We Will... Gather (Acts 2:42)

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Date: 20 October 2024

Preacher: Jayson Turner

[0:00] Thank you Matthew. It's good to see you this morning church for those watching online. Thank you for joining us as well. We are in a series considering our membership commitment to one another our membership covenant to one another and this morning we are going to be considering the statement we will gather and I consolidated the sermon down to one verse to see if I can preach shorter so we'll see. I don't know we'll see what happens. But let me pray for our time and my prayers to Matthews and the Lord to speak to us. Father we indeed gathered here this morning we are desperate for you Lord I don't know what the week has held for each person here but no doubt there's plenty of trials and difficulties and discouragements and hard things in life and so Lord we're desperate for you this morning. Father would you refresh us today with your mercies that are new? Might we have eyes to see them and be quick to give you thanks. Father I pray that you would work through the the gathering of your body this morning Lord that we indeed would be a church that ministers to one another. This is not a solo project for one guy to entertain or speak to the many it's for us to all participate and Lord I pray that you would give us a fresh vision of what that means for us to gather this morning and we will give you thanks. But meet with us minister to us Father whatever the need is we ask that you would present it if it's conviction that that would be present if it's comfort that too would be present.

Thank you for some new faces here gathering with us I pray that they would experience just warmth of the hospitality of the body of Christ and Lord that in all things you would receive glory. We pray this in your name Jesus and all guys people said amen. Well Lifeway did a study back in 2019 this is pre-pandemic and they did a study on the church and they analyzed church data from like 34 different Protestant denominations in the United States and they found in that study in 2019 that 4500 churches closed their doors that year while only 3000 were opened were planted were birthed which is a decline of 1500 churches in the year 2019. That is the first time in U.S.
history where more churches closed their doors than were planted. That study also indicated that people were not leaving the church in lieu of some other world religion. Simply people were not attending church any longer. We live in the age today in a culture that can be described as the great unchurching of America. One author puts it this way it's about Christianity not churchianity and so please know as we consider our commitment this morning of gathering that this is very counter cultural. This is very odd what we are actually doing here this morning that began earlier with our discipleship hour this is foreign this is nonsense to the culture in which we live and yet Jesus delights in the gathering church amen. He actually delights when the church gathers he delights he loves the church. Jesus actually loves fourth memorial church.
Paul exhorting the Ephesian elders described this in Acts 20 verse 28 he says pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to care for the church of God which he obtained which he purchased with his own blood.
So Jesus is not half-hearted about this gathering. He's not laissez-faire when it comes to the church. Jesus loves the church and so perhaps the place for us to begin this morning is to make sure that we are clear on what we are gathering to. So the first question for us this morning is what is a church? What is a church? We're called to gather as a church what is a church? Well the word church ecclesia in the Greek simply translates assembly so the church is an assembly it's a it's a generic word used in the Old Testament in the Septuagint the Greek version of the Old Testament it's used 69 times and it's just a general generic word for a gathering of people and then when we get to the New Testament it's used in a more technical sense this word ecclesia ec out of callio to call okay so we're a we're a called out assembly or a called out congregation we are part of the new humanity rescued from sin but we're an assembly we're a people in fact we don't go to church we gather for worship as the church and I know I'm I'm sort of mincing words here but it grows out of

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our our theology the church is a people those rescued out of darkness Peter says that this way in 1 Peter 2 9 says but you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light so we're a called out people now in the fourth century 16th century we have two theologians

[6:29] Augustine and Calvin they they defined the church using two different categories Calvin used these categories due to the Roman Catholic church in his day but he described the invisible church and then the visible church this is one way to think about the church there is an invisible component here the invisible church is the church as God sees it only God knows the hearts of men know who is truly a believer God knows the difference between the wheat and the weeds or the tears that parable in Matthew 13 it says in 2 Timothy 2 19 the Lord knows who are his and let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity so there's this the invisible church the church is God sees it but then there's also the other category the visible church it's the church as we see it now some of you often like to live in the realm of the invisible church right only appearing on occasion maybe you're here this morning not trying to offend but I'm glad you're here is everyone in the visible church a believer no Augustine said many sheep are without and many wolves are within Paul to the Ephesian Elgin in Acts 20 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock so the visible church in the way that they're defining it will always include some unbelievers and if they're here and you're here and you're not you haven't bowed your knee to Christ and you're here and you're searching and you try to understand we love that continue please investigate ask questions wrestle with the things that you hear and let's talk let's dialogue about that or perhaps you're part of the invisible or the visible church and you're just simply pretending to love Jesus and Luther remarked this you can't even preach this it's so on the edge but he said hey there are mouse droppings among the peppercorns I didn't say that Scott that was Martin Luther well a more popular way that we categorize the church today it's the local church and the universal church okay the big sea universal church that what is the universal church it is the community of God of all true believers for all time now what if our understanding of the church stops at the view that it is the church universal the big C what's the result of that mindset that we just we just when we think about the church we think of the church universal right all of God's people for all time

