

What the Church Does

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[0 : 00] Those of you who don't know me, my name is Jesse. Why don't we jump right into it? We got a lot of ground to cover this today and we're gonna be in Acts 2. And if you have a Bible, you can open your Bible to Acts 2.42 or if you turn on your Bible, you can go there as well.

And if you don't have a Bible with you on your phone or don't worry about it, we also got them up on the screen. We'll have the verses up on the screen for you. So we're gonna go ahead and jump right into it.

So verse 42 says this, and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers, and awe came upon every soul.

And many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles and all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

[1 : 05] And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. This is God's word. So we are in a series on the local church.

If you're new to us, it's a great time to be here. We're only on our second iteration of this. I really urge you to go back and listen to the first one, our friend Frickey, yes, that is his name, Frickey. He gave last week. It was absolutely phenomenal on what the church is. But today, we're gonna look at what the local church does. And when it comes to church, I think some of us in the room, we've been around church a while.

We have a good handle on what it is. We're pretty up on church. We like it. We go to it. But for others of us in the room, I realize that you might feel a bit confused or hurt or cynical.

You've done the church thing before and maybe it didn't go that well. Maybe you came out a bit bruised, a bit battered. You've seen the ugly side of church. And some of you may be in the room and you're just absolutely brand new to church.

[2 : 03] You don't know what to make of this thing. You're here checking it out. You'd like to discover more about it. Or maybe some of us, we just have been a part of a church, but it's been a long time since we've been in one and we're a little out of practice and we've kind of forgotten what local church is about.

Whichever category you might fit in, I want to invite us all to, we've all come in with these like preconceived notions, right, and presuppositions about what local church is or what we think local church is or local church should be.

If we can just take those and set them to the side for a moment as we dissect God's word that we just read and to see what his design and purpose for local church is.

We want God's written word to inform and also reform if necessary and then also transform if necessary our hearts and our understanding of what local church does.

And let me just say, because some of you are probably like, oh man, where is he gonna go with this? This isn't me coming and clubbing us all and saying, you aren't doing enough, you better do this and this and this and this. That's not what this is about.

[3 : 06] If I do my duty well today, what I hope is that I give us all a bigger vision for the local church that stirs our hearts with faith and hope in it, right?

So church isn't ever God's plan B. It's like it's his plan A. Like Paul talks about it as to the Ephesian elders. He talks about like, hey, the local church, your church, man, it was bought by Jesus's precious blood.

And so we need to see that and we need to say like, man, God has a desire and a love and a passion for the local church. And so what I hope to do is we can all walk away and to start dreaming and moving toward the possibilities of what can happen every time we gather together.

But not only that, all the possibilities of what can happen as we scatter as the church throughout the week. So again, last week we looked at what local church is.

It's not a building. It is a people and it is a community that has been captivated by Jesus. Fricky like gave that to, I mean, he just spelled it out so beautifully and so well.

[4 : 13] But in that captivation, we are drawn to him, right? And so we are drawn to Jesus. We wanna see him as he really is. We wanna be with him. We wanna experience him.

We wanna walk with him. But the result of being saved by Jesus is not only being drawn to him, because as he draws us to himself, you know what he does? He draws us together. That's what he does.

He draws us into community. And that's what the local church is. The local church is an assembly of Christians. And that's what we do. We see this in Acts 2.

That text we read says that they were together. That's what we do. We gather together. Now, we're in this room. I feel like I'm preaching to the choir right now. We're like, yeah, no duh, right.

That's what we do. We get together. It's obvious. But they were the first to do this. I can ask to you, there was no example for them to look out and say like, oh, there was a church. I get it.

[5 : 07] Those people did that before. We just have to follow their example. They didn't have that. But isn't it amazing that on the heels of this church being formed, which happened at one sermon, like being preached by Peter, 3,000 people getting saved and added, it's like that would be like my dream result of like a Sunday morning, like 3,000 people being saved and added.

But this was their natural response. 3,000 people. It was their natural response, not one dropout. And here's why. The Holy Spirit is always going to lead you toward being the church.

And part of being the church is being together. Like the very word church, the Greek word there is ekklesia, and it means assembly, which means getting together.

