

6/26/22 - Acts 2:42-47 - "An Authentic Community"

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[0 : 00] This passage in my life has served so much direction of what God has called me to do within this church body. Since young Pastor Brent was installed here as the pastor, this verse has been one of those compelling verses that I have fixated my attention upon of what God desires of his church to look like.

And so even Summer Nights, the Summer Nights logo, it was all geared based off of Acts 2, 42 through 47. I don't think it's coincidental at all that we are teaching on Acts 2, 42 through 47 and our first Summer Nights is coming up.

And so this is something that I believe will challenge us today, but know that God's word should challenge us, that at times it kind of cuts against the grain of our sin and I have to be okay with it and we all have to be okay with that cutting process.

So let's dive right in. And what we have is Luke provided last week with key insights into the essential activities within the transformed life of the 3,000 believers.

Just two weeks ago, we got into the aspect of the passage where the Holy Spirit had come, that it had come, it had started something that had been promised long ago.

[1 : 42] The Apostle Peter stood up and explained everything of what is going on, what was promised back then, which is occurring now. And then we see that deeply convicted crowd of 3,000 people last week.

3,000 people were converted. They were cut to the hearts and they were baptized as a symbol of that conversion.

Baptism. This sermon deeply convicted them and drew them to repent. And the passage today is unique.

So if you could imagine, I just wanted to get our frame of mind thinking in sort of a thematic way or maybe there's a better term for that, but what you see in movies, that often when movies are starting out, beginning of movies, you hear the birds chirping.

You see the sun rising. You see it's just clear skies. Everyone's smiling, especially in some graphic horror movies and things like that.

[3 : 00] They really play on that. And what you have is this setting scene of what seems to be like everything is going great.

Nothing could ever happen that would ever deviate the movement and the momentum and the utopia experience that the people are experiencing within those movies.

And so I want to connect that sort of emphasis upon what Luke is doing in his writing. And so we have a sermon titled today, An Authentic Community.

An Authentic Community. Because today's passage brings to life a record of the daily life of these believers and specific insight into their attitudes, into their affection, and into their attention of these new converts, the 3,000.

So when we're talking about setting that scene, everything's great. Yeah, everything is going great. But if a church is to be strong, it must be unified.

[4 : 14] If a church has any chance of being strong, it must be unified. In attitudes, in affection, in attention. So in attitudes of aligning our emotional states and our mental states to God's word, in our affection, in allowing mutual love to testify of God's love towards us, and our attention.

Focusing not on worldly treasures and values. It doesn't matter what the mega millions is at. It can be at a trillion dollars, and it will not affect the life of the church because we are not built on earthly values.

We're not self-centered in our attention. And upon this unity, nothing will ever have the power to break this bond, not even death itself, church.

And when we're talking about that thematic scene setting of movies, I believe what Luke is providing is a detailed description of the beginning, that everything was fantastic going on. God's promise has been made. It's come to fulfillment. And that when the church is come against them, that nothing can stop the momentum and the proclamation of the gospel.

[5 : 38] And it comes through these very passages of unity. So let's begin and see how Luke describes the daily life in what is known as, you can probably understand it as, the golden age of this young church.

But before we get into a couple points today, three points in total, I'd like to pray for our time. Let's pray. Lord, we come to you today, and we know that you are the giver of life. Your word is the bread of life. Father, help us to feast right now upon your word. And we pray that in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen? Okay. I lost you there. Three points. And the first point, as we're gonna see in the passages, verse 42, and that salvation drives Christian community.

And how these points are gonna all relate to one another, they will relate to one another. So if you're taking notes, they will be compounding in emphasis, they will be building upon a grand main point.

[6 : 55] And so point one is to simply say salvation. You can understand this as God's grace drives Christian community.

God's grace drives Christian community. It says, And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. The first activity that propelled the early church is a devotion to the apostles' teachings.