I think if you if you live in that realm where you define the church simply as the church universal it leads to a low commitment to graft yourself into a church body I think the local church suffers when we stop our definition of the church at the church universal often these folks are sort of surrounded with with ministry energy but very diluted towards giving that to their own fellowship or they go consumer they church hop or maybe they're even their family is scattered between many churches looking for the programs or the preacher to meet their respective needs and I would say often if you just live in the realm of the church being defined as the church universal the big C it can lead to a lack of accountability in your life and I've done ministry for for a minute and I've seen it so trust me so we can't stop there with our definition or understanding of the church the second category as we break it up the the universal church it's the local church it's the little C and what is the little C it's a particular community of believers in a particular location in a particular time okay so the big C church universal the community of all true believers for all time but the little C local definition a particular community of believers in a particular location in a particular time and what's fascinating to me for those that want to just say it's the church universal there is no definition for the church local as you read your bible the word church it appears in the New Testament 114 times 90 of which make reference to a local assembly so yes I'm trying to increase your love for belief in that when you hear the word church preach we're often and most often talking about the local church now it's important for us to recognize I believe when folks air on this side it usually leads to a diminishing of importance in the local church but I think we can air here too as well by thinking not of the big C church you can say well I'm all about the local church J I love the local church and disregard the fact that wait a second there is a big C church and I think when that happens what can occur in a local church is pride we can begin to have pep rallies for us look what we're doing ministry can become more about us not the gospel we can also begin to view other local churches as a competition and I love the fact that we don't have that at fourth and spoken is unique in this it's a new thing for me having lived in a different part of the state there is a cooperation that I've never seen in terms of the the churches in spoken in fact earlier this week there were Scott was in his

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office with three other lead pastors of other churches and they were they were just their friends there there was sweet fellowship and laughter and they were gathering to do some training for for for some men at the many different churches and it was just it was a sweet picture to me now next question how do we know if we've got a church how do we know if we're actually a church like what makes a church a church some of this is a little review I know Scott talked about this at our first sermon in this in this series but let me do some review for some of you that maybe have forgotten or some that weren't here but how do how do we know if we have a church is it numerical is it that we just have enough people and then we have a church because to have a synagogue you would have had to have 10 Jewish men so how do we know if we have a church I mean do we apply Matthew 1820 right for where two or three are gathered in my name there I am among you is that what we do know that's really bad exegesis all right that's not talking about like God showing up at your Bible study because a couple of you guys were praying together it's actually talking about church discipline Matthew 18 you can you should read that in context got a hermeneutics class we're doing Wednesday nights and we're learning this together that has nothing to do with like God being present when two or three God's present with us when we're alone church amen okay we're doing pretty good Scott our people are getting it um are we at church if we have a building I mean we have a pretty we have a pretty great building this is remarkable this is an incredible resource the Lord has entrusted to us and we use it well I think we're very generous and I love that lots of ministry happens in here not just our church gathering but but other ministries and and it's it's it's a it's a blessing to have this but are we a church because we have a building no in fact uh Paul says in Romans 16 5 says hey greet the church in their house so yes lampstand gospel church is a church even though they meet out of school but this question of what makes a church a church it it really surfaced in forests about the time of the Reformation the 16th century as many were looking at the abuses in the Catholic church a works-based gospel being present there and so theologians were wrestling with this question what makes a church a church how do we recognize a true church what are the ingredients necessary for a church to exist martin looser looser gives us a definition he says the church is the congregation of saints in which the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered john calvin actually gives a similar definition where he says wherever you see the word of god purely preached and heard and the sacraments administered according to christ instruction there it is not to be doubted a church of god exists and so if you look at those two definitions they really boil down the church to three distinguishing ingredients and by the way yes this is all under the rubric of worship but the three ingredients that they give us first you have to it's the obvious right and looser says this he says you got to have a congregation of saints for a church to exist what do you need christians if there's no christians there's no church because we are a called out people secondly you need to have the bible preached a true gospel message by faith alone we are saved and the catholic church was abusing this tetzel the priest of the day the grand commissioner of of indulgences in germany was going around preaching a coin in the coffer rings a soul from purgatory springs that's not biblical your good works or your money put into the dish is not getting somebody out of purgatory a place that's not even mentioned in the bible it's not about works by faith alone so if you need the bible preach a true gospel message present for a church to exist are the Mormons is that a church it's not a biblical church jahovas witnesses those are not true churches well what about a health wealth social what's the word over use these days woke gospel what if that's being proclaimed and i would say charitably at the very least you have a very unhealthy church but chances are you're actually missing ingredient number one because people haven't heard that there's a gospel and it's by grace alone through faith so you don't actually have a congregation of believers so you're missing a necessary ingredient one and two for a church to exist the unity church doesn't meet the biblical qualifications of a church we got a pinball arcade in town that's actually registered as a church
okay but there's no christians there there's just pinball and as cool as pinball is it's not a church so you got to have believers you got to have the bible preached and the third thing that both Luther and Calvin mentioned are you have to have the sacraments or we use the word ordinances so not to like confuse when we participate you're not earning grace when you take them it's a memorial you're remembering it's the gospel scene and so that has to be present baptism and communion observed regularly and what's cool about both Luther and Calvin they actually are just echoing the bible because we have been given a definition of the church as we observe what they did in Acts chapter 2 verse 42 scripture affirms that all three of these marks are necessary ingredients for a church to exist this is not my idea this is not scott's idea this is from the lord and this is what luke