Which is this, right? I'm not a big fan of participation trophies, but guess what? You show up to church, you get a participation trophy. Good job. Well done. But we don't gather just because we have to.

We don't gather because like, well, God said we have to, so I'm gonna suck it up, and I'm gonna do it. I'd rather be somewhere else right now. Maybe it's during football season, it's watching football games, or whatever it may be.

[6 : 23] Maybe it's like out on a boat, you know, on a Sunday morning, it's really pretty. I get that. But we don't gather because we have to when we're suffering for God, you know, it's like, okay, giving up a lot here.

And we gather because important things happen when we're together. And here's the other thing, like different things happen in different size gatherings, which is why we regularly gather in big and small groups to help each other see and experience Jesus.

That's why we do this thing. We don't do this thing because it's what the people in the South do. We get, you know, we show up and we go to church and we check off our box and it's like, boom, we go away and, hey, we did our religious duty for the week.

No, there's things that happen while we are together. What does Acts 2.46 say? It says day by day, right? This regular rhythm. There's this regularity.

Attending the temple. Oh, you guys are paying attention. Very good. And breaking bread in their homes. So there's like the attending the temple together, the big thing they come together to do and then breaking bread in their homes, the kind of small gatherings.

[7 : 33] They weren't like, well, I like the big, but I don't like the small or I like the small and I don't like the big. And we can kind of pick and choose which one we want to do. No, they needed both. They realized they needed both and so do we.

So do we. Being the church means you gather at the big and the small stuff. Why is that important? Maybe you're asking that question. What is the big deal? And here's the big deal.

Because you have gifts from God. You and I have gifts from God that are needed at both of those gatherings. See, we get saved, but God then through the Holy Spirit gives gifts to each and every Christian.

Because you know what? He's called each and every one of us to do ministry. In the New Testament, the New Testament church, it's the priesthood of all believers. Like 1 Peter 2, 9 says, like he called us to be a royal priesthood.

Priests in the Old Testament, they did all the ministry in the temple, in the sanctuary. Priests in the New Testament, it's all of you. We're all here to do the ministry. We're all qualified.

[8 : 36] Because not anything special about us, but because what God has done, he qualifies us, and not only does he qualify us, he equips us to do the work of the ministry.

And we need to get that truth to sink deep into our bones. And this is where God, I think, today wants to do some informing of our hearts. Maybe you didn't realize this was true, but he also wants to do some reforming of our hearts.

Maybe you grew up in a tradition where it's like, no, no, no, Jesse, it's the pastors and the deacons and the people on the stage that do the worship. They're the people that do all the ministry. I can't do that.

No, no, no. You need to be reformed. And then in this revelation, let it become conviction. Open your hearts to let God speak into it so our hearts can be transformed to step into that, right?

Man, I want... Moses tried to disqualify himself five different times with God. God's like, you're gonna lead my people. No, no, no, God, you know, I'm not good at this.

[9 : 33] I can't talk well. You know, use somebody else, use somebody else, use somebody else, use somebody else. And God's finally like, you know what, Moses, be quiet and just go do it. Moses is like, okay. And you know what? Like Moses saw all his weaknesses.

And you know what? He probably was really bad at all the things he thought he was really bad at. But you know what God gave him? He gave him everything he needed to do God's work and to do God's will.

So don't disqualify yourself is what I'm trying to say. Nothing you have done, there is nothing you can see within yourself that you think of, ah, too many limitations, I can't do this, so I can't...

Don't disqualify yourself. Open your heart and lean in and say, you know what God, you can use me. I believe that. Please use me. We need to come to church, not only to get.

And it's okay to come to receive. We come to receive God's grace. We come to sit and see him and bask in his presence. I was just reading Psalm 21 in the past few days and just really enjoying it.

[10 : 34] One of my favorite lines in there, it says like, God will cheer you in his presence. I love that. I'm like, yes, God, I need to be cheered in your presence. Because sometimes life's tough.

But man, we can come to get, but we have to do more than just coming to church and gathering together to get. We also come to give. And we don't give what we got necessarily.

We give according to what God has given us. So Romans 12, 6, it puts it to Paul's writing to a church and he says like, hey, having gifts, hey, you guys, you church, everybody in there in the church in Rome, everyone's sitting in a seat.