That was the propeller, the apostles' teachings. Here we receive insight into the apostles' primary role of laying the foundation of the church, of which we stand upon.

And this is unique because throughout the biblical context of scripture as a whole, this was common. This was a common aspect within Jewish life, temple life, Jewish culture.

They would be expected to have formal presentations similar to this by way of sermons, oratory sermons. And they were given the central role within Sabbath worship back in those days.

[8 : 14] So they would be expounding off of, for instance, the Torah, and how the Torah would be connecting to the minor prophets and what's promised in there.

And so what Peter is doing is essentially the same, right? We receive a glimpse into that formality in which Peter connected the rich messianic fulfillment of what was said then as fulfilled now.

A connection that declared forgiveness of sin. It declared new life in Christ, right? It declared new nature. We're new creatures.

We're a new creation in Christ. So, by what Luke is describing here, we should understand something vital.

Before even getting more than five or six words into the first verse, we should see something important. That the life of the church is propelled by sermons.

[9 : 17] Sermons serve as a propeller of God's intended purpose to propel the life of the church. Sermons will propel the spread of the word throughout the book of Acts.

And it's sermons that propel the Christian community. When you look out through the book of Acts, you see signs, right? But signs have their specific purpose.

And we see sermons propelling through the book of Acts. That it is signs that validate the sermons that's actually being spoken. And how often we can get that mixed up as we emphasize and put on a pedestal.

The signs, the wonders, and the supernatural working of God. And they lose their place of the sermons. It's almost as if the sermons are proclaimed and declared.

And all the glory of God is verbally proclaimed from the pulpit. And then he lifts the card. The apostle lifts the card and says, I'm authorized to say this to you.

[10 : 22] And how often we miss, we put the cart before the horse. And we misplace the emphasis of the sermons versus the signs. So we have, for us today, a Christ-centered word.

To even propel the church in this day, 2,000 years later. And this is amazing. Think, Peter's sermon even led to significant converts.

But something else is developing here. We see that sermons, according to verse 42, don't necessarily have this continuous converting end.

I believe that sermons should convert people. There should be a gospel call, which I try to remember and bring into the pulpit week by week.

But that's not their end. We see that sermons actually propel the lifestyle that is brought by conversions.

[11 : 27] And that is a unique role that sermons within the body of Christ serve for us today. You see, the life and activity of a church begins in the pulpit to equip the church for missional lifestyles.

Boy, I'm getting like a flashback to like three years ago of saying this to the folks of the church when I was installed. These are the very words that it begins in the pulpit and spreads to the life and equipping you for missional lifestyles.

Don't you see it, church? The passage describes the unique role of sermons. And you see, this gives us a theological, robust belief that sermons edify the church to engage the world.

It is that realignment, that tool of realignment to focus our attention and to be spurred in sanctification. There's a hard reality, though.

If at times you sense in your life that, I don't know, you're not engaging the world, we ought to give our church attendance a good audit.

[12 : 36] If there might be a disconnect within maybe your effectiveness outside of these walls, might you look upon your Sunday schedule the past year or so to see how many times you prioritized corporate gathering?

We ought to audit our participation within the Christian community constantly. Many of those that I lead or disciples specifically, we have something called a time audit because we're given 168 hours in the week, and that's all that we're given, 168 hours.

And we have control in our lives of where those hours are going. We have control. And one thing that we can see when we audit our time throughout the week, we could see the God that we worship.

We could see what we're prioritizing in our lives. And so I believe that it's often helpful to see that laid out on paper.

And what a wonder it would be to be doing that in our own Christian lives of how we prioritize our Sunday gatherings or summer nights gatherings or Bible study gatherings.

[13 : 51] I still have yet to meet a struggling Christian who prioritizes church gatherings. Who prioritizes church gatherings. I still have yet to meet a struggling Christian who prioritizes corporate gatherings.

