

Every Part Matters

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Date: 13 November 2022

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everybody. How's everyone doing today? Good, good, good. Hopefully you're not like me and realize that you probably didn't wear enough layers this morning. I am a little bit chilly, so hopefully as I speak and move around, I warm up a little bit. Those of you who are new to us, man, thank you for coming today. Really appreciate you coming and being with us. And those who are listening online, thanks for listening. If you've got a Bible with you, you go ahead and open it up and turn to Acts chapter 6, or if you use it on your phone, you can do that as well. And what we're doing is this series, what we're trying to focus in on, we're not going verse by verse through the book of Acts. We're going through and marching through select stories because what we really want to do is we don't want to hone in on like, oh, we want to see the life of Paul and see everything he did or any particular person.

What we want to do is we want to look at the church. We want to see how God used that first church, that first generation of believers to transform their world. What started as this tiny little huddle in Jerusalem by the end of the book of Acts, which was spanned a couple of decades, the gospel had exploded across the Roman world, the Mediterranean world, and then the borders beyond that into parts unknown. And yet thousands and thousands of churches planted. Who knows how many believers came to know Christ, both Jews and non-Jews at the same time. And so we're looking at that. Last week, Alan did this amazing job unpacking how impactful God's grace is in our lives and how necessary it is for us to understand it, to know it, to receive it, and to let it change and transform us. Because when God's grace gets into our lives, the very center of that, the very heart of that, the outflow is this radical generosity. We see God's grace flowing into us by his radical generosity towards us, right? He sent his son to die on our behalf for us. And then he goes on and he gives us things that we didn't deserve, right? We deserve punishment. He doesn't give us punishment.

Instead, he punishes his son for us, dies in our place, so we get to receive his favor and delight. And then we're set up as his sons to inherit eternal life with him forever. It's this beautiful radical generosity which then overflows out of us in this super abundance of grace to others. And the thing about radical generosity, right? It's, man, people love that, right? They love to be recipients of it, right? And this church was like a first century Mr. Beast. Like stuff was just flowing out of them all the time. And they were enjoying, they were enjoying this high esteem by outsiders who weren't even believers, right? But not all outsiders were like big fans of this church. The religious leaders in Jerusalem, which were kind of still in that place right now. The gospel hasn't exploded out of Jerusalem just yet in the book of Acts. But the religious leaders in Jerusalem and Israel, they weren't so stoked about these Jesus followers. They looked at them and they saw them as just another cult that had risen up and they were leading Israel, Jews, God's people, they were leading them astray to believe in this false Messiah that had already come. And to be honest, we can look at them and say, like, man, those guys just missed it. They were terrible what they started doing to the Christians.

But to be honest, their passion and their concern wasn't unwarranted. See, they were living in the aftermath of hundreds of years of enslavement and displacement from their homeland, from Israel.

Israel because God had judged them for their idolatry and forsaking his law. They were unfaithful to the law of Moses. They had forgotten and they chased after other idols and other things.

[3 : 48] And so what happened over the years of them doing this and God warning them through prophets and they've refused to repent, finally Jerusalem and the temple had been torn down, right? And they were put into exile for a season and then God brings them back and the temple gets rebuilt in Jerusalem. It gets rebuilt and they fall back into idolatry and then the temple gets torn down again and they're kind of occupied. And so in Jesus's day even, like there was a new temple built by Herod, this king, and they were a Roman occupied nation state. And so it's this like imperfection they're living in, right? This kingdom kind of like restored, but man, it's not what they really had longed for, even though it was an improvement over the years of exile and ruin. And for them, for these religious leaders, they're considering all this stuff. They're considering all of that, which is why they were so, I mean, we give Pharisees a bad name because they were like, man, they were so attentive to the law and make sure everybody was following it perfectly, but it's because they were jealous for