You don't have to have the title by your name, pastor, every single saint. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them.

If prophecy in proportion to our faith, if service in our serving, the one who teaches in his teaching, the one who exhorts in his exhortation, the one who contributes in generosity, the one who leads with zeal, and the one who does acts of mercy with cheerfulness.

[11 : 42] We are a church who really believes that it's important to plan our services out. We should have a plan.

Like I don't like get up here and wing it on a Sunday for my sermon. Like I spend time writing, preparing the music guys. I think about their songs they're gonna play and they practice him, they come.

But we are a church who plans in pencil. We got the plan on a Sunday, but you know what? We hold it like this. We are open to the Holy Spirit interruptions. And you know what? We want those interruptions.

And do you know how the Holy Spirit interrupts? Like he's, like it's not like Pentecost. Like that would be awesome if he comes in with wind and fire, like resting on people's heads. But that happened one time.

Hasn't been recorded in church history ever since. It was a special moment. But you know how the Holy Spirit interrupts? Through something he's put into you. And I'm not talking about like, oh, what is church service now?

[12 : 41] Is it like some crazy open mic moment where everybody can just holler out anything at any given time that they want to? Or it's like, sweet, there's an open mic. I'm gonna run up and say anything. No, no, no, man. There is like, there's good Holy Spirit interruptions, but there is order to it as well.

There is always gonna be order to it. God loves order. 1 Corinthians 14, 26, Paul's writing to this very gifted church, right? Where everybody has all these gifts and they're using them and he encourages them in that.

He says, what then brothers? When you come together, when you come together, each one has a hymn, has a lesson, has a revelation, has a tongue or an interpretation of that tongue.

Let all things be done for building up. Not building up the people who are using the gifts, building up the church. That's why the Holy Spirit put gifts into each one of us.

Because he wants us to use them for the building up of the church. It's a beautiful thing. You get to participate in that, right? We aren't sitting on the sidelines watching everyone else put bricks on stuff and mortar and blah, blah, blah.

[13 : 44] And we're just like, oh, that's pretty cool. This looks like, man, God wants us. He gets us in there with our hands and he's saying, yes, you can use this. I'm using you to build this church up into all it can be.

And so we see this potential. But then he finishes this whole chapter in 1 Corinthians 14 with this little command. But all things should be done decently and in order.

So, you know, maybe you come from a charismatic background or you've been on the outside of seeing the charismatic and seeing some craziness and you're just like, man, it is just like everyone is having a free-for-all that is crazy.

Nothing makes sense. I don't want any part of that. And so what we often end up doing is we just chuck the baby out with the bathwater. And we say, no, that's no good. Not interested.

But there is a way to do this that is beautiful and that is orderly, but God working through us in encouraging and strengthening and building up his church. Let me give you a practical example.

[14 : 45] Our very first Sunday meeting here, two different people. One was my wife, Haley. The other one was Brian Hart. He's one of the pastors at Moorhead City. And they both came to me during the time of worship and they both felt they had something to share and they knew it wasn't just a me thing God was speaking to them.

They felt like, no, this is a we thing. This is something God is wanting to encourage and say to all of us. And so they simply leaned over to me and they shared what they felt God give them.

And as the Holy Spirit typically does in those moments, he was highlighting the same truth through two different voices and we can be encouraged by that because you know what? The Bible says, out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, let everything be established.

So I don't have to wonder, it's like, man, is Haley really getting this right? Or is Brian really getting this right? Because you know what? The Holy Spirit spoke this to Haley. He spoke that to Brian.

And it was exactly the same thing, the same like vein of truth, but in different words.

And so we got to get up and they gave this, what they got from God, they gave it to the church in a very simple manner. And the church was encouraged. And we got to respond out of that with worship to God.

[15 : 54] But in that moment, our faith was here and then the Holy Spirit used it to ratchet up our faith to here. Which is an amazing thing. Our faith was built up and so the church was built up.

That's how those things work out very practically. But it comes through and it's just simply coming with your offering and leaning over to Alan or Bear or myself or Elliot and just saying like, hey, whoever's leading the meeting, it's like, hey, this is what I'm feeling.