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writes acts 2 verse 42 it says and they who are the they the congregation of saints ingredient number one devoted themselves to the apostles teaching the bible is being preached ingredient number two and the fellowship to the breaking of bread in reference to the lord's table the agape feast that they would have and a prayer you have the breaking of bread the lord's table the ordinance there ingredient number three present and what i love is that acts 2 42 actually adds a couple more marks of a church because it says a fourth mark is fellowship for a church to exist you have to have fellowship coinonia is the word partnership it's the one another's it's not much of a church if we're not involved in one another's lives and in fact that's why we're taking the time to do a sermon series through this covenant document of we're going to covenant together we're going to participate in one another's lives in a particular sort of way and one of the ways that we participate actually falls under the heading of fellowship which is it's the breaking of bread we're doing this it's we're participating as we take communion together but then the final thing it says end of prayers and i would say the fifth ingredient is prayer detrick bonhoeffer says this he says a christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another or it collapses and i would say the degree that we are a church is the degree that we actually pray for one another so there should be this sort of invisible reality of of prayers that are happening not just Sunday morning but throughout the week as we intercede for one another it's got talked about that last week that we are actually committing to pray for one another it's how you love one another extravagantly actually by taking the time to intercede to the father on someone else's behalf so we have this definition yeah you got to have christians you got to have the bible preach you got to have the ordinances you got to have fellowship you got to have prayer great what about perichurch ministries are those churches what about fellowship of christian athletes is that a church or a young life is that a church or a christian camp or a christian school or even a seminary is that a church i mean if they preach the bible a true gospel message maybe they even like celebrate community together are they a church no because there's a final ingredient a sixth ingredient that you need to have and it's this in fact paul said to titus in titus one five this is why i left you in crete
[23:16] so that you might put what remained into order and appoint elders in every town so to have a church you have to have qualified biblical leadership and the elders of this church have been entrusted with the care and the shepherding of this congregation and you need to have that in place and that's what makes a church a church so what happens if you're missing an ingredient or maybe you go light on an ingredient does it change the recipe yeah it does what if you're making pancakes and you decide to skimp on the milk what do you have you have muffins not pancakes well it's the same way here like we've been given the ingredients god has laid this out in his wisdom that this is what's necessary for a church to be a church now that we've got that all locked in this morning we're going to talk about gathering and on the front end of the message i i made this statement actually we don't go to church rather we gather as the church practically how do we do this well how do we gather well well we've already seen like these necessary ingredients so that's already a part of it that's a given okay we've considered acts two forty two those ingredients if the word's not being preached it's not a good gathering if we if we neglect participating in communion and and in baptism we just had a baptism last week and i think it was an encouragement administered was it last week or two weeks two weeks see how sharp my mind is it's amazing um so we've already talked about that but what i love is that god communicates through narrative through story the bible's a story but he paints pictures for us what the church should be as it gathers and actually we have these pictures that that are painted in the new testament of of what the church should be and how it should gather well we have these metaphors of the church and we don't have time to hit all of them so i picked three this morning that i think will help us and they will help us chart priorities in our gathering okay so let me give you three paintings if you will of the church gathered and the first one is this the church is called a body that's one metaphor of the church god describes his church as a body paulses and first chrithians 118 and he jesus is the head of the body and then he defines body and he says the church the church is a kin it's described as a body jesus is the head of the body he is the authoritative leader of the body so where the head goes the body should follow make sense if the head is going in direction and the body is going another second it's not a healthy body the disturbing kind of image but when used of the church this word body it's actually always in the singular it's never in the plural there is one body there's one body we are one body which is why paul says in first chrithians 12 2060 says if one member suffers all suffer together if one member is honored all rejoice together for one the members are interconnected the best illustration I have of this is when I'm at home and I step on one of those synthetic dog bones