Breaking the bread in prayer. Right? I still have yet to see and meet a struggling Christian who rarely misses our Sunday morning meetings here, 52 Sundays a year.

I mean, obviously, unless death or birth. We've had many births. Not many deaths. Yeah. We have sicknesses. We're traveling and life happens and everything like that.

So don't hear something that I'm not saying. But it's the attitude of priority. Our audit of our time should say something.

If you are possibly discouraged or struggling in your life, maybe it's time you ought to start of how often, how much you're committed to your church family. That might be a good starting point.

[15 : 01] Because the church life is, the Christian life is church life. Everything in our lives, our work, our job, our families, stem from church life.

And Luke is describing something profound here. If there's any vitality to be found in the church, it begins with the recovery and the discovery of the apostolic message through God's word.

It's the only, if there's any pragmatism in what God does in our lives, this is the only pragmatic means of which God tends to build and edify his church through these gatherings around sermons.

And I have the second point. So if the first point is salvation or God's grace drives Christian community, then Christian community drives gospel witness.

And we see that in verse 43. We see awe came upon every soul. This is awe. Every soul. Everyone who encountered what was going on.

[16 : 10] The breaking of bread in prayer. The apostolic teaching and message. This is a word that could describe panic, fear, or terror. Maybe that's true.

But I believe that it might be more rightly to be defined as reverence and respect within such a term of awe. If the sermons propelled Christian community, Christian community propels their gospel witness with awe.

The onlookers looking into that church of that gathering in the corporate body with awe. And the message of the gospel was validated not only through the Christian community, but also the signs and wonders of the apostles.

Because all throughout the Old Testament, we see that the prophets would verify that they are sent by God through signs and wonders.

Signs and wonders was that card carrying bona fide, you know, that statement license and registration. If you've been pulled over the all throughout the Old Testament and into the New Testament, the signs and wonders served a purpose of validating the messenger.

[17 : 23] The person of God to listen to them. And so this is important. And absolutely profound.

Because if you could imagine the place and the setting of this gospel witness. This was in probably Solomon's temple. There's Solomon's court and the outer temple, part of the temple in the outer court.

And you would see a gathering of Christians. In Solomon's oracle. Fellowship.

Praising God. Like never before. Proclamation. All about salvation in Jesus Christ.

Now that's a pretty big riot. Right. Boy. Boy. Did they sure turn this temple into a house of prayer.

[18 : 27] As Jesus once commanded. It's happening. What would be so awestruck about such a community, though?

You got to ask. If what they've been doing is kind of culturally acceptable to assemble under a formal sermon. What's so special? Well, one thing.

Is that you got a fisherman. Proclaiming a sermon. A bunch of unqualified individuals. Declaring the power of God of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Connecting all these dots that the Pharisees are like. Doing their math in their head. Who have very learned people of the law and Torah. But not only that.

How about the unity? How about this unified group of Christians? The unity in diversity. That this is not merely a social club.

[19 : 31] At all. And the strength of this church was their unity. In fact, you can't spell community without unity.

Think about that. And it wasn't merely just a bunch of baptisms. Like baptism was the miracle. The magic. You know, abracadabra. You're the same.

And you can get along now. Right? It wasn't the water. It had nothing to do with the water. The water symbolized the inner conversion of the souls. That were coming to know Jesus Christ.

They weren't the same. It wasn't a shrine club of like-minded individuals. It was literally unified diversity. Through one baptism.

Through one baptism. A diverse crowd was unified under one Savior. One Messiah. One Lord. One Jesus Christ.

[20 : 26] The Messiah who came. Who was promised to the Jewish people. And in that we can be assured. That if that is true. Within that church. Within that culture.

Within the power of the gospel. If Christian community drives our witness. The church as we know it. Is not about self-interests.

At all. It's not a buffet. That you go to. And take one thing and put away the other. It's not a buffet of self-interest. And many of us today know the term of.

You know. Church shopping. I believe it's a horrible term to describe a process of diligently and prayerfully seeking a community. That God's calling them to.