And you know what? You don't have to worry about if you're wrong or right. We get to vet those things before they come out and they're given to the church. But those are good things. Those are awesome things to push pause.

Those are good orderly disruptions from the Holy Spirit that we want to see. But it takes coming to church expectant and ready for God to use you.

How do you come to church? Do you come to church thinking like at any moment, you know what? Man, God, I believe at any moment you could drop something in my heart. Maybe some discernment. Maybe just a scripture that starts burning in my heart.

[16:59] How can he use you? And let me just say like some of those things can happen from the stage but they don't have to happen from the stage. It can be before and even after a meeting as you're talking to someone. We were just talking about this before prayer.

Like every moment, every time that we get together is a holy moment. From the time that you come in and you start greeting people and seeing people, every moment is not a common moment.

We should not treat them as common. Every moment is a chance for God to use you and minister to others through you. Let me give you an example of how this can work just during any given time. We were at this pastor's conference a couple weeks ago and I was just in a conversation between meetings with a guy who's a pastor from Thailand and we're just talking and then suddenly he says like, hey, God wants me to tell you something.

I was like, sweet, go for it, man. He's just like, brrr. I was like, whoa. It was good. I needed to hear that. It ministered to my heart. It strengthened me.

[17:59] It gave me faith. It encouraged me and so you know what? I walked away from that conversation not just knowing more about that guy and what was going on at his church. I walked away with wind in my sails too. Now, unfortunately, I didn't give anything back to him but it was like, you know, but I was just like, man, it's amazing when God does that stuff.

It can happen right out there in conversations with people. That's why we're paying attention and attuning to the Holy Spirit and expectant leaning in and we don't need to be shy and nervous about ministering to each other like that.

Again, there is no difference between ministry and serving in the Bible. In fact, in the New Testament, when you see that word ministry or service, they are from the same word family in the Bible.

They are intricately connected. To serve is to minister. To minister is to serve and God serves his people through his people.

God ministers to his people through his people. And so when we come together, yeah, we come to be poured into, but we also come to be poured out.

[19:08] Imagine that, guys. Imagine what that kind of church looks like. Imagine how much more ministry could happen at any moment of our gatherings. Both our big gatherings here on a Sunday, our small gatherings throughout the week.

If we all came. You know what that means? It's like, man, it's coming prayed up, full of the Holy Spirit, expecting and wanting to be used. And I think that's God's vision for the local church. And not because I think so, because that's what I see in the Bible. That was like normal Christianity. When you read Acts, when you read the epistles, what was going on, that was the stuff that was going on. It wasn't weird.

And I think that's the direction God wants us to move toward as a church, as a local church. And you know, the Bible says, and Paul said this to that Corinthian church, he says, man, eagerly desire the gifts.

Eagerly desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which means like lean into them and pray and ask for them. Pray and ask for God to use you before you gather in your big and small groups. That's my encouragement to all of us.

[20:09] And I'm not talking about like, hey, let's fake it till we make it. I'm not into that. I mean, it's awesome when God brings interruptions, but that isn't what a successful meeting necessarily is.

It's not what we hang our hat on. So if it doesn't happen, we don't walk out and go like, I guess God wasn't with us today. Now, here's a helpful rule. Show up expecting and wanting God interruptions, but be okay if he doesn't.

Because there is nothing common about when believers gather together in faith. And God convicted me of this recently. I had drifted into treating holy things, into treating holy moments as if they were common.

In my longing for disruption, what I've been talking about, I begin to despise what is always available when we get together. Ephesians 5, 18 to 19, Paul is encouraging this church, and he says, don't get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

And the actual, the way the Greek could really be rendered there is be being filled with the Spirit. Don't just like be filled once and that's it. It's like being ongoingly filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, in hymns, in spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.

[21 : 36] And so this is telling us an important thing that should be happening when we get together. One of the things we do is we gather to sing, right? We just did that. And it's amazing. And I want us to give us a greater appreciation for what we are doing when we are singing.

And I want us to realize, you know what the first words of God in the Bible are? They're a song. They're a poem. Genesis 1 is a poem.

He's singing creation into existence. The first quoted words of Adam, the first man, you know what they are? They're a song.