Israel in a lot of ways, in a lot of ways. They didn't want to repeat the sins of their fathers. They didn't want to repeat. They didn't want to be the leaders in charge of the generation that went back into exile because they were disobedient to the law of God. And so for them, Jesus wasn't the Messiah. He's just this wannabe that was leading Israel from true Yahweh worship. And so they're facing this and they're seeing this little ragtag group of disciples growing in number, and not only in number, but popularity. Everyone around them is like, man, these guys, I really like these guys. They're really good. I'm liking what I'm seeing from the outside. And this just made them grow more and more angry toward them. And so we see in what happened after Acts 4, when we see this like, and 5, when we see this like amazing generosity out working in the church, the apostles are preaching. And these religious leaders are like, you know what? We got to stop this. So we're going to take the apostles. We're going to imprison them. And so the persecution in the church gets more and more bold and brazen. And as they imprison the apostles at the time, God sends an angel to release them. He says, hey, keep on preaching the good news about Jesus. It's okay. So the apostles say, thank you to the angel. And they go right out into the temple and start preaching Jesus again. And that's where the leaders find them. And they get so mad. They're just like, we just imprisoned you.

We're going to arrest you. So they arrest them again. And then they beat them and they charge them. You better stop preaching Jesus. You better stop doing it. And some of these guys at this time, I mean, they're hopping mad. These guys are like angry. Some of them, they're like, let's just kill these guys. Let's just get rid of the problem. And, but thankfully, cooler heads prevailed in the moment.

And instead of death, they give them this beating and they say, okay, just stop, stop preaching Jesus. And they let them go. But the apostles, man, they, they like didn't get the clue, right? Whatever they were trying, whatever the religious leaders were trying to accomplish, the apostles did not pick it up. They run out and they're just, they're rejoicing like, hey, we got beat up for Jesus. This is amazing. High-fiving each other. And, and then once they finish celebrating their beat down, they, they go and they preach in the temple. And, and then it says, they also continue to preach Jesus from house to house. And this is where we pick up the story in chapter six. And it says this, now in these days, when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists, Hellenists is just, it means a, a Greek speaking Jew. Um, the, the, the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews, Hebrew speaking Jews, because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

And the 12, meaning the apostles, summoned the full number of the disciples and said, it is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty, but we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. And what they said, please the whole gathering. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy spirit and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Pumbaa. No, I'm just kidding. Timon and Parmen. I was just seeing if you guys are paying attention still.

[8 : 08] All right. Good, good job. Good job. Timon and Parmenas and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase. And the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. And a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. This is God's word. So up to this point, most of the problems and opposition that the church was facing was really coming from the outside. But here's this new, interesting wrinkle. And on the surface, it really doesn't seem like it's that big of a deal. So again, let's see where we're at, right? This church we're talking about in Jerusalem at this time in Acts 6. It is massive. Like the last time we got a number count from them was back in chapter 4, where it said the number of men came to about 4,000, which quite possibly means that's just the counting of the heads of men. And it's not counting the women and the children. So this could be a church of anywhere to like 8,000 to 10,000 people, even more possibly. I mean, this is a lot of people. This is a lot of people. And then after a few references to the church continuing to grow in number, it's like they stopped saying how. It's like it got too big to count. It's just like, you know what? After that, we knew there was 4,000 men at some point, but then it just kept growing. It's just like, you know what? Forget it. There was just a lot of people. A lot of people.

That's what's happening. Massive church, right? Now within this church is an extremely small minority group that are bringing a complaint. And not all are they only small in number, right? Proportion to the church's size, but by cultural standards, they were quite insignificant. And this is where, this is the beauty of the gospel. This is where the gospel shines so brightly in the face of culture because the gospel teaches us this. Every person in the church matters to Jesus in equal measure. Every person. Which means the poor person, those poor widows, those helpless widows, they're just as important as the pastor. I mean, that's what's going on here. And you know what? Too often churches, they exist to praise and celebrate the pastors more than everyone else. That happens too much in the church. And this is not Jesus's way. He is no respecter of persons. In fact, if we look closely at Jesus's life, he seemed to move toward and to prefer the poor and the powerless, right? The widow and the orphan and the ostracized.

