

“The Spirit-Filled Church”
Acts 2:42-47 / Ryan Patty / Relentless Gospel

Good Morning Christ Community Church! Thankful to be gathered with you here on this Sunday morning. If you haven't yet please turn to Acts chapter two as we will be finishing out this chapter today. And as you are turning there, let me ask you a question. When someone finds out you go to church, has anyone ever asked you, “what do you do at your church?” What do you all do there? When I meet individuals in this particular community who belong to a different religious church and we have them over for dinner they always ask three questions in particular, 1) “what do you all do at your church?” 2) “How did you become a pastor?” and 3) “Do they pay you?” I kid you not it is always those three questions. And they are always surprised that I get paid.. Still not sure if the surprise comes that the position gets paid or I personally get paid..

Nonetheless, how would you answer that question, “what do you all do at church?” Maybe you would say something like we come together to worship Jesus. Or we listen and are taught from his word. We pray. We encourage one another. There are lots of things that you could say I am sure, but our passage today really provides us with the summary of both what constitutes a healthy church and how that church lives out its faith. Again, a summary statement that gives us orthodoxy (what constitutes right belief) and orthopraxy (what constitutes right living). We will look at the life of the church today, *But how does someone get to be a part of the life of this church?*

Well that's what happened last week as we looked at the entrance into the church. Patrick walked us through the Holy Spirit being poured out on the believers and Peter preaches an awesome sermon and thousands ask, what do we do, how do we respond to this message and he says, “Repent and be baptized!” This is how one enters into fellowship with God's people. They repent of their sins, recognizing that they in and of themselves can do nothing to save themselves and that they stand condemned and guilty before a Holy God and so they heed the call to place their faith in the one Person who can rescue them. Jesus Christ, whom they crucified. And so they believe in him, and they show their allegiance and obedience to him by being baptized. He is their new King. Jesus commanded His followers to be baptized, and the apostles communicated this command to the crowd and 3 thousand were

added to the church that day. But now what does being a disciple of Jesus Christ look like, in part, for these people? What does a Spirit-filled church look like? That's the focus for us today. Let's read the passage, [Acts 2: 42-47](#)

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. 44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. 45 They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Let's pray.

This morning we need to see and marvel (truly marvel friends) at three things that this passage instructs us on. They are:

1. The Marks of a Church
2. The Life of a Church
3. The Growth of a Church

Let's jump into 1) **The Marks of a Church** How does the early church answer "what do you all do when you gather together?"

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

What are the foundational marks of a healthy church?

Devotion to

- 1) the Word,
- 2) to Fellowship,
- 3) to the Breaking of Bread (communion)
- 4) to Prayer They were, Luke tells us, devoted.

This morning we will spend the majority of our time looking at their devotion to the Word, but this is in no way to imply that the others are not important. Now devotion is a word that can describe who we are in some regards. We can be devoted to many things. To work, to our families, to our spouse, we can be devoted to a hobby or a sport, or to recreation or to travel. Good things for sure. But let's glean and learn and be reminded from this passage what a disciple of Jesus Christ is devoted to. They are devoted first to the apostle's teaching. And what do the apostles teach, the words of God. Just as Peter's sermon was filled with OT scriptures and so the rest of our bible's are filled with the apostles' teaching, so then, we too today, are called to be devoted to the apostle's teachings.

But if you're anything like me, you've often thought, "man, it would have been great to have been a part of this church. To see the Spirit poured out and to see the signs and wonders that are described here." But think on this. Today we actually live in a much more privileged and fortunate position than they did. Why is that, you ask? Because we have in our hands the words of Moses, the words of the prophets, the acts and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the words and teachings of the apostles. We have all that God intended for us to have! The completed Word of God! And it is ultimately in and through THIS Word that God's power manifests to change lives for His glory.

I cannot stand the unbiblical divide that happens today. You'll hear people say "well that church over there is really strong on the Spirit, but pretty weak on the Word." Or "this church over here is really strong on the Word but sort of

missing out on the Spirit.” May we never divide the Word of God from the Spirit of God! The Bible never makes that distinction. That is a false dichotomy. God’s Word and His Spirit are always at work together. Think back to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the amazing sign and wonders, what’s the first thing that happens? Peter preaches a sermon. What was it that changed these people’s lives? Was it the signs and wonders? The tongues? No, those things were a means to an end. It was the Word of God. Look back at **2:36-37: 36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” 37 When they heard this, they were pierced to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?”**

The Word of God applied by the Spirit of God creates the people of God. And we friends are so privileged to have this complete Word today. Are you devoted to it? Not just this hour and 15 minutes here today but the rest of the week? Do you love it? Are you guided by it? You can be devoted to a lot of things and never change, but that’s not true with God and His Word. Maybe an illustration will help.