They're a poem. When he looks at his bride, Eve, for the first time that God created and brings to him as this gift, he looks at her and he says, at last this one is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. That is a song. That is a Hebrew song that he is singing out in response to this beautiful thing that God has done for him.

[22 : 46] He doesn't have his hands in his pockets, primarily because he didn't have any pants on. But what I'm getting at is his posture isn't like, oh yeah, cool man, thanks God.

Eve's pretty hot. She's pretty cool. Think I'm gonna like her. Think it's gonna work out. What is he doing? He's feeling the feels.

He is like in touch with his emotions. He is realizing something good has happened. He is seeing God and he's seeing a gift from God and he is responding accordingly.

And that's what we should be doing when we're singing. Like Adam addresses, he sings the song, he's singing it to God and he's singing it to Eve and that's what Ephesians 5.19 is getting at.

It's saying addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Let that sink in for a moment. Singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.

[23 : 51] I think we often come in and we think of singing to the Lord with our hearts, but we don't realize that also what we could be doing at the same time is addressing one another in our singing.

Well, Jesse, what is that all about? Well, we come to God and we gather together and we come to him and yes, we lift our eyes and we sing to him and we sing about him. We sing these amazing truths.

But also what we are doing is we are singing to each other. And this is what this means. I'm not the only preacher on a Sunday morning. We all preach to each other when we join in singing these beautiful songs about who God is.

And you know what makes for good preaching? Faith married with good theology. That makes for good preaching. And so we as a church are dedicated to singing songs that have good theology in them.

We really care about what we sing about because singing is an important thing. It is proclamation. Preaching is proclamation. What I'm doing right now is proclamation.

[24 : 55] Singing to God about God and who he is to him and to each other is proclamation. Proclamation. When you and I come together before God full of faith, singing true things about God, you know what we're doing?

We are singing some of the best sermons. A lot better than what I'm doing right now. I hope you get encouraged by this.

Some of us are like fingers crossed like, hey Jesse, does that mean no more sermons anymore? I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that. Sorry to disappoint you. We still need to be taught from God's written word.

After all, the Bible is our standard of truth for faith and life. So we can't ditch it. And that's why it's always going to be a part of our gatherings as well. We gather to hear the preached word.

Referring back to Acts in verse 242, it's the first thing out of the gate. It says they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching. And the apostles weren't going around giving motivational speeches or history lessons.

[26 : 03] No, that's not what a sermon is. A sermon is about Jesus. And when the apostles taught, that's what they were teaching the church. They were talking about, teaching about Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2, 1 to 5, Paul says this. He's telling this Corinthian church, hey, remember when I first came to you. When I came to you brothers, I didn't come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.

He's saying like, man, I gave you sermons that were not impressive. According to the standard of the day of what good eloquent speech was.

For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And as with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling in my speech and my message were not implausible words of wisdom but in demonstration of the spirits and of power so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men.

It's not gonna rest on me and how good of a performance and how eloquent I am. What is it gonna rest in? The power of God. There is so much that can be said here.

[27 : 14] We don't have enough time for it. But a lot of what gets called preaching or sermons today is really just motivational talks by good communicators. And you can hear that anywhere else but the church is where we hear about Jesus.

And if the church doesn't preach Jesus, go find another church. Anything else is gonna lead to moralism, it's gonna lead to legalism, or some type of ism that doesn't require dependence on God. And God dependence is where the Holy Spirit and the Bible are always gonna take us to. That's what's gonna happen. And as you cultivate that God dependence, you can cultivate it by coming to church and doing all these things.

It cultivates God dependence. And another way to do that is through prayer, which is why prayer is something that the early church was also devoted to. And we should be as well.

Verse 242, they devoted themselves to the very last thing in that verse 42, it says is the prayers. We gather to pray. When we come together, we should be praying.

[28 : 21] We do a prayer time before service. 30 minutes before service, we gather together those who are serving because we wanna kick ourselves off in the right way. We want to prepare ourselves and prepare our hearts of what we're about to get into.

We don't wanna come in with any kind of self-dependence. We wanna come in with God dependence. And here's the thing about prayer. Prayer, in its essence, is faith and practice. What are you doing when you're praying? You are praying to a person you can't see, but believing that he is there and that he is hearing you. You know, I'll never forget. This like transformed me. Just recently, we went on a trip to South Africa to visit Haley's family. And I'll never forget, we ran into a pastor in a little village, a poor man, pastoring a small little church.