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while not wearing shoes and they're hidden all over our house in places that you don't know and you will step on one if you come visit and you're in socks and you will know it and you will feel an epic amount of pain it has it's just it's way above lego like underneath the like it's it's a whole nother realm of pain and I did this a couple weeks ago and I'm just like screaming like a baby and then Sydney was so kind she got a bandaid for me because I was bleeding on my third toe on my right foot and the point is it's just a little toe but I'm like everything in me I'm connected and I'm feeling it and it's coming out of my mouth of like it was kind of a whimper not proud of it not proud don't ask my family they observed it firsthand if one part suffers everybody suffers like we feel that there's that that empathy piece this compassionate heart piece and I and I love that about the body that is you see folks that are that are struggling discouraged and like there's an empathy piece you enter into that you enter in in prayer or maybe you're helping in some way serving when they're in a place of need maybe you're making them a meal I don't know but but that's a beautiful piece about being the body the the key theme of this metaphor however is really that there's a diversity in the members right first Corinthians 12 14 says for the body does not consist of one member but of many and I think this expected interconnectedness is very foreign to our culture this whole series of a membership covenant that we will we're committing this to one another is so foreign I think it's foreign not just the culture I think it's foreign to many people's view of the church in their own personal ecclesiology right the study of the church the theology of the church in fact the evangelical church and its historical roots often focused on the individual and Jesus not the community and Jesus there was this pietism movement in the 17th and 18th century within Protestantism and it focused on the inner man it focused on me and Jesus versus the community and Jesus and frankly that's easier all I gotta think about is me but it's foolish because when it's just I'm thinking about me it's not a safe place to be there's there's health in numbers there's protection in numbers there's a couple metaphors we're not going to look at but you have the metaphor of the church being a flock right being a family here's a key question how can a body be a body if it never or rarely gathers it can't it can't I mean imagine this morning leaving one of your members body parts at home and every day you just left one and you kept forgetting it I mean it would be insane and you would be you would be hindered all day compromise and be able to function at full health and I would just say simply the priority and gathering well I'm gonna start I'm gonna start basic for us we actually have to gather we actually have to gather we have to prioritize the gathering C.S. Lewis is remarkable because of all like church history figures he's the one that probably didn't want to gather the most but he was compelled by scripture and he says this the new testament does not envisage solitary religion some kind of regular assembly for worship and instruction is everywhere taken for granted in the epistles so we must be regular practicing members of the church and he did a very small Anglican church I got to visit it when I was in England not just you nothing flashy but he was committees like you know what I see this as a pattern laid out from God in his word I'm going to obey he would he would be very content not to do and I think Lewis does a good job of actually echoing scripture when it tells us in Hebrews 10 a familiar passage verse 24 says and let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some so it's possible not to meet but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing here so apparently in the first century there were some who had decided they they were not going to gather they didn't need to gather why contextually here there was persecution occurring perhaps for those that decided they weren't going to gather it was for protection I'm going to protect myself but if I gather it's going to cost me I want to stay culturally relevant culturally valued by not gathering this is really I shared this thought with Scott this week because I I was mainly convicted and I wanted to share that but one theologian writes this as he thinks about the description of the early church in the book of acts he says when when one reads the book of acts we recognize that people today put an unbiblical priority on personal safety that's why I shared it with Scott I didn't want to have to deal with that one alone and these early Christians they were deciding we can't gather because it's too costly which made me think about well then why do people not gather today is that the issue what is the issue today and I made a list of of five reasons I hear in conversations and I'm very proud of myself because I alliterated it and they all started with the letter H and my list was four and then Scott gave me a fifth I'm not going to tell you which one but the one that offends you is the one that he gave to me so you talk with him later why do people not gather today first one hypocrites probably heard this right church is full of them why would I attend and I think often to myself well right why would you attend and add to the number I never say that audibly right but it's it's on the inside right but we're not a perfect place we're a

