

## Acts 2:41-47: We are Passionate about the Local Church

**Opening Illustration:** hunger games – The 3 Finger Salute that was a sign from her district of love and admiration and respect which is now being used to spark a rebellion – *A seemingly simple thing as a sign of rebellion against the evil empire!*

- The Church is a lot like this – *The Church as pictured in the NT is a band of rebels, sojourners, and exiles who move about awaiting the toppling of the current world order that is under the sway of the wicked one and so it is with us* – Local churches are outposts of a coming Kingdom announcing to the World and to the powers that soon the King will arrive and the Kingdom of darkness will be brought to nothing!

**Context:** In verse 41 we see the preaching of the gospel creates the church – *Pentecost has come and the gospel is preached as Peter looks at the crowds saying this Jesus whom you crucified God has raised up and made Him Lord and this preaching of the gospel forms a people (the 1<sup>st</sup> Church)*

- You are not saved into isolation – *You are saved into a people which means you need to be living out the gospel changed life with a community of gospel changed*
- In (Acts 1) the apostles ask Jesus when He will establish the Kingdom – *And Jesus, as Jesus always does, strangely doesn't really answer the question about when the Kingdom will be established, He says the Spirit will come and once He does this gospel will advance to the ends of the earth as you will be my*

So IDC I want us to see that as we are marked by these things – *And as we ourselves are marked by these things and as we plant churches locally, nationally, and globally that are marked by these things* – *I want us to understand that even when it does not seem so we are a part of something cosmic and we give the world a picture of what the global reign will look like!*

So let's look at 4 Marks of a Healthy Church – **A healthy church (and a healthy disciple for that matter) is marked by being devoted to 4 things:** 1) The Scriptures 2) Prayer 3) One another 4) And the Mission!

- You see it is really very simple (not easy) if you want to be a vibrant disciple and if we want to be a healthy church – **We must love the Word, Prayer, the Church, and the Mission** – These things should mark us individually and corporately!

**(Read V. 42) Mark 1:** A healthy church is marked by devotion to the Scripture – Verse 42 is pretty much a summary verse that begins by talking of their devotion to the Apostle's teaching – *They were committed to the Apostles teaching (which was the Apostles unpacking the OT in light of Christ, thus what we must be committed to is scriptures of the Old and New Testament!)*

- And the language here indicates this was not a passive thing but instead they were intensely devoted to learning and so it must be with us – *We are all called to be theologians who are committed to learning from and about our God!*
- This is why we do expositional teaching (EXPLAIN) because we want to let the Word set the agenda for IDC and we want to let God speak for Himself
- So what is your authority? What dictates your behavior – Peers and their opinions? Tradition? Family? What feels good – if it feels good it must be right? Experience?
- The greater question for those of us that follow Christ is not do you believe the bible – **But instead when the bible gives a command that contractdicts your feelings or your experience is the bible suddenly silent or redefined?**

Beth Moore said this recently at Passion: *"You will watch a generation of Christians -- OF CHRISTIANS -- set the Bible aside in an attempt to become more like Jesus. And stunningly it will sound completely plausible.*

*This will be perhaps the cleverest of all the devil's schemes in your generation”*

**Tony taught from the home office on Nehemiah 8 – *This scene where the people come back in the land and find the book and as they begin to read it they stand, they bow, and even later they weep at the reading of the word – I want us to be a Nehemiah 8 people both individually and corporately who love the Scriptures!***

**So are we a people like that? Does the word bring those kinds of reactions and devotion out of us? – *When is the last time you wept when you read the word? When is the last time you bowed in awe at the reading of the word? When is the last time you welled up with joy when you meditated on the word? (LETS BE A PEOPLE WHO LOVE THE WORD!)***

**Devoted to fellowship (look at that below)**

**(READ V. 42) Mark 2: A Healthy Church is marked by devotion to prayer – The early church was committed to communing with God and to petitioning God – Prayer can often be very difficult for me when it comes to these 4 marks but really is a matter of belief and unbelief!**

- **Lack of prayer is a sign that we are dependent on our own strength – *If we are going to be a dangerous church in this rebellion we need to see prayer as Piper describes it not as an intercome but as a war time walkie-talkie in which we cry out to our God our General for His Help in the Mission!***
- **We see here in this text as a result of prayer God did many signs and wonders through them – *We should pray for power in this mission and God may or may not grant to us powerful signs whether those be miraculous or as simple as helping us suffer well and love well as we go to war against this current tyrannical order – Lets be a people that devote ourselves to a prayer life that is ORIENTED not toward our own glory but instead is oriented toward the GLORY OF GOD AND THE ACCOMPLISHING OF HIS WILL!***