His name was Abrams. And he told me that he was on his way to a wedding of a couple, some newlyweds that were in his church. And he was going to pray over them.

[29 : 23] That's what he was going to do. And he was like finishing up his shift at work. And as soon as he was done, he was hightailing it over there to go do that. And he told me how much that needed to happen because divorce and infidelity was so rampant in his church community.

And he wasn't going there to just offer up a faithless blessing over them because he's the pastor and that's what pastors do. No, he believed his prayers over them mattered and that they were gonna make a difference.

I'll never forget him looking at me. I get teared up every time I think about this. He looked at me and he said, in this really cool African accent, God hears every prayer.

That's why I pray. He hears every prayer. That dude didn't have resources like we have.

He didn't have wealth and money to depend on. He had God and not much else. And you know what?

[30 : 30] That's enough. I want that kind of faith for myself. I want that kind of faith and God dependence for myself but not just for me. I want it for all of us. I want us not to be a church that prays sometimes.

I want to be a church that runs to prayer. I want to be a praying church. I want us to lean into it. I want us to become so God dependent that like man, it's the first thing we think about. Whether it's good things or tough times we're running into.

We're bringing God into it. Consider this. If prayer leads us into more God dependence, what is our prayerlessness leading us into?

The less we're dependent on God, the more we are going to be dependent on something else. And you know what? I think in our wealthy Western context, we can develop an unhealthy dependence on things like money and possessions.

It's easy to do that. But the early church wasn't like that at all. And it's not because they were dirt poor. I mean, they were a mixture of poor people and wealthy people, but look what was happening in verse 45.

[31 : 36] And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. Kind of sounds like a hippie commune a little bit, but nevertheless, what we see the early church doing, and I think what we see, what we can step into more, is it's like we see them.

It's like we give generously together. We do that together. Now some of you are thinking, man, that's too bad, Jesse. I was just starting to like you guys. Is this where we're going? Are we talking about money?

I'm not saying it's like, hey, we're gonna stop and start passing the offering plates. That's not what's going on. Actually, I find it easy to talk about generosity because we are a generous church. We are.

However, I'm sure that there are many in the room who don't give or don't give generously to the local church. And I think some of that's just out of lack of knowledge. It's like, oh, I didn't know that was a thing we were supposed to do.

Yes, God encourages us. I mean, Jesus talked about giving all the time. And our hearts and money are a very intertwined thing. And so giving, you know, 10% or giving generously on a regular basis is saying to money and wealth and possessions, I don't need to find my satisfaction in you.

[32 : 53] You are not my greatest hope. I'm depending on God. I'm trusting in him. What was happening in that first church that they were like so joyfully giving their stuff away?

It seems like they were doing that, right? Well, people saw God at work and they wanted in. And a couple chapters later from the text we were looking at in Acts 4, verse 32, it says, Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul.

No one said that they had any of the things that belonged to him, that they were his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

And great grace was upon them all. Not just the apostles. Upon them all. There was not a needy person among them.

For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet. And it was distributed to each as any had need. And thus Joseph, who was called by the apostles Barnabas, which means son of encouragement.

[33 : 57] It's a cool guy to be around, I'm guessing. He was a Levite, a native of Cyprus. He sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. I mean, guys, what an absolute legendary vision of what local church can be.

We see that here. Can you imagine? I mean, don't you want that? That idea of like great grace was upon all of them. And the result of that was this like lavish generosity toward one another.

There was not a needy person among them. That is crazy. Now, this kind of generosity that we're seeing, it's a lot less surprising when you consider that they weren't just sharing stuff. They were sharing lives.

They were sharing their lives together. Acts 2.42, the beginning, it says, they voted themselves to, and then it says fellowship, to the breaking of bread. And then in verse 44, it goes on to say, and all who believed had all things in common.

And so just picking out little pieces of those verses, the essence of it is that they were doing life together. That is what was going on. It just wasn't showing up for the church events, right?

[35 : 04] The local church is more, and remember, it's not a building. It's not showing up just when we're in this space, which is good to show up to, right?

