

Sermon Script: The Acts 2 Church! (Acts 2:42-47)

Date: June 3rd, 2018

Introduction:

Mission! Chapter 5 in the Biblical Story! I have said this many times, but if I were to reduce the story of Scripture to six chapters, they would be... Chapter One: Creation; Chapter Two: Fall; Chapter Three: Promise; Chapter Four: Redemption; Chapter Five: Mission; and Chapter Six: Restoration. Last week, the disciples of Jesus were introduced to the mission of Jesus until he returns to restore the earth. This is chapter five. This week he read about some key themes important to the mission and its launch. We read about the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples while they were in Jerusalem. This event gave Peter a platform to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, and 3000 people came to know Christ that day. We read about the theme of signs and wonders, which were used to authenticate the message of these disciples to the Jews. We read about the bold proclamation of the Gospel and violent opposition to the Gospel. We read about the martyr of Stephen, which opened the floodgates of persecution against the church in Jerusalem. This persecution caused a scattering of many believers away from Jerusalem. It was time for the next movement in Acts... Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria. The mission is unfolding, but there is a God-given structure for carrying out this mission. It is the Church. The church is being established, and the book of Acts gives the reader a look into what made this church tick. Acts 1:8 serves as an outline for the whole book. The Holy Spirit is empowering believers to be a witness of Jesus as the Christ starting in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7) then Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-12) and to the ends of the earth (Acts 13-28). So we are literally reading about the establishment of the church in Jerusalem and then its expansion out from that point.

Thesis: This morning I would like to help you see four internal values and four external outcomes of the Acts 2 Church. As I talk about each one, I would simply ask that you do what I did when I was preparing... evaluate how your values and experience concerning the church align with these Acts 2 values and outcomes.

Four Internal Values of the Acts 2 Church

As I said earlier, on the day the Holy Spirit came, Peter boldly proclaimed the Gospel and 3000 people were added to the church. In one day, they went from a small church to a mega-church. It is immediately after this event that Luke gives the readers as clear picture as to what the church valued. Let's read Acts 2:42,

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

They devoted themselves to four things in the church! These were things that they valued greatly, enough to where they gave themselves wholly to them. **The first value of the Acts 2 church that is laid out for us is that they valued good theology.** The text tells us that they devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching. What did that include? It would have included the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus. They were the disciples of Jesus. He was the one who walked with Jesus and sat through many hours of teaching. They were

the ones who sat at the feet of the resurrected Messiah as He explained the Old Testament and how it pointed towards himself. It was now their time to pass on what they were learning. Christianity did not start with random ideas about who these disciples thought Jesus was and what He was about. They were teaching them what God revealed to them while He walked this earth. They were entrusted with revealed truth, and they taught the people. The Acts 2 church highly valued the Apostle's teaching... they highly valued good theology. That word can scare people, but it shouldn't. Theology is the study of God. It is teachings about God that were revealed to us through His Word. The Apostle Paul tells believers to watch their life and their doctrine closely. Theology matters because true worship matters. If someone says to me, "I don't really care for theology." Then I would ask them who or what they worship, and how do they know? Worship is the most theological thing that we do. It matters what we are saying about God and what we think about God and His glorious Gospel. "Well, I just love Jesus!" That is great, but are you loving Jesus as He revealed Himself, or a made up version of Jesus that doesn't exist. Theology matters greatly and the Acts 2 church knew this!

The second internal value held by the Acts 2 church is they valued authentic community.

They devoted themselves to the fellowship. This word "koinonia" is a word that means partnership or sharing. It describes a relationship bond between believers because of their union with Christ. We share the Holy Spirit. We share a bond of peace. We share a common Savior and King. We share a common future inheritance. We share a common Father. Believers are a family... we are called to be one. This kind of fellowship is described at different places in the book of Acts. We will get to one section later in this passage and you will look at a different passage in Acts during your Life Group time. They highly valued one another. Paul tells us in Romans that the church is to be devoted to one another. Mutual care, mutual rejoicing, mutual encouragement, and mutual sharing are all a part of this. They took care of each other and encouraged each other in their obedience to Christ's mission. They prayed for each other... they genuinely loved one another as Jesus commanded. They highly valued the fellowship. Church was not a place to go on Sunday, it was a people they had a bond with daily. They met together because they needed each other. They did church every day! They served together, they went to jail together, and in some cases, they died together as martyrs. They were one. Acts 2 describes the blueprint of fellowship for us, however, the church... even the early church did not always align with this value. 1 Cor. is an example of this misalignment. The church was divided. Sinful attitudes and power struggles wreaked havoc on the church. It is not an accident that Paul's approach to unify the church was to draw their attention back to the fact that they are One Body through Christ.