I'm not saying that he just totally rejected and neglected the rich and the powerful. We see him like meeting with Nicodemus, like having a very sincere, honest conversation with this rich and powerful religious teacher of the day. We see Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, kind of on the down low. He didn't want everybody to know about it. But nevertheless, he was a believer and a disciple of Jesus. And he was rich enough to have a tomb that he buried Jesus in afterwards.

I mean, back then, if you had a tomb to bury Jesus in close by Jerusalem, you had some money. It took some money to have one of those things. That was like prime real estate. But Jesus, he also, man, we see his life. He loved the outcast. He loved the oppressed. And he moved towards the marginalized. And, you know, we don't often see that in the church today. That's not our like primary motive or modus operandi, which it should be. We kind of live in a culture that's different to that. There's a, you know, there's a whole month to celebrate pastors. There's like pastor appreciation, but a whole month, right? And this isn't me kind of like fishing for anything.

I'm not like, hey, I'm really disappointed, guys. I'm actually kind of like, I'm a bit like gobsmacked about that. And I'm not, I'm not, I'm going to go as far as to say, I see a lot wrong with that actually, as a pastor. Because first, we shouldn't limit our appreciation for people to specific months or days, right? And second, I don't see a poor appreciation month on the church calendar.

[12 : 23] We often adopt things without thinking of the implications and what kind of culture they create.

The American church in general is captivated by the celebrity pastor paradigm, right? We, we worship men and women in the pulpit or up on stage for their gifts and their abilities and what they give to us in terms of teaching and quite frankly, their entertainment value. That's a lot of what we do. And the church in Acts had every chance to do this too. They were no different.

The apostles, man, they were rocking and rolling. I would pit them up against any kind of like church celebrity pastor today and say like, you know what? They were probably doing more and they were doing it better. Look at the reputation that they had. Acts chapter five, this is just a few verses back from where we're at. In verse 12, it says, 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. None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord. Multitudes of both men and women. So that even, they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats that as Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them.

The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits. And they were all healed. So the apostles, man, they are doing some amazing stuff, right?

We see them. Their ministry was effective, powerful teaching about Jesus accompanied by signs, wonders, and miracles. But remember, we can look at that and say like, oh my goodness, yeah. Those guys were amazing.

[14 : 12] This is what it's all about. It's finding the right person to like do everything. But remember, this isn't the only reason why the church was growing and why the gospel was advancing. It was the whole church. They were all doing this together. All the Jesus followers were living the gospel in radical, generous ways towards each other. But not only that, they were sharing the gospel with their neighbors too. I mean, church historians, they say, man, that the reason that the gospel got out to the world in that time, it wasn't just the apostles going and spreading the good news. It was the servants, man. It was the people in the kitchen. It was at the watering holes. It was in the washrooms. It was in the harvest fields. It was those people taking the gospel into those contexts and gossiping about Jesus to anybody who was willing to listen to them. That's what was happening. And Acts isn't just, it's not this celebration and exaltation of the apostles. It's a celebration of Jesus and his continued work through the Holy Spirit into the church who were empowered. And the Holy Spirit empowered every single member of the church to do this work, to be on mission. And the point I'm making, and I think that this passage is making, is this. We tend to distinguish and rank ministries in order of public demonstrations of power and authority. That's what we tend to do, right? Oh, this ministry, it's like, gosh, being up on the stage, okay, that's way up here. But like, man, if you're just, you know, serving coffee somewhere or washing toilets or greeting somebody and saying hi, or maybe in kids ministry, that's like, that's, that's, that's the lower end. That's the lower echelon stuff. We tend to rank ministries that way, right? The better you are at teaching, the better you are at preaching, the more accurate and frequent you can give a prophetic word of, word of knowledge, or the more often that you lay hands on the sick and they're healed, this, man, those people, those are the ones that really count. Those are the dudes and the dudettes.