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redeemed place we're a place where people are being sanctified and I often talk with folks when they share that is the reason they don't attend a church in my my conversations in my car as I drive them and it's hard to know how to respond because there's a lot of bad examples and I I usually just tell them you know what you have to look to Jesus because
Jesus is perfect he never failed no hypocrisy and you have to look at his life I think that's something that we can tell those who maybe are looking at saying man well there's hypocrites everywhere second reason hobbies or leisure but it's an H right hobbies people don't attend because they love their activities I drove for four years in Seattle and it was interesting because Saturday nights as I drove people around I'm in gathering with a church on Sunday morning but Saturday night you hear the conversations and you hear people talking about what are our plans tomorrow what are our plans tomorrow and I kid you not the big thing in Seattle Sunday morning what do the unbeliever do they go to brunch it is a big big deal I had no idea I've been a Christian since I was young I didn't know brunch was a thing like restaurants that's the thing like you do a big brunch and people that's what they would do they didn't gather with a church they would gather and have brunch and that's kind of a hobby right eating food foodies that's a hobby so that fits third reason people don't attend they don't gather this one's a stretch but I'm gonna use it anyway a hotline to heaven that's to be an H okay but really what we're talking about here is I can be spiritual without organized religion and maybe you've heard that one right God communicates with me in a special way without having to gather with a hypocritical body see you tie both of those together there had a conversation with a woman about this who claimed that God spoke to her specifically and she didn't have to attend she was special and then I asked her about Hebrews 10 and the exhortation to not forsake the gathering like if you've heard from God here's his book here's the spirit wrote it so what do you think about that she didn't appreciate that it was it was a reasonable question I think for three people don't gather because they're hot tea hot tea I don't use the word hot tea too often that's a clue on who suggested this one
[37:46] I don't think Scott used the word either but nonetheless we're British now I mean all of a sudden but what is that it's pride I don't want to get I don't need to I don't want to be told what to do a conversation I appreciated this conversation with with a young gentleman he said you know I have a hard time going to church because I don't want to be told what to do by the preacher I so appreciated that he was honest I want to you know we all have an aversion to authority it's our flesh default setting we don't want to hear from others the pastor or the body right I want to hear what the sermon is I don't want to receive the counseling oftentimes I see this happen when somebody enters into we're trying to restore them and and we're employing some sort of church discipline to sort of draw them back and it's like well you're disciplining me I'm out of here I'm not going to continue to show up seeing over and over again and finally the final age why do people not gather because of a hurt because of a hurt right and I think there's a spectrum there hurt could be I don't have friends right or no one was kind to me at the church all the way to the other end of like man I was there's been abuse a spiritual leadership and that's a reason that that folks don't attend but to be a body church we actually have to gather we have to gather we're a body we're not going to hit on the metaphor family but we're a family we're a family in 2nd Corinthians 6 18 God says I will be a father to you and you will be sons and daughters to me we're a family and you actually have to gather to be a body to be a family we have to gather when the elders call us to gather and it's a privilege it's a privilege to gather church I think we missed this you got so many things going on that we can that we can go to that we can participate in but it's a privilege Dieter Bonhoeffer says this so between the death of Christ and the last day it is only by gracious anticipation of the last things that Christians are privileged to live in invisible fellowship with other Christians it is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in the world to share God's word and sacrament not all Christians receive this blessing you'll believe it you talk to Kamesh after the service he was just at a missions conference in South Korea I'm sure he heard from folks where they're on they're on an island like this is beautiful church just look around for a moment this is beautiful that we have this we have one another this is the church this is not the church this is and it's a privilege not all Christians receive this blessing the imprisoned the sick the scattered lonely the proclaimers of the gospel in heathen lands stand alone they know that visible fellowship is a blessing it's such a blessing church and I was actually telling Scott I thought our work day yesterday was the best one I've gotten to be a part of maybe because I got to Hallbark so that was pretty cool but I just there was such a sweetness to people to God's people gathering and serving together it was it was if you weren't here you missed it was so it was good there were some great conversations some laughter