Illus. Imagine your life is a car. Where is the Bible in the car of your life?

1. Is it in the trunk of your car? Like where you keep some tools and the spare tire. You go to it in an emergency or an accident and you’ll get it out and try to fix what’s going on. It’s there for help if you need it.
2. Or is the bible in the back-seat of your car? Much like an annoying back-seat driver that keeps telling you what to do and how to drive you just wish it would shut up. Stop nagging at ya. Is that God’s Word for you?
3. Or one most common is it in the passenger seat of your car? Like a good friend riding along with you, you all have good conversations, you listen to them and value their input. They are beside you. But ultimately, you’re the one at the wheel. The one who has the last say of where you end up. Is that the Bible for you?
4. Or is it truly in the driver’s seat? Is God’s word in the driver’s seat of your life? Does it direct you and guide you and shape you? Do you need to hear from it day by day. Do you love its truth and its wisdom? Do you love how the Spirit applies it to your life and causes you to grow into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. This seems to be the case for the apostles and the early church. They were devoted to God and His Word? Is that you?

I'm so thankful to be a part of a church that is striving together to be devoted to God's Word. We desire to learn from it, be shaped by it, grow from it. We desire to study it with others throughout the week, to pray over it with others throughout the days. How amazing is that! But maybe you're here and your life isn't characterized by a devotion to God's Word. You love God, but it's been hard lately. Your bible is only opened up when you come here on Sunday. Much like the bible in the trunk analogy your's sits on your coffee table and nightstand day by day just staring at ya.. And I could have each of us tally the hours we spend in a week watching tv or surfing social media and then compare that with the amount of time in God's Word, **but I simply want to say this, if your heart now is convicted and you have not been devoted to the word of God like you should, pray and ask.** Pray that God would help you. And just get started. Open up and get reading. If you started a reading plan at the beginning of this year and now feel back-logged by the amount you have to catch-up on, don't worry about the catch-up. Start back today. So pray, and ask. Ask someone here to help disciple you, learning from them how to read the Word, meditate on it, and enjoy it. Reach out to Pastor Patrick about getting plugged in to a group or class. Resolve to be devoted to God's Word.

The early church was devoted to the apostles' teachings, and to fellowship which we will cover in a minute, and to the breaking of bread and prayer. This breaking of bread language we often understand to just be sharing a meal, but here in v. 42 most agree throughout the history of the church that it is actually an allusion to the Lord's supper. A little different from the communal meals they shared he will mention in v. 46. Here it is put in place next to three other marks of the church that are foundational for a church. So the placement in the text is significant, but likewise, in the Greek, it has the definite article before it that signifies it as THE breaking of bread, this translation gets it exactly right. This is the Lord's Supper, or what we also call communion, that they do in remembrance of Him. Just as Baptism is the initial sign that you are coming into fellowship with a church, that you are publicly becoming a disciple of Christ, so the Lord's supper, the breaking of bread here, is the on-going sign that you continue to profess faith in Christ and are a part of the body of Christ. We remember what Christ has done and proclaim his death until he returns. A mark of the church is the right practicing of the ordinances.

And they were devoted to prayer. Praying together is the idea here. Prayers that are public and corporate and that encourage and instruct the entire body. Yes, there is for sure a time for the prayer closet. But part of what we are trying to do here is grow our corporate reliance on prayer in such a way that we can confidently say we are devoted

to prayer. Devoted to asking God to work and excited to watch him work. Practically speaking, this is why we are starting a monthly prayer service. We are wanting to normalize prayer in the lives of our people here. And we recognize that we need to grow in this area.

And the glorious truth about prayer that we see time and time throughout the Scriptures is this: **The Sovereign God chooses to work through His Word by His Spirit in answer to the prayers of His people.** God delights in answering our prayers! How amazing is this! And as we will see, the early church's reliance on prayer was a catalyst for their growth. Remember what happened before Pentecost, as the disciples were waiting on the promised Holy Spirit? Acts 1:14, they were continually united in prayer. No great move of God that we have seen throughout the history of the church can be separated from prayer. It is as the great missionary and author Elisabeth Elliot said, "Prayer lays hold of God's plan and becomes the link between his will and its accomplishment on earth." God uses the prayers of His people, and We are called to be a people devoted to prayer. Let us heed that call to prayer. This brings us to..