But in God's economy, it just doesn't work that way. Ministry isn't a pathway to climbing the corporate ladder in God's kingdom. It's not, ministry isn't about building your platform.

It's not. Ministry is always about getting lower. Ministry in God's kingdom means moving to the lower place. That's what it's always about. In verse one, it talks about these Hellenist widows, these Greek speaking, Greekified Jews, these, these poor, powerless, unimportant to society ladies. And it says, man, they were being overlooked in the daily distribution. Something was happening in the church, this daily distribution. Now word for distribution is really, is really a word that means ministry or service. And in fact, it's the exact same word. It's the exact same Greek word that is used in the phrase ministry of the word that the apostles talk about that they have to give themselves to, right? So you could, you could actually read verse one and saying like these, these widows were being overlooked in the daily ministry. And that Greek word for ministry is diakonia. I'm going to geek out on you a little bit here, but I think it's going to really help us.

And it's going to, it's going to really open this passage up in such a beautiful way. That Greek word is diakonia, which describes the action or ministry of a diakonos, which is a person, right?

The first one is a verb. Diakonia describes what a diakonos does. A diakonos is a person who was a slave that was assigned to work tables, to wait on tables. Literally it's, it's the, the, the verbiage is, or the, the picture is dusty servant. And to be a, a diakonos in that culture was one of the lowest positions in society. This wasn't something that was like, Ooh, nobody was like, nobody, no little kid, five-year-old kid was like, what do you want to be when you grow up? I want to be a diakonos, mom and dad. That is not what was happening. You didn't want to be that. You didn't want to end up there. That is something that happened to you. It's not something that you chose to do, but in Acts, the church and its leaders, especially, they don't avoid this humble position. In fact, what we see over and over and over again is they seem to gravitate towards it. They seem to move towards it, which may surprise us, but it is no surprise to the apostles because Jesus, man, that's how we lived. And you know what? He used these same words to teach them. Who is the greatest in the kingdom?

[18 : 44] Luke 22. Let's start in verse 24. Here's a fun little like, fun little like cameo moment in the lives of the apostles with Jesus before he left them. He says, a dispute also arose among them, the apostles, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. Now just pause like, man, when you're arguing about that and Jesus is in earshot, you know something good's about to happen, right?

They needed some adjustment to their thinking and Jesus is about to give it to them honest here. So in verse 25, he says, Jesus says to them, guys, the kings of the Gentiles, they exercise lordship over them and those in authority over them are called benefactors, but not so with you.

Not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as one who serves as one who diakoneos, as one who gets lower, as one who ministers. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves, one who diakoneos? Is it not the one who reclines at table?

But I am among you as one who serves? Diakoneos. Our Lord says, I came to move to the lowest place to serve you. And this is why the religious leaders were so confounded and confused about Jesus and his apostles. They were looking for a Messiah king who would come with power and pomp and authority and be like these exalted kings throughout the earth that they know of, right? This Messiah, they were like, surely this guy would be above certain things. He'd be a man of privilege. He'd be a man who lives in a palace. He'd be wealthy. He'd be a man who has servants and an army to command at his disposal, all of these things. He wouldn't be a man that's moving to the lowest place to serve the least of these. But Jesus, man, he brings a totally different kind of kingdom. He is always moving lower to serve others, which is like, when you think about what Jesus did when he washed his disciples' feet, that was like, I mean, so you have like the diakonos serving, that's like low, low, low. And then to be a foot washer, that's even like, that's why Peter freaks out. Peter's like, no, no, no, no, no, you can't be doing this, Jesus. Like, all you're serving, all this stuff, this is like, this is too low for you. Let me wash your feet. And Jesus says, no, no, no.