Thirdly, they valued their focus on Jesus. The text tells us that they devoted themselves to "the breaking of bread." To be honest, this is a difficult phrase for us to really be certain about. Here is why... Sometimes this phrase is used to speak generally of a common meal that was eaten daily as it is later in this same passage. At other times, it is used in connection to the Lord's Table. Here is why I lean toward this speaking about the Lord's Table. First, the definite article "the" appearing in the original seems to be pointing toward something specific rather than something general. Second, the context of this verse is speaking of what the early church devoted themselves to. It would seem odd that Luke

thought it would be important to point out that the early church devoted themselves to eating a common meal, even if it was done together. In our time, it would almost sound like they devoted themselves to potlucks! How strange does that sound? “So tell us one of the four deeply held values of your church?” “Oh, we love our potlucks!” Don’t get me wrong, I love a good potluck, but I am not sure it rises to the level of a deeply held value worthy to be mentioned in that context in Acts 2. Finally, I think it should be seen as the Lord’s Table since Jesus specifically commanded that this meal be observed regularly as a church. It was to be a huge part of the DNA of a church. So if this phrase is a reference to the Lord’s Table, which I think it is, then what is Luke communicating? He is communicating that the church deeply valued a consistent focus on Jesus Christ. It is through the Lord’s Table that we intentionally reflect on the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is an ordinance that we practice to remember... never forget... consistently internalize the greatness of Christ and this amazing covenant that we are in because God Himself came to us and paid the penalty for our sin. They valued their focus on Jesus.

The fourth internal value held by the Acts 2 church is that they valued their **dependence upon God**. The text tells us that they devoted themselves to “the prayers.” Prayer is our gauge of dependence upon God. They devoted themselves to this activity. The article in front of prayers probably indicates that there were some set prayers said by the people corporately. This was very common in Jewish religious practices. However, it certainly includes the practice of spontaneous prayers as well. The point is that this church knew they needed God and expressed that to Him in prayer. Prayer should be a huge part of our ministry. Your Life Groups ought to be praying together and for one another. It ought to permeate our ministry teams. If you are on a team ministering to children, it should not be looked at as a thing you do before you minister, but as the thing you do. The same is true with students, or working with any other group of people. Our leadership teams ought to feel the weight of our dependence upon God as we make decisions and seek wisdom. Prayer should permeate our ministry.

These are deeply held values of the Acts 2 church. These are the four aspects of church life that they devoted themselves to, but these values produced some outcomes in the Acts 2 church.

Four External Outcomes of the Acts 2 Church

Let’s quickly move on to see four outcomes that were produced in the Acts 2 church. **First, they were in awe of God**. Look at verse 43,

43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

God was authenticating the message of the Gospel through wonders and signs being preformed by the apostles. No doubt this was a powerful and visible display of the work of God. It was if God was yelling, “Here I am! Will you believe?” The result was that the people were in awe of God. I wonder where our sense of awe is? Yes it is true that we did

not see the resurrected Jesus with our own two eyes. True, it is not everyday we see the blind receive their sight back or the lame man immediately walking again. However, God is still at work in powerful ways. I would encourage you to pay attention and look for God sightings. I believe that God has worked miracles in the life of our people. There are people alive today, because God's gracious healing hand. I have also seen God miraculously and specifically provide for this ministry and other ministries in Lowell. I have seen God resurrect dead marriages and breathe new life into a soul whose faith in Christ was hanging by a string. Where is our sense of awe toward God?