2. The Life of a Church

Here in point number 2 we see the mark of fellowship in v. 42 being lived out.

43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. 44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. 45 They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

Jesus summed up the entirety of the OT teachings in Matt. 22 when he answered the question, “teacher, what is the greatest commandment?” Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind. And love your neighbor as yourself.” As we looked in point one, the early church was devoted to loving God, and now this section shows their devotion to loving one another. This is the OT Law being lived out before us! All of the prophecies pointing to the Spirit of God’s Law being written on our hearts are being modeled here for us as they seek to love one another!

And v. 44 in particular describes this fellowship, “they were together and held all in common.” The idea of fellowship is to have something in common, it is to have partnership and participation in something. So what the text clearly shows is that as they gathered with one another, there was fellowship, koinonia. And this fellowship was grounded and rooted in their common faith, they were disciples of Jesus Christ. This fellowship wasn’t centered just around having a good time or what hobbies they had in common or what sports their kids participated in together. It was grounded and rooted and centered around their faith. They had conversations about their faith, they encouraged one another in their faith, they spoke to one another the truth of God’s Word, they spoke “Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to one another” as Colossians tells us.

But in some measure the Christian church at large has forgotten how to have fellowship that’s grounded in our faith. The famous Pastor and evangelist G. Campbell Morgan wrote in the early 1900’s of the state of the Christian church then, “It has become very difficult for Christian people to talk of the things of Christ with each other. They meet together in ordinary life, and they talk of everything except the deepest things of their spiritual life; and that not because they have not deep experience, not because they are unfamiliar with the things of God and His Kingdom,

but because they have never learned how to help each other in mutual conversation concerning them.” - G. Campbell Morgan

We are so quick to ask about work or sports (again not bad things), but so slow to ask “how is your walk with the Lord? What has the Spirit taught you through His Word lately? Where is the grace of God most noticeable in your life this week? How can I be praying for you?” Listen, I’m not saying walk around like a Jesus Robot and turn away from any conversations that aren’t about God. And I’m not saying you have to “Jesus juke” everyone when they bring up something else in life. Dave says, “Man, Bob, that was a crazy storm last night huh?” And Bob says, “Yeah it's like His Word says, “He brings the rain on the righteous and unrighteous right?” No; stop being weird. If someone brings up the Superbowl to me today I’ll still give them 16 reasons for why the Cowboys will be in it next year. I’m not saying to painfully force the conversation. But I am saying, if you have been knowing and actively fellowshiping with people in the church now for 6 months, a year, even two years, and you guys have yet to get below those surface level conversations and talk about one another’s spiritual good, then maybe, just maybe, there is a problem.. Let’s be a church that is marked by intentional fellowship centered around God and what He has done for us. Let us who fear the Lord speak of his marvelous deeds together.

And let me briefly tell you what the text is not saying here about Christian fellowship before I continue in what it is. Look at v. 44-45 - 44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. 45 They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. This verse is not telling us that the early Christian church was some hippie commune. It is not a text to argue for communism or socialism or whatever other ism someone decides it is. V. 46 tells us that they clearly still owned houses and property, and even the rest of the NT would corroborate this. What it is doing is describing a community of love that was marked by radical generosity and genuine fellowship. This text does challenge us, don’t gloss over that. Luke in his Gospel recorded more than any other Gospel the parables of Jesus that stress the dangers of letting our lives consist of the things we possess. This amazing fellowship that he describes for us in Acts 2 is the antidote for the deathly pull of materialism.

So this church was a community that sought to live life with an open hand, not seeking to hoard and thinking what’s mine is mine and yours is yours, but genuinely thinking and living out, what’s mine is yours as well because they genuinely desired to share with one another and recognized that all of it is a gift from God. This text challenges all of

us in how we live in community with one another, what we talk about with one another, and how we give to one another. So let me confidently say I am often floored by your-all's generosity to one another. Big and small. It looks like families making meals to help new moms transition home from the hospital or to help a family while they are laid up sick.. It looks like people opening up their homes and saying yeah you can live with me for as long as you need to, I'll reach out to some friends and see if we can help find you work. Year by year you all give faithfully to our mercy fund to bless our Idaho Falls community and our Shining Star (\$13,000) offering to help those within our church. It looks like families giving cars and clothes to someone in the body that has a need. It's people coming up to me and saying if a kid can't afford camp or the mission trip just let them know and it will be taken care of. I've seen you all do that time and time again and it is awesome. In a ruthlessly individualistic and materialistic world, the generous and selfless giving of faithful believers is a beautiful thing to behold. Churches can often die today because they are not doing anything which the world would look at and say, "There! There is evidence that God is real and that he is absolutely glorious!" Churches can become so inward focused that they neglect modeling what it means to love others well. But thankfully we are seeking to proclaim to this community, "We love our glorious God and we love one another and we will love you!" And I praise God that we are seeking to, in part, live out **Galatians 6:10** which says, "10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith." We are seeking to do good to all, both in the walls and outside of them.

