

Apostles' Teaching

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[0:00] All right, so, is it blinking? All right.! You know, the old saying, why did the chicken cross the road?

! Well, this was a couple of years back, why did the chicken cross the road hit the internet? And it's been updated this week, so why did the chicken cross the road?

John McCain, my friends, chickens should cross roads in order to engage with the other side.

Hillary Clinton, what difference does it make that it may cross the road?

Maybe a couple of guys one night decided to carry it. Bill Clinton, I did not cross the road with that chicken. John Kerry, although I voted to let the chicken cross the road, I now regret that vote.

It was the wrong road. Good negotiations will bring this to the proper end. Al Sharpton, why are all the chickens white and carrying guns?

[1:16] Oprah, well, I understand the chicken was having a terrible time on her side of the road, and I will fix it by buying her a new car to get to the other side.

Dr. Seuss, did the chicken cross the road? Did she cross it with a toad? Yes, the Christian crossed the road, but why it crossed, I'm not told. Ernest Hemingway, the chicken crossed the road to die in the rain, alone.

Colonel Sanders, you mean I missed one? Okay, well, enough of that. I want to ask you a question. Should the Bible inform the culture, or should the culture inform the Bible? First one is right.

Unfortunately, we're not seeing a lot of that.

We're doing a sermon series on Acts 2.42, and it says, And they devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers.

[2:35] And each Sunday, we're going to roll out a little bit of what that particular verse means for the day. And today, it's, And they devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles.

We're going to talk about that historical context, why they devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles. We're going to talk about what that means today, and then we're going to talk about what does it mean to us, Holy Trinity Church.

So let's begin. As I mentioned last week, on that first Christian Pentecost day, Peter preached a fiery sermon, and 3,000 people responded.

Can you imagine 3,000 new believers who committed themselves to Jesus Christ? How many Christians were there in the world at that time?

About 120. So we went from 120 to 3,000. Do you think there was any need for some teaching?

[3:39] What do you do with these 3,000 people? I mean, that's more than Billy Graham ever got in one rally. What did they do with them? And so the apostles put their heads together and said, Well, there are certain things these people need to learn.

The main thing they need to learn is about Jesus. So they essayed these 3,000 people, and sure enough, they found that these 3,000 people were almost all of the Jewish religion, because they were