesus Christ. (Romans 12:5)

Now, isn't that what a worship service should be?

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Richard +

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