But unfortunately. This is done through many superficial means. It's not done according to how it was done in Acts 2.

[21 : 24] 42 through 47. We focus a lot on music. Styles. What people are wearing. The age groups. How much we have in common with that group.

I mean. Honestly. You want to be honest for a moment. If we could design our. The most perfect church. It would be. A congregation filled with people like us. Who think like us.

That agree like us. I mean. Isn't that hysterical. How we just have a tendency. And just this selfishness to say. If only the world just. Was more like me.

God forbid. That ever happening. I do wish the world. The whole world was more like less. I do. I do. But when you consider.

The things that. This church had in common. Their commonality. Was not only in the gospel. In salvation. They had a common.

[22 : 23] Grace among themselves. That was unique. But also. They had a common unity. Of mission. They were unified. In mission.

And that's important too. What is the church's mission? Right? Who is leading that mission? And let us rally around.

That mission. Yeah. They might not play the music. That I like. They might not agree with everything. That I agree with. It might be this. Or they might be that. But what is the mission? And our consumeristic.

Culture. Has just invaded. The church. As I mean. The culture. This is a testimony. Of the culture. Invading. The nation of Israel. For a long time. And it has warped our minds.

To think. What can I get. From it? A return on investment. Well if I give. You know. A little bit more of my tithes. Maybe I'll get a higher valued opinion.

[23 : 23] In the church. And you know. We can fix that hideous. White they put on these walls. And we can change this. And change that. Met. And this consumeristic culture.

Has just. Been saturated. In our minds. In the idea that. Our needs need to be met first. And then. Once our needs are met. Then. We can meet the needs.

Of the church. Right? But a biblical culture. Is completely opposite. Our needs.

Are met. When God's needs. Are met. Through the church. By means of the church. Our needs are met.

If the apostles. Can surmise something. For us. Today. In our culture. Today. I believe. They would rightly. Rebuke many of us. Many. Within. Congregations.

[24 : 18] All around. The world. Saying that the church. Is not about. You. The church. Is not about. The needs.

Of your family. The church. Is not about. The needs. Of your kids. The church. Is not about. A men's group. For you. To. To get a part of. If you want.

A men's group. You can start one. It's not about. Any of that. Those things. It's about. Jesus Christ. It's about. This missional. Lifestyle.

Of him. Not us. And in that. I believe. That we can stand. Challenged. Without much more.

Discussion. Right. I could probably. Close this. And we could. Prayer. Be.

More than. Likely. Convicted. And challenged. Today. And myself. Included. To inventory. Our hearts. We will have that moment. At the end of this.

[25 : 12] This message. But. I pray that we can. Surrender. The cry for me. And in turn. Cry for him. As steel valley church. Because that. Is what.

God has called us. To do. But we won't end things. Just yet. Let's finish this passage. To capture. That very sentiment. That very missional sentiment.

Coming in. Full circle. Let's finish the passage. And capture that. As Luke describes. In his summaries. Of. Of the life of the church. This. Up to this point. It's kind of been a summary.

Of that life. And that Christian community. Let's get into specifics. So. If by God's grace. It drives Christian community. In point one.

Christian community. Drives gospel witness. Point three. Is gospel witness. Drives. Effectiveness. And expansion. And we see this.

[26 : 06] Effectiveness. And expansion. In verse. Forty five. Through forty seven. It says. 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 people. And the Lord. Added to their number. Day by day. Those who were being. Saved. Wow.

I mean. I've read this passage. Many times. But this week. Something. Can you imagine. A living. In a community. Like that.

You can see clearly. That this fellowship. This community. Was not built. On music style. It was not built. Around. What their specific needs were.

[27 : 07] It was the needs. Of those around. This is profound. That. This was not anything. Like a shallow relationship.