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it was just it was such a sweet time to be together okay second metaphor we're gonna speed it up all right the next metaphor and actually the last

two of these they come from the same text and the second metaphor is this that the church isn't just a body but it's a priesthood the church is a priesthood first Peter 2 5 says you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ okay now who is Jesus Jesus is the great high priest we know he's described as such in Hebrews 4 he gives us direct access to the father but I love this metaphor of the church this picture of the church that we collectively are a priesthood how many priests were in Israel in the Old Testament well beginning with Aaron who was of the tribe of Levi it was only one tribe it was a tribe of Levi they alone did the temple work now the New Testament church were all priests which means there's actually no professionals here there's not the body does the work of the ministry so the second priority for us to gather well well first you got to gather but secondly in our gathering we have been called to participate if we gather it's about participation it's about every single one of us understanding that we are ministers and we minister to one another this metaphor ought to alter our mindset as we approach the gathering every time where the church is called to gather by the elders right it should change our mindset that this is not about one individual it's about the many the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 13 16 says do not neglect to do good to share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God this is all of us this is all of us so we're participating in one another's lives when we gather this is not about we're not driving to the movies together like we're not driving to go observe the rodeo to watch people perform for us we're actually entering into battle we're deployed into battle yes when we scattered but even every time we gather there's ministry that actually needs to occur this morning it's not going to happen for me or scott or coal or or melissa or or or any of the elders it's it's it's going to be you ministry to someone else somebody that you see somebody that you you observe i had a friend i have a friend scott i have a friend um i want you to know that i have a couple um pastor on the west side and we had a conversation because his roles changed where he was not he had like one of the hours during their gathering he had no responsibility he was like i don't know what to do jay what do i do i was like well you could go go and be with people just go listen and see what the lord wants to do with you in that just go be present and like probably four months later like he calls me like jay i can't tell you like ministry has exploded like i don't have i have no shortage of ministry because i've actually like taken a full hour where i'm just present i'm in the foyer and i'm just with people and i kid you not i'm praying with people i'm encouraging people i'm weeping with people and it was like it it was like oh i don't have an official role i guess it doesn't matter no no no when you don't have an official role you're
actually liberated to minister to people it's beautiful so i'm not going to do anything from the next six months scott so that i can minister i'm just teasing a little little pastor humor there all right we minister we teach lessons we lead prayer gatherings we even purchasing supplies right facilitating events like we're acting as priests every member is a minister and the benefits of having this sort of mindset it changes how we it changes how we sing actually it's not a performance from you know rendon and the musicians up here like we're now participating and we're recognizing that we're ministering even as we sing because as you sing and you sing out i'm reminded you believe this and you're adoring god and i'm drawing courage from that and comfort from that and we're speaking true things about the gospel to one another god is using that in your life in my life ministry's happening it's participatory we're ministering to one another actually even the sermon is participatory did you know that that it's not just listening to scott or col or j it's participatory because as you're listening as you're taking notes i'm encouraged i'm like wow you're taking this serious and i thought that i was the only one actually pursuing after holiness but i'm now reminded that i'm not alone in this and i'm drawing courage from that sometimes when you amen amen see when you do that then somebody else like it's like affirming like this is true this is good this is from god and that's courage to me so it's it's participatory and it actually reminds us of what normal christian behavior is like and we need that weekly i was struck by this last week as i was driving uber and i had a client who needed to go run to the marijuana dispensary and then it was like one of those trips where i had to sit and wait and they decided to like look at everything i mean it was like 15 minutes i sat it's so funny to me when i'm sitting because you know my vehicle it's a white
German car with a browning sticker on it which is really a juxtaposition that no one understands but it's it's there and so you know where i'm at my car is right there on division at the dispensary i'm like