We want to get together in the big. It's not just showing up to community groups. It's a good thing to do and be a part of, but it's beyond that. It's doing life together, right? That fellowship, devoting to the fellowship, that's that word koinonia.

It's probably half of us in the room have a T-shirt with that word on there, which just means partnering together. It's a fellowship that is on mission, with a common mission. And now, I want to say this.

If you've stuck around long enough in church, devoted is really what it takes to hang in there with fellowship and doing life together. There is all kinds of reasons to want to leave and lean back, but when we understand what the church is and what we are called to do, we stick.

We're devoted to these things. And along with the fellowship it's talking about here, it says they broke bread, which is not talking about communion. It means they were eating together. They were

sharing meals together.

[36 : 07] Part of our generosity towards one another, part of doing life together, is having open doors and open tables. Liverpool Football Club, it's one of those famous soccer clubs.

It's really cool. Their motto for a long time has been, you never walk alone. That's like their fan base motto, that's what we chant. And this is the thing, they're kind of doing life together, not in the sense of how church does, but they're kind of getting at it.

Because you can go anywhere in the world and if you're wearing a Liverpool jersey and there is another fan that is a Liverpool follower and devotee, you are always going to have a seat at that person's table.

They're always going to invite you in. You're wearing the team jersey. Hey, we're Jesus' disciples. When you get saved, you put on Jesus' jersey.

We're all wearing it. There's always an open door and a seat at each other's tables. And not just for those in the church that we're doing life with. It goes even beyond that. In Acts 2.47, it talks about them praising God and having favor with all the people, those inside the church and those outside the church.

[37 : 18] And the Lord added to the number day by day those who were being saved. And the church, man, we should be gathering, we should be getting together for sure. We should be doing all those things when we gather together that we talked about, big and small.

We should be doing life together, but that's not all. It says here that we also, what we do is the church scatters for mission. And this is my last point. We're almost done. Everything that we do in our fellowship and our togetherness is for the building of our faith and the strengthening of our faith and our resolve and our endurance that we can go out and be scattered into the world as salt and light.

We go out for mission. That's what we do. And the more you're full of faith, here's the thing, the more you're gonna wanna share it. It's just how it is. A lot of history has shown that the, has shown the church kind of like cowering back in a holy huddle away from the world, scared of the world, hiding out.

But we see at the end of this passage, man, this little community, this little church in Jerusalem. Well, not so little. They had 3,000, okay. But they're not hiding out. And they're scattering and they're, they're going into the community and talking about Jesus and sharing Jesus with, with those in their life.

And that's been the story of One Harbor, like from day one. 12 years ago, Donnie and a few families, they started a church in a living room. That's what happened. And he's there and he's like, hey guys, please don't invite anybody.

[38 : 45] We don't have any clue what we're doing yet. Let's just give it some time. And thankfully, in holy disobedience, some people did invite somebody to come to the living room gathering on the second Sunday.

And that guy's name was Derek Jenkins and he showed up. Nobody knew this, but he was on his way to overdose. He was, he was a recovered drug addict. He thought that, and he was told that, oh, once I get off drugs, life's going to be better.

And he got off drugs and life was absolutely miserable for him. But he didn't know Jesus. And so he's like, well, if this is all I got, is just being sober, I'm just going to go out in a blaze of glory. And that's what he was going to do. But he decided to stop in because he was invited by some guys to give God one last try and he's there and he gets radically saved. Then he then starts fighting his addict friends, like, in a sneaky way, like, promising to give them rides to where they need to go. But like, he picks them up in his truck and lo and behold, he lands them at church and he says, yeah, I'll get you there, but first you're going to sit in this service. So that's happened, man.

[39 : 55] The people in his world, he started, he started being salt and light to them. He started talking to them about Jesus and then they started getting saved and they started coming to church and we had surfers doing the same with their surfer friends and golfers with their golfing friends and students bringing their friends and businessmen and women like in the marketplace bringing their friends and coworkers and on and on it goes and God, what he just did is he just kept adding to our numbers daily those who were being saved and so we moved from living room to a gas station, outgrew that.

We moved to a nightclub. Our kids ministry was at a former hookah lounge. We could write a book on how not to church plant, let me tell you. But we didn't have anything impressive to attract people except that we just kept holding out Jesus.