Of self-interest. Anything that they owned. Or had. Had the purpose. Of serving others. Anything that they owned. Or had. Had the purpose. Of serving others. The church cared.

For one another. As a result. Of aligning. To the mission. Of God. Right. I don't believe. Luke is describing. The utopia. That we all need to be doing.

Like word by word. We need to be doing. Everything. We make our list here. Of the check boxes. I don't believe that. But I do. I do believe that. Luke is describing.

A humble disposition. And an attitude. And affection. Within this church body. And that unity. That it produced. Of contingent list. Love.

[28 : 04] And care. For one another. You see. Even biblical context. Tells us. Long ago. The transformative power. Of the Holy Spirit.

That the church. Would be witnesses. And turn the society. Upside down. This is a Joel like prophecy. Where believers. Would experience. The year. Of the Lord's favor. In times.

Of refreshing. So if signs and wonders. Church. If signs and wonders. Serve to. Provide validity. In the apostolic.

Message. Then it was. Charitability. That validated. The church's. Message. Right. That as the apostolic.

Message goes forth. To the hearers. From the pulpit. To the pew. It's that. Effectiveness. Of. Charitability. That validated. The church's.

[28 : 58] Message. What's that church. All about. Charitability. Charitability. And we see that here. This charitability. Was huge. It's not like. Okay. I'll give you a couple bucks.

To get to the gas station. You could fill up on your own dime. This is literally giving them a car. This is. In context. We'll see in verse.

Or chapter four. This is about land. And houses. Charitability. Charitability. This is profoundly. Large. Not just a couple bucks.

Charity is a validation. Of the church's message. And God's mission within. If you don't believe me. Wait until we get to Ananias. And Sapphira. Because that will tell you.

Exactly. What charitability serves. And the mission of charitability. Within the church. You see a gospel transformed church. Is exposed primarily.

[29 : 55] Through its concern for we. And them. Not me. Not about me. These concerns are deep issues. That spread from the church's needs.

To the needs of the world. If you lack any assurance. Or doubt in your life. Concerning your salvation. If you're one of. One of. Going through a season of doubting. That.

In your life. One simple test. Is just inventory. Your attitude. Towards your possessions. Right. Are you hoarding. Or are you renouncing.

Right. We can look at a bank. Bank account history. And see exactly. What you worship. And see what. You value.

And where your charitability lies. God. And honestly. I mean. If you had the wrong preacher. This would be a great time. To do an offering. But. If that's what you're thinking.

[30 : 52] In this. Don't feel pressured. To even give to our church. Find an organization. But. Charitability. Is so important. An act of worship. That really tests. The condition. Of our hearts.

And what we value. If you don't want. Your money here. Like. Give it somewhere else. I'm not trying to. Meet our budget. This month. God has control of that.

But if the question. Causes grief. Of inventory. Our. Not only our time. But also our treasures. In life. It causes you grief. I just ask you.

To simply repent. Repent of that thinking. That if you. Believe that. A new couch. And a new sofa. Might.

Bring happiness. To your home. You're wrong. You believe that. Maybe painting. Or rearranging. The furniture. In the room. May changing all the rugs. And things like that. Is going to fix your marriage. No. New house will not.

[31 : 47] New car will not. Only the gospel. Can fix it. But if that question. If you inventory. Your time. And your treasure.

If that brings you. Assurance. Then praise God. Praise God. That the Bible. Has been instilled. Within your hearts. A sense of charitability.

Because that. Is what drives. Steel Valley churches. And you. Individually. As a Christian. Of your effectiveness. In the world. And the expansion. Of that church.

By your witness. When we as Christians. Can be. At a place. Where we are not. Hoarding our possessions. But renouncing them. We embark upon. The life. That Jesus Christ. Has called us.

To be followers of. And to lead. So. I'm going to leave you. With just a couple remarks. And we're going to spend. A little bit of time.

[32 : 42] In prayer. No offering. Just so you know. What we have here. Is a summary. Of an authentic.