You need to learn this. I'm doing this because you guys need to see how low you really need to go. Because I am willing to get that low for your sake. To be great in his kingdom, Jesus showed us, I mean, it always means getting lower, always going towards that lower place.

[21 : 42] And this, guys, this is the nature of being a Jesus disciple, right? This is all of us here. If you're a Jesus disciple, if you're a follower of Jesus, this is what you are called into, you and me. We are always, always, always moving to the lower place, always. And it's not just serving and doing ministry and finding that ministry that suits you best, that you want to do. It's allowing the spirit to lead you into service that looks humble and low and costly. Let me give you an example from a life of an amazing saint who's dead now, but man, one of my heroes in the faith. He died in 1996. His name was Henry Nguyen. And he was a very, yeah, just an amazing Christian man.

A very smart man. He was a professor at Harvard, taught at Divinity School at Harvard, taught at Divinity School in Yale, very well sought out for speaking engagements all over the world.

He wrote many books that impacted a lot of people. Pretty much was probably a Christian celebrity in his day. He traded all that in to follow God's call in his life to go lower.

He said no to Yale or Harvard, I can't remember which one, being a professor there. And he went to work with individuals who had intellectual and developmental disabilities at a ministry called Laarche, Daybreak Community in Ontario, Canada. And then it says this, he spent the last 10 years of his life. Ministering to one individual with profound developmental disabilities. This guy who on the surface at some point in his life, this dude had it all. He was at the top of his game in the Christian world. And he followed God's call to get lower. That's what he did. There shouldn't be a place or position or ministry where we, where God could call us into, where we think, no way. That's beneath me,

Lord. You got to choose something else. The implications here are clear. To be a disciple of Jesus means to serve others. So the questions for us in this room, if you're a, if you are a Jesus follower, if you are on Jesus's team, the question for us is, man, where am I serving? Who am I serving?

[24 : 28] Why am I serving? The spirit field, and what we see in the book of Acts is we see this amazing, the spirit field, spirit led church is made up of these disciples that are running to the lowest place to serve. That's what they're doing. And it's a beautiful picture. And what it shows us is that every part matters. That's, that's what's at the heart of this. They're saying, man, every person matters. Everybody does. And so we see in this, we see in this church in the book of Acts, the poor aren't neglected. The least of these that society calls the least of these, they are not being overlooked.

Now, let me address this in our context. What, what would we say the least of these are in our day and age? In another way to say it, who are the vulnerable? Who are the overlooked? And I think in our context, it could be the poor or the orphan. Man, we think of like those in foster, in the fostering system. I think it's true of widows today too, and the elderly, they're in often in vulnerable, overlooked positions. Those with disabilities, those caught up in addiction.

It could go on and on and on. All I'm saying is there are plenty out there for us to serve. There are plenty out there for us to go and serve and move to the lower place. And I think in general, it can just be kids, right? Like, man, every church I visit, I just want to say this, every church I visit, I love to go and talk to the kids ministry people and say like, hey guys, how's it going? And they're often, yeah, we love what we do. And I was like, oh, cool. How's the support? And they're like, ah. Every church, they always say they never have enough help, which means that on Sunday at church, there is this consistent group among us that are being overlooked and under-ministered and under-served. And I just want to applaud those in this church that do step up and are volunteering there and discipling our kids on Sundays. And those that are also involved in our youth ministry, I think that's amazing. It is so easy to just be like, ugh, kids, annoying, frustrating. I don't get anything out of them except headaches.

It can feel like, man, ministering in those contexts can feel fruitless and unrewarding. It can be a real challenge. I get that. Me and Hales, how long did we serve for kids ministry? Was it three years?

Two years? Something like that at Southlands? The church we were at before? I get that, man. You can feel like, you can feel like, gosh, what is going on here? I'm not seeing any fruit out of this, getting a lot of headaches, a lot of complaining parents. It's saying, telling me like, this is how you should do it, but I'm not going to help you do it. I'm just going to tell you what you're doing wrong. And it's so easy, so easy for them to be overlooked, but we celebrate those.

