



Awakened to Church

Message Notes, August 20, 2017

Acts 2

In Acts 2, we have the amazing account of Jesus pouring out his Spirit on his followers at Pentecost. They are filled with power, boldness and joy. They proclaim the gospel about Jesus. Thousands believe and are saved. The *Church* is born! Not a building, but a community. Not a place, but a *people*. This community began to live out their faith and life together, albeit imperfectly, as the people of God in the world – worshipping God, following the ways of Jesus, caring deeply for each other, and proclaiming the gospel and love of Christ throughout the world.

Many have problems with the church, ranging from total disillusionment because of the failings of the church, to personal painful experiences within the church, to indifference because the church seems to them irrelevant. We need to awaken to a fresh vision of who we are as His Church.

1. The Church is a Creation of the Spirit.

- John Stott captures this truth well: “Without the Holy Spirit, Christian discipleship would be inconceivable, even impossible. There can be no life without the life-giver, no understanding without the Spirit of truth, no fellowship without the unity of the Spirit, no Christlikeness of character apart from his fruit, and no effective witness without his power. As a body without breath is a corpse, so the church without the Spirit is dead.”
- The Church is infused with the life of the Spirit – his character (fruit), power and passion (mission) for the world.
- Jesus, from his ascended position in heaven, is continuing his ministry of bringing the kingdom, through his followers (the Church) by his Holy Spirit.
- How does Jesus express this “plan” to his disciples in John 14:12-17?
- We are meant to be a Spirit-empowered community, lest we become a mere human organization, that drifts toward empty institutionalization, that ends as a lifeless museum (like so many church *buildings* in Europe).

2. The Church is a Missional Movement.

- Jesus stated plainly that he came for “the sick,” to “seek and save the lost,” to “proclaim freedom for the captives.” His mission is now our mission. We are his hands and feet in the world.
- Again, in Acts 1:8, Jesus states with clarifying boldness, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”
- It was a deliberate strategy of God, to pour out His Spirit at the day of Pentecost when Jews from throughout the known world would be gathered in Jerusalem. And the disciples speaking in all the languages present that day was not simply to dazzle the crowd, but to communicate the gospel so it would go forth in the world.
- Not long after, Holy Spirit would lead the Church to take the gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews). God reveals that His kingdom is for any and all who would believe in and follow Jesus, regardless of ethnicity.



3. The Church Proclaims a Jesus-centric Message.

- Read Peter’s sermon in Acts 2. After the preliminary explanation of what is happening that day, he preaches Jesus – his ministry, how the Old Testament scriptures reveal him as the Christ, his death and resurrection, his ascension, the pouring out of his Spirit. “So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah” (Acts 2:36).
- This became the “mantra” of the Church – “Jesus is Lord!”
- When Paul talked about his missional ministry to the Gentiles, he said, “For I determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2: 1-2).

4. The Church is a Fellowship Community.

- We will be filling this out next week, but read Acts 2:42-47 – a video, if you will, of the life of the early church, as the believers learned to love each other and share authentic life together around Jesus (again, imperfectly, because they were still human).
- The Church was (and is) far from perfect. Just keep reading through Acts and you will see their mess as well as God’s glory. God has not chosen us as the conduit for His kingdom because we are perfect. He has chosen us because He loves us and his grace is sufficient for our weaknesses.
- The enemy desperately wants to destroy the impact of the church, and one of his great strategies is to deceive us that somehow the church is supposed to be perfect, and thereby we are quickly disillusioned.
- 2 Corinthians 4:5-7 reminds us that while we are his “vessel,” we are in fact, fragile jars of clay (with plenty of cracks). Our frailty (our cracks) allow the world to see the light of his glory and grace (the treasure) shining through us.

Let us rejoice and give thanks for this treasure of grace and the Holy Spirit we have within.

Read and celebrate these scriptures that remind us of our identity as the Church, the People of God:

Matthew 5:13

Matthew 5:14-16

Matthew 16:8

Ephesians 3:10-11

Ephesians 1:18-23

Ephesians 5:25-27 – We are the beloved “Bride of Christ.”

John 14:1-3 – This familiar passage, often read at funerals, is really a marriage expression. In the Jewish culture, a groom would spend up to a year building/preparing a home (or “place”) for his bride. Then, at the time of the wedding, he would go get her and bring her back to this home to live with him. With Jesus, this life is eternal.

This is who we are to Him – His beloved bride “to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death ... *brings us even closer!*”

Let us celebrate who we are as His Church!