So our challenge is to continue in it, and for each of us to be challenged about how we live in fellowship with one another. Just as I said it's hard to be devoted to God's Word coming once a week, so it's the same with fellowship. It's hard to be in and a part of the life of the church coming once a week, fellowshiping with God's people once a week, not being involved with a small group or a class or an accountability group or consistently meeting with others throughout the week. We cannot have the fellowship described in Acts 2 only by coming Sunday and having no engagement with God's people Monday through Saturday.

And listen, I realize that this past year has put a serious dent in all of our fellowship. It's made it harder than we ever could have imagined at times. And so in light of this, we in leadership recognize the importance of community and the gathering all the more and in the coming months are going to work hard at getting people involved. And we are going to need people to open up their home and welcome people into them. Our call to you is this, when the time is

right for you to be here, be here. Or If you have been church hopping, going to one church for the worship, another for the preaching, or another for the programs, settle down. Whether it is here or another church, ultimately it doesn't matter, but we do want you to be involved in a local church and be committed to fellowship with the people there. So as each of us can and when each of us can, let's be here, and jump into the fellowship of the church. Plant roots and open up your life to others. Get to know others, live life with one another, grow with one another, be generous towards one another and marvel at how God's grace will manifest in the day to day of your Christian walk as you seek to live in fellowship with his people. And as our fellowship grows, let's look in closing at how the church grows.

3. The Growth of the Church

47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

When reading this passage it can almost, at times, sound like a recipe for success. $A + B = C$. Preach the Word, fellowship, pray and you will automatically have growth. That's what any pastor or elder wants to hear. And there is truth to it. To have faithful growth and to make faithful disciples of Jesus, one does need to follow the commands and practices that are outlined for the church throughout the NT. But the steady reminder throughout the NT is also this: we are called to faithfulness. We are called to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus together. As much as we want to take responsibility for what might be happening in a church or in someone else's life that we are discipling or for even our own growth in our own lives, the Bible's refrain is clear: God brings the growth. As we faithfully preach and teach and evangelize and love, the Lord is drawing hearts to himself and this amazing truth causes us to do what it says at the beginning of v. 47 and praise God! Praise God that he saved us and He is still saving others.

And when it comes to the life of the church, we must always keep in mind who's church it ultimately is, and that is King Jesus' church. So we don't want to manufacture anything, or try to force growth, or say this is the latest and greatest thing that will push our church over the top. We want to strive to be faithful, we want to follow these marks that the early church devoted themselves to, and if the Lord blesses us with growth then praise be to God! We will recognize that it wasn't us, but instead all of Him.

It as Paul says in 1 Cor. 3 6-7 - "6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."

And this idea of the Lord giving growth is only reinforced from the text itself. Who does the saving here? Remember what we looked at in point number 1: *God does by His Word through His Spirit*. "Salvation is from the Lord." And then Who brings them into the fellowship and life of the church? God does, look at v. 47, he "added to their numbers those who were being saved." He's responsible for saving them and bringing them in. The growth of the Church is first and foremost an act of our sovereign God. And in our faithfulness to him, His Word, and His people, He often

acts mightily for His fame and name and glory amongst the nations. So may we be devoted to that! And recognize that God brings the growth.

So the questions that confront us from this text are really simple yet weighty. Am I devoted to God? Devoted to His Word? Devoted to His people? If that's not you, if you are here and you are not devoted, then we invite you to join. Come and see what Christ has done for you. Come behold His wondrous works. His love knows no bounds his grace never runs dry, would you cast your cares on Him? He calls on us to follow Him, to be devoted to Him so may that be true of you.

And Christ Community Church the reality is that by the grace of God we have been growing. We were growing before Covid and we have seen people join in the midst of it. Based on those still watching from home there will be a time sooner than later when this room is packed once more. Praise God for that! He gives the growth, let us never think it's us, he gives the growth and let us be astounded at what He is doing through this local church that we call home.

Allow me to read the first and last verse once more.

Acts 2:42 and 47 - **They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. & Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.**

May we be that church. Would you pray with me?