[27 : 20] We celebrate you guys and gals that are doing that, getting low, moving to that spot that isn't easy to show them how amazing Jesus is. But we should acknowledge that there's a gap there too. There's opportunity for more of us to step into that role. And I honestly think, and this is my own heart, and I can't say like, I heard this from on high, but I think the more that we see that bustling over there and us having a bigger heart for what's happening over there, I think that is evidence of God's grace among us, of us getting this thing of radical grace, of moving to the lower places and being willing to move to the lower places. And I want to say this to you, like it's not all bad, right? Like, hey, you guys are awesome. There are a ton of other areas where, man, we are killing it. You're fostering, you're adopting. You are looking out for widows. You are looking out for those in need. Man, the poor and the needy, they can come to us and their needs are being met.

And I see that. I hear stories about that. That is amazing. Many of you in this church are choosing the way of Jesus and moving to the lower place, to the underserved and the overlooked. And I just want to celebrate that. But let's continue to ask God to work in our hearts, to see ministry and serving the way he does. That diakoneoing, taking that lower place of the servant. And may that produce in us fruit of seeing this rise in the care for those that society would say are unimportant, those that are just easy to overlook. And I want to champion that call, but I want to do so with this caution that's from this passage. As important as it is for us to allow God to convict and correct our hearts, we have to watch out for overcorrection, right? There's always like, man, that's when you look at the history of the church, one person likened it to a drunk man falling off one side of the horse to get up and then fall back on the other side. We're just falling into these unhelpful overswings all the time. And here's what can possibly happen. It's as important as it is to care for the poor and the marginalized and the least of these, as society might call them, it can never come at the expense of prayer and preaching the gospel. We have to see it as both and, not an either or thing.

We can't be a church of like, which way are we going to go here? Whoa, whoa, whoa, Jess. I thought we were all about the gospel, not about all this other stuff. It's like, man, it's, the Bible says you don't have to choose. Like the church in Acts, they were doing both.

Look at what it says in verse three. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty of serving widows, giving them food, making sure they had enough to eat. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry, the diakonia of the word. And what these verses teach us is that every ministry of the church is equally important and should be done well. The apostles didn't choose one over the other, and they didn't also elevate one over the other. Now, you could walk away from this passage and feel like they did. And so like, it seems like they were kind of just pushing that off to the side and saying like, yeah, I don't want to deal with that. We're going to do our thing over here. You take care of those widows. But what they realized is that these widows needed to be cared for. They loved them, and they wanted to make sure they were well cared for. And so they didn't just be like, oh, you know what? Just pick some people and take care of that so we can get back to the real stuff.

What did they do, man? They wanted men to be set in whose reputation preceded them. And that reputation meant that they, in their lives, had already been giving ample evidence that they were full of the Spirit and wisdom. Right? It's the kind of people you would want to be leading you in anything, to be caring for you at all. And that kind of shows how important the disciples took this ministry. They got a team of men who were highly qualified with kingdom characteristics. And I'm sure the apostles would have been great at food distribution. Sure, they would have probably have killed it. But to pick up that ministry, right, of serving those widows, to pick up that diakonia, they would have to have neglected another important ministry. And as central as the poor are to the heart of Jesus, it can't come at the expense of preaching and teaching and prayer. And you know what? Thankfully, we don't, in the church, we don't have to pick which one we should do. Jesus wants his church to be equally passionate and engaged in both because every part matters. Every part matters. Everyone playing their part means that we can be a both and church, not an either or church. And remember this, the Bible tells us this, Jesus has qualified every Christian for ministry. Every Christian to be doing something. Every Christian to be getting lower and serving others. Jesus calls every disciple into that ministry of getting lower and serving others. And we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do ministry, to be able to be doing the getting lower and the serving others. And what this does, the more that the church is doing, the more that