**Samuel Chadwick: *The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.***

- **The church in Acts was a praying people – will we be? – **Be intentional about setting aside time both personally and then in groups for this most important discipline (SUNDAY MORNING but also formal and informal!)** – *And maybe just maybe we will see an advance of the Kingdom that can only be explained by the power of the Spirit!***

**(READ V. 44) Mark 3: A Healthy Church is marked by devotion to one another – The Greek word here for fellowship is “Koinea” which indicates a close relationship – You see in V. 42 there is A DEFINITE ARTICLE in front of fellowship**

- **This means they were committed to a specific people – **This is why church membership is not something we do to track numbers but it is something that is vital for our growth in Christ – We all need to be accountable and an identifiable member of a local church among a who people who know your name and you know theirs!****
- **Some might push back and say Church Membership isn’t biblical – **Here alone we see they are committed to a specific people and there is an intense sense of belonging as they are added “to their number” – *But also the word is biblical (1 Cor. 12), accountability to elders demands it (Heb. 13) and accountability to one another demands it (1 Cor. 5)*****
- **The NT has no category for someone who’s a Christian but that is not accountable to elders or fellow members in a disciplined community of faith who are committed to one another – *Whether they called it membership or not!***

Here is what this devotion to one another looked like it was characterized by:

- 1) **(READ V. 44) Unity**
- 2) **(READ V. 45) Radical Care:**
  - a. Deuce talked about this kind of love last week – **A kind of love that loves as if it was you yourself in that plight**
- 3) **(READ V. 46) Worship:** This early church was marked by lives of worship together in large (*at the Temple*) and small groups (*in their homes*) “praising God” – **This passages paints a much different picture of the church than I was taught in VBS**

Illustration: We teach kids silly hand gestures and its actually bad doctrine – **Do you remember this hand gesture (THE BUILDING COULD COLLAPSE TOMORROW)** – What the problem with it!

- The Church is not a Building and the Church is not an event the church is a people – **The church is not something you do AND THE CHURCH IS NOT SOMETHING YOU GO TO the church is something you are – Your identity has changed (Timmis)**
- Why does this Matter: Because the text here is showing that the church is a people on mission together – **The building could collapse tomorrow and IDC will be just fine (unless)**

We have inadvertently taught people that there is a building you go to and you act a certain way there and you don't say certain things there because you don't want to say that in Church – **We have taught that somehow we can divorce Sunday from the rest of the week – But Monday matters as much as Sunday because you are something you don't just go to something!**

- The Church is certainly a people who gather to encourage one another through singing, and prayer, etc – **And there is a unique glory to the gathering for sure but the church is more than that – But the church is a people on mission to bring glory to the Triune God by calling on people from all nations to take part with us in our great rebellion against the evil order! (SOUNDS A LITTLE BIT LIKE STAR WARS except in our case the death star has already been destroyed!)**
- Unbeliever we are calling you into something much greater than coming to a building once a week to hear preaching, and singing, and reading – **We are calling you into a family that lives life together for the glory of God and on mission with Him – And it is no wonder some people have the wrong idea of heaven (never ending choir practice)**

This is the only way Discipleship is going to happen – (“DAY BY DAY”) they were in each others homes **fellowshipping** – **We will not grow or help others grow if we only see each other for an hour on Sundays or if we hop from church to church and are never truly known!**

- If we are going to be disciple and grow then we have to be in each other's lives daily gospeling one another as people sit on your couch and open your refrigerator – **We cannot grow in Isolation because we need people who get to know us well enough they can point out our blind spots**
- This means also that nothing is off limits for our brothers and sisters to speak into – **Do you have relationships with anyone who have permission to speak into any part of your life – Your temper, your marriage, your parenting, how you spend your time, how you dress, how you spend**
- This is what you sign up for when you become a covenant member – **That you will be discipled and that you will disciple – For your good, for the health of the church, and ultimately for the glory of our God!**

- 4) **(READ V. 46-47A)** This commitment to one another also involves thankfulness, and thankfulness around meals together – **The early church enjoyed meal fellowship together that signified their unity and togetherness** – This is a family who has family dinner together!
  - a. And these meals were marked by thankfulness and joy – **What an amazing verse they enjoyed their food with glad hearts – Why? Because they recognize food is an evidence of grace from a kind and generous God who provides for His people!**

- b. We above all people should be marked by thankfulness and generosity because we know we have received a gift that we did not deserve