The second outcome was that they were a **generous and compassionate community**. This outcome is a direct result of this deeply held value of authentic community... koinonia. Look at the text,

44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

They were together and had all things in common. This does not mean they all had the same personality nor does it mean they all had the same thoughts about different issues. It means that they did not close their hands on "their stuff" but rather they shared all things. If someone was in need and you could meet that need, then you did it. They gave to one another. They took care of one another. They did not hold too tightly to their hard earned possessions. They would even sell their things to help others. I have a suspicion that this generosity was not just to those in the church, but it included those outside the church as well. The compassion to the poor is well documented in early church history, and is modeled by Jesus Himself. I think it is more than reasonable to think that this kind of compassion and generosity became a major factor in people coming to faith in Christ.

This leads me to the third outcome. **They were consistently on mission in a large group and small group setting.** Look at verse 46,

46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

Day by day... they were consistent. What did they consistently do? Attended the temple together and breaking bread together in their homes. Attending temple together gave them a venue to meet as a large group. Breaking bread in their homes gave them a venue for smaller groups. At this point many will just assume that they went to the temple to huddle up for worship and then had their small group huddle in their home. I do not believe that is the case. Here is why. Going to the temple was more than just worshipping together. It gave them a platform to speak to other Jews about the Messiah. In Acts 3:1, Peter and John are headed to the Temple during the time of prayers, and they run across a lame man begging for money. Peter heals the man in the name of Jesus and revival breaks out. Look at Acts 5:19-20,

19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

The Apostles are healing people and proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah. This upsets the religious leaders, so they have the Apostles arrested. However, God opens the cell doors during the evening and tells them to go and stand in the temple to do what? Speak to the people all the words of this Life. Proclaim the Gospel. We find that many priests become believers in Acts 6:7. In Acts 20, we find Paul proclaiming Christ in a home after a meal. It seems like a common strategy for evangelism. However, the greatest clue for what took place at the temple and from house to house comes from Acts 5:42,

42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Daily they went to the temple and were in homes (no doubt around a meal) and proclaimed that Jesus was the Christ. This activity was deeply missional. What they valued internally as a church was preparing them for what they would do externally as a church. I think people saw an authentic community and were attracted by it. Look at this from Acts 5:12-13,

12 Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. 13 None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.

The point is that a major outcome of the Acts 2 church was that they were on mission whether they were together in a large or together in smaller groups.

The final outcome is that they grew! Acts 2:47 says,

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

They grew! They multiplied! It was a natural outcome to their internal values and missional mindset. At FBC we want to grow. We want to see people come to faith in Christ and then find an authentic community to which they belong. We want to be attractational. We want to be a community that is deeply in love with God and overflows with love for one another. Honestly, this is one of the major reasons we have the Pathway. This is why we want people to be involved in a Life Group. This is why we have a reading plan and encourage people to develop the discipline of Bible reading, journaling, and memorization. We think it is highly effective to develop these disciplines that help you grow in your faith through an accountable relationship with others. We call these groups... D-Group. Bottom line is that we want our people to be deeply in love with Jesus and authentically loving towards one another. That is attractational and intentionally missional! It is a recipe to grow deeper in our faith but also wider in terms of the number of people.

Conclusion

If you have ever driven a car that is out of alignment, you know that it makes driving a challenge. Misalignment is a suspension problem. The suspension system is what connects your vehicle to the wheels, and if the suspension system is not adjusted properly, then it has all kinds of negative effects on your wheels and driving experience. When your car is out of alignment, the steering wheel may shimmy back and forth as you go down the road, and when you reach a certain speed your car is likely to start shaking. It may veer to one side or the other. It will cause uneven tread wear on your tires and your steering wheel will be rotated too far to one side. Just as a car that is not aligned properly will cause adverse effects on the car and the driver's experience, misalignment of your values concerning the church and the values given to us in Acts 2 will cause adverse effects on the church on one's experience of church. My hope this morning is that you might give thought to how your values and outcomes concerning the church are aligned with the values and outcomes of the Acts 2 church.

Walking Point: What needs to happen to bring your life into alignment with these internal values and external outcomes of the Acts 2 church?