Community. And they devoted themselves. To the apostles teaching. And fellowship. To the breaking of bread. And the prayers.

Might we. Remember. And be reminded. Of the mission. That God has laid out for us. Here as Steel Valley Church. That we are.

Similarly. An intentional. Church. Family. Devoted. To the hearing. Of God's word. And the doing. Of God's word.

Luke's description. Is not just. Historical. To detail. These cool things. It did serve. That purpose. But it is theological. He is putting together. An orderly account.

[33 : 41] For Theophilus. Who desired. An orderly account. Of what in the world. Is going on in the church. And Luke has provided it to him. And our level of involvement.

In the church. Will dictate. How we view. God. As a hard reality. But a hard reality. We need to wrestle with. But unfortunately. When our involvement. Is lacking.

And the altar. Of our worship. Is revealed. We at times. Find that. We. We serve God. Through the name.

Of work. Or sleep. Or laziness. Serve the altar. Of family. Or the friends.

In our lives. Or maybe late night. Saturday night. Life. That caused us. To sleep in. And be tired. For our corporate. Gathering. We must remember.

[34 : 35] Church. If the church. Is to be strong. It must be. Unified. In attitudes. Affection. And attention. In attitudes.

Of aligning. Our emotions. And our thoughts. With God's word. In affection. Of allowing. Mutual love. To testify. To God's love. Towards us. And in attention.

Focusing not. On worldly treasure. Or not worrying about us. Worrying about others. And upon this unity. Church. I'm telling you. Nothing.

Has the power. Of breaking that bond. Of unity. Not even death. Itself. Why does this matter? Why does any of this matter? You might be like. Man. Brent's being really.

Is he okay? Remember the thematic emphasis. This is. This is. A thematic. Setting.

[35 : 31] That's taking place. The birds are chirping. Everything is good. Why does this matter? Let's just look a little bit further. In this series. In Acts 7.

58. And on. They said. Luke. Luke records. Then they cast him out. Of the city. And stoned him. Stephen. And the witnesses.

Laid down their garments. At the feet. Of a young man. Named Saul. And as they were stoning. Stephen. He called out. Lord. Jesus. Receive.

My spirit. As this man. Is getting. Hit with. Very large. Boulders. Crying out. To God. To end it. And the failing.

Of his. Knees. He cried out. With a loud voice. Lord. Do not hold their sin. Against them. And when he had said this. He fell asleep. And Saul. Approved.

[36 : 29] Of his. Execution. And there arose. On that day. A great. Persecution. Against the church. In Jerusalem. And they were all. Scattered. Throughout the regions. Of Judea.

And Samaria. Except the apostles. Devout men. Buried Stephen. And made a great. Lamentation. Over him. But Saul.

Saul. Was ravaging. The church. And entering house. After house. He dragged off. Men and women. And committed them. To prison.

Upon this unity. Nothing will have. The power. To break. This bond. Not even death. Imprisonment. Suffering. Or torture.

Can break that. May we be encouraged. And challenged today. That the Christian life. Begins with church life. Not about you.

[37 : 28] Family. Comfort. Or your care. Church life. Begins with excuses. Begins when excuses end. When we bring more excuses.

To the table. Of why we should be gathering. Than why we should. Refrain from gathering. And we can be assured. That your job. Will be just fine. When it begins. With church life.

Your family. Will be just fine. When it begins. With church life. Your care. Your comforts. Will be taken care of. Within the church life.

May we remember. The building blocks. Of this authentic. Church life. That our salvation. Drives. Christian community. Christian community. Drives gospel witness. And gospel witness. Drives effective.

And expansion. May we commit ourselves. To the Lord. And realize. Our priority. Is laid out. For us. Simply and plainly. In scripture. In a value system. That is counter.

[38 : 24] To the culture. Of our day. May we remember. We want to be ■■■■■■en.

Of our life. And September. You should be taken care of.