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thinking i'm there's gotta be a there's gotta be somebody from forth that drives by i was like what's jay doing because i was literally there for 15 minutes but i as i sat there i'm watching people go in go come out go in come out and it was a complete cross section of our city and so i was thinking about this is what this is what normal behavior is in spokane you're an unbeliever you you love to get high and wear pajama pants because there was there's a lot of pajama pants going in and out i'm just observing i'm the observer but think about that it's so it was like this is normal this is and i'm sitting there going this is normal i have to be reminded of what's normal for the for the person who's in christ right and you even talk about it in your in your neighborhood groups this morning about like this is what we wear now because our life is hidden in christ this is what we now wear we don't wear that old stuff this is what we wear and it's like yes when we gather we're reminded this is normal behavior this is what god expects of us and he cares and we need to be affirmed in that and that's a participatory thing even as we hear god's word taught and preached as we interact as we amen amen i know this is this is i know it's hard for some of us we're going to get there um we're a priesthood we're all ministers third and final metaphor picture church is a body church is a priesthood churches also a building but not in the way you think because first peter two five says you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house and so this final image tells us what yeah the church we have to gather right we participate but as a church we also do what we advance to gather well we have to have an advanced mindset and i love this picture here this this image it tells us the church is actually not yet complete you yourselves are living stones and are being built up as a spiritual house yeah the church is part of god's redemptive program where he's adding to our gathering and i would say the church is god's chosen means of advancing in his kingdom in this age which is why we went to all the hassle difficulty trouble of seeing a church planted because we believe this god is using the church to advance his kingdom and the third priority for us to gather well is that we would advance go therefore make disciples of all nations be a a city on a hill for the glory of god and the joy of many the joy of of those that don't have joy yet how does this metaphor help us to gather well it keeps us on mission it keeps the gospel at the center our gathering isn't an end and in and of itself we exist to make more disciples and i would say it this way the church exists for the church that doesn't yet exist
the church exists for the church that does not yet exist for those that have not yet trusted in christ for our children that that they will come to faith in christ so yeah we're going to put on a christmas party in our neighborhood here come december because we actually wanted to matter that fourth is here in the Logan neighborhood and we want to be a light to our neighbors and we want to talk about the gospel yeah we're a church that wants to advance that's why we planted lampstand gospel church we want to be a church that advances that's why we've got some faithful individuals that continue to lead this ministry grief share because we want to meet some people at their point of desperation and need and actually tell them that the greatest hope you could have is the gospel and we want to use that to advance we're going to be doing a an apologetic outreach we're going to be familiarizing ourselves with some material next year christianity explored as an offering to gather unbelievers to come in here and be exposed to the gospel in a context where they can have conversation with christians we want to be a church that advances in fact i think it's even why we take time to pray every sunday with our first impressions team before service because we want to be a church that advances so we're praying and we're asking lord you know as we see people new faces come through let us practice hospitality let's be a free sweet fragrance of the gospel it should matter forth that we are here in the logan neighborhood and in spokane unless we forget we were all prodigals and some of us have come home and others still need to be told that the table is set and the father is kind amen let's pray father we want to be a church that that gathers that sees it as the greatest privilege of our week to begin the week to gather with your people to gather to adore you lord we want these gatherings to be a a a a a a precursor of a shadow of what we have to look forward to in your presence someday that we will adore you in person the king of kings the lord of lords lord when we gather we want to feel small and and and have a reverence and an awe for you and so lord in each of us if we have we have somehow thought less of the church than we ought to have and maybe we're struggling with some some unkindness or or some hurt or whatever it might be lord i pray that we would have courage to to make get those things squared away and and if there's forgiveness that needs to be offered if there's repentance that needs to happen lord by your spirit you would accomplish that in each of us the lord we want to prioritize the gathering lord i love that we start our week by seeking you and lord i pray that as a as a as a body we would just we would grow in our understanding and our delight that you love to use people you love to use the

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body the members of the body and we would see ourselves as participants here and lord that you would increase ministry in each of our lives as we take time for one another and father we do want to be a place that continues to celebrate and see baptisms or we want to be a church that proclaims the gospel and lord we see new lives hidden in christ we love you jesus thank you for letting us be your sons and daughters in your name amen

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