This devotion to one another led to favor with all the people – Now this does not mean everyone turned to Christ but what it does mean is the watching world respected and there was an attractiveness in the church's life together – As one commentator said of this early church: “*And just like their Lord, this young community of faith was now growing in wisdom and favor and stature with God and man*”

**(READ V.47) Mark 4: A healthy church is marked by devotion to the mission** – They are committed to sharing what has changed their life that being the gospel (v. 41 and 47)

- This is the mission we must be devoted to church – We commend what we cherish
- That is how people are added to our number – We live with gospel intentionality thinking like a missionary in our neighborhoods, workplaces and schools, and places we go – *As we seek to use our gifts and interests and homes strategically for the Mission of God!*

You may say I don't even know how to begin being devoted to the Mission – We have some mechanisms for training here at IDC some of which we will be rolling out in some GG's (*reach out to me or Zac Lyons*) – But discuss in GG this week simple ways you can use your gifts and interests and homes to share the gospel of our Lord!

If we want to be a dangerous church to the principalities and powers of darkness we will be marked by these four things – And it's not something that will just happen and it didn't just happen on Sundays – *Instead we will have to intense devotion to them!*

- **SIDENOTE:** Don't underplay the importance of GG – *It is the place we have set aside to intentionally do these things for about 2.5 hours a week!*

**Conclusion – Left to ourselves we will fail in all of these areas and that is why we need the work and example of another when we do fail:**

- We look to the one who so devoted to the word of God: That He would look the accuser in the face during temptation and say “*man does not live by bread alone...*”
- To the one so devoted to prayer: That he would often go out hours before daybreak to commune with His father and the one who would teach us how to pray – *To the one who even now after securing our pardon with His blood stand interceding for us to the father*
- To the one who so loved the mission of God – *He left His heavenly home for earth and became a man and humbled Himself by becoming obedient our brother Paul would tell us even to the point of death to accomplish the Father's Mission! That's Love!*

And we look to the one who so loved the Church (who so loved the bride) – *He set His face like flint to that Cross where He would stand in the place of sinners and take every bit of the wrath due sin (things like my sin in college) in order to save a people for His possession!*

- This one who so loved the brothers that even though they abandoned Him as He was dying – *He would walk out of a grave into the sunlight an ex-corpse and look their sister Mary in the eyes and say “Go get my brothers!”* – *And now He is distributing the riches of His work on the Cross to any that have need if they will simply admit that need and cry out for mercy!*

**Response: Unbeliever** – This is how we hope you would respond to the message today cry out for mercy – There is a king who can transfer you from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved Son – Submit yourself to this King and join our rebellion against Satan and his evil empire

**Response: Believer** – *Devote yourself to loving the Word, communing with God, actively loving the Church, and to sharing the gospel that saved you!*

- **For some response would be becoming a member of IDC or another local, gospel-believing church**  
– *It is time for you to find a place where you belong and where you have elders giving watch over your soul and fellow members who know your name!*

**And finally let's realize with eyes of faith that we are a part of something Cosmic** – *Lets realize that there is a Spiritual truth going on here that is not necessarily observable but there is a day when we will see how devoting ourselves to simple things has had eternal realities!*

- **The church has looked like this throughout the centuries and people have taken notice – Here is what Aristededs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century said to a King about the early church:**

*“Now the Christians O king, by going about and seeking have found truth, for they know and trust in God the Maker of heaven and earth who has no fellow, from Him they receive those commandments which they have engraved on their minds and which they observe in the hope and expectation of the world to come, they refuse to worship strange gods, and they go their way in all humility and cheerfulness, falsehood is not found among them, they love one another, the widow's needs are not ignored, and they rescue the orphan from the person who does him violence, he who has gives to him who has not unbegrudgingly and without boasting, when the Christians find a stranger they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him as a true brother, they do not call brothers those who are bound by blood ties alone, but those who are brethren after the Spirit and in God, when one of their poor passes away from the World each provides for his burial according to his ability, if they hear of any of their number who are imprisoned or oppressed for the name of the messiah they all provide for his needs and if it is possible to redeem him they set him free. If they find poverty in their midst and they do not have spare food they fast two or three days in order that the needy might be supplied with the necessities. They observe ... the commandments of their messiah living honestly and soberly as the Lord their God ordered them. Every morning and every hour they praise and thank God for His goodness to them, and for their food and drink they offer thanksgiving. Such O' king is the commandment given to the Christians and such is their conduct.”*

**You see very SIMPLE things, like 3 Finger Salutes that signifying something much greater**