[33 : 08] Jesus' followers are doing this together, the impact, man, it has ripple effects beyond our borders. When more of the church participates in ministry, the more the gospel advances. And that is exactly what happened here. You see this in verse 7, and the word of God continued to increase, spread out, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. Every part mattered. The widows were being taken care of well. The word of God and the prayers and that ministry was also happening, and the gospel advanced. All right? There is never a choice for us between ministry that involves teaching, healing, prayer, versus ministry that involves issues of justice, as in taking care of the poor and the powerless. Both are important, because both are at the center of Jesus' mission. Every person matters in Jesus' church. Every person.

Every ministry is important. And when we live to serve, when we live to follow Jesus into that lower place, when we live to diakoneo, we live to take that lower place in order to bless others. That is the gospel. That is the heart of our Savior, and that is the heart of the church. That is who he calls us to be.

Every single one of us. As the band comes up, I want us to consider how we can respond to this. If you are here listening, not yet a Christian, man, one, I want to say so glad that you're with us today.

And I want to say this to you. What you need to hear is Jesus chose to leave heaven, way up there, to come down to earth, way down here. He came to serve, and he came to serve you by dying on a cross, by taking the lowest place, so that you could be exalted, your sins forgiven, for you to be made holy, to be made justified before God, and be reconciled to him. And here's the thing. You can take this amazing offer of salvation today by faith in him, by faith in saying that, you know what, Jesus, you are Lord and Savior. I am giving up. I can't serve my way into heaven. I have to acknowledge that you came and you served me, that you loved me enough to take the lowest place. In a moment, we're going to pray, and there's going to be a prayer on the screen for you, for you to pray if you want to put your faith in Jesus and begin following him. And that's what the Bible calls us to do. That's what Jesus instructs us to do. It's to repent and believe, and that's how you respond to his call. If you're here and you're listening, you're already a Christian, I want to ask you two questions. Where is the Holy Spirit calling you to take the lower place? Where is that?

Who is he calling you to serve? Where is he calling you to serve? I want to leave you with those two questions. We're going to examine our hearts, and I just really want us to spend some time, 30 seconds to a minute, just to listen and respond to the Holy Spirit and what he's been saying in our hearts, and how he would lead us to respond to what it means for you, how he's calling you to take a lower place. Let's go for it.

[36 : 41] Let's go for it. Thank you.

Lord, we really are humbled by this. Following you is, I think, much more humble than we dare to realize.

Help us, Lord. We want to recognize that, man, we could run out of here and just say, like, well, I better go do this. I want to preempt and pray that we all preempt that with, Lord, help me.

Let there be a cry in our hearts, Lord, to recognize, man, without your help, there's no way we're going to be able to do this. We need your grace working in our hearts, transforming us. We need your help, Holy Spirit.

Because it is hard to always take the lower place. Help us. Amen.

[38 : 13] Amen. If you want to stand with me, we're going to take communion together. And I want to say this.

I love that we're ending with communion today because we talked about taking the lower place and how hard that is. But you have to remember this.

As a disciple of Jesus, there's somebody who always went a little bit lower than you. He's our Lord and Savior. He is our exalted King.

And He went lower than anyone else ever so that we could be lifted up, so that we could be forgiven, so that we get to be called God's children, so that we get this beautiful inheritance called eternal life and life of Him everlasting forever that is full of peace and joy.

That is our hope. And what we do is when we're taking communion, we are saying, Lord, you know what? We are joining you in your death. We are joining you in your humiliation.

[39 : 23] We are joining you in the going lower and committing ourselves to that because that's what life in you looks like. But you know what? We can do that because in His resurrection, we are exalted.

We get life in Him. So let's eat of His flesh, His body broken for us. Let's drink of His blood, shed for the forgiveness of our sins, this new covenant, this new relationship with Him we get to live in.

Let's take and eat and drink together, my friends. Let's take and eat together, my friends.