That's all we did. We kept doing life together. We kept our doors and tables open and I never want this to change. I want this to be the testimony of us 10, 20, 40, 50 years from now when like our grandkids are still doing this thing like they're still doing this.

They're still doing church this way and the best chance that people have to hear about Jesus isn't on a Sunday actually. It's every moment of the week and every part of our community as we all go out.

You and I, we're filled with the same spirit that rose Jesus from the dead. The same spirit that rose him from the dead is with us. We take him with us wherever we go.

[41 : 31] School, the workplace, the grocery store, the playground, at the beach, wherever it may be, we take him with us. And here's the thing, you don't need a Bible college seminary degree to be a missionary.

You don't. The disciples, that early church, those apostles that were like rocking and rolling, people were getting saved with what they were doing, it says this about them.

They were the equivalent of redneck fishermen who didn't finish grade school. Acts 4.13, it says, now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished, but they recognized something.

They had been with Jesus. For most of us, we don't need another Bible study, we just need to pray for more boldness. That's what the early church did a lot. They prayed for more boldness.

It's amazing what Jesus can do with a little faith and a little boldness. So let's respond. If I could have the band come up. I want to say this to you, if you're here and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, and we said at the beginning, we don't have anything other than Jesus.

[42 : 40] All we've been doing from the very get is holding out Jesus and that's all we got. And that's not us trying to sound uncaring towards you, man, it's really a confession of our weakness.

We got nothing else. We don't have anything that will change you except Jesus. Jesus can. But we hold out Jesus freely to you no matter who you are or what you've done.

We want to say to you, Jesus loves you. And has you here for a reason. He wants to meet with you right here where you're at. He wants to save you.

He wants to add you to his body, his church, his bride. And we're all going to have a chance to respond to God in a moment. And I just say, I want to encourage you during that time for you, pray to God to make himself real to you.

Pray to Jesus. Man, Jesus, I want to know you like what this guy's been talking about. If you're here and already a follower of Jesus, man, I just want us to take time to think about what is our response to this sermon?

[43 : 46] What is it? I want to say, give us a chance in preparation before communion to ask and consider and go to God and see how he's leading you to respond.

what is your next step of obedience as you follow Jesus? What are some things maybe you just need to repent of with your attitude towards the local church and what it's been?

Consider these areas of devotion that we talked about in scripture today. Think about that. You know what? God's grace is so good. He's not going to club you over the head. And again, man, what he's done, he's given us this beautiful vision of what could be.

And you know what he does? He calls us into that. He says, hey guys, you can come. Be a part of that. Lay aside your false expectations, your false thoughts, your false suppositions.

Come and be a part of what I'm doing. Let's respond accordingly. Let's take a few moments just to pray right now, quietly on your own with God. Holy Spirit, you're speaking to our hearts.

[44 : 56] and just pray that even as I finish this prayer that we would just keep focusing on what you're speaking to us. Just keep responding to what you're doing and what you're saying.

Pray that your grace would be there to convict in the most tender, loving way. To redirect our hearts. To find joy again in the local church.

Hope again in what it can be. Amen. to find excitement in the possibilities of being a vessel of grace through which you could work and minister to others.

Both in our gatherings but also as we go out and scatter on mission. Amen. Amen. If you would stand with me.

We're gonna do take communion and this reminds us that the local church isn't a social club that somebody thought of and said, you know what, there's lonely people.

[46 : 02] Let's try to do some gatherings because it's a good idea. No. Now, the local church is the local church. We do this because Jesus bought it with his blood.

He bought it with his sacrifice. And the togetherness that we have is from the one body that was broken for us. And so when we take and eat of the bread, we're reminded of that.

And we're taking of that in faith and we're saying, man, thank you, Lord, that we are part of the same body. That we are connected together. And his blood shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins so that we could be brought in and be a part of his church, his assembly, his people.

Let's eat the bread together and drink the cup together. Now, we're gonna sing one more song.

And I want us to remember what we're doing when we're singing. We are proclaiming. We are preaching a sermon. We are telling true things about God to God but to each other.

[47 : 16] So let's sing loud and let's sing proud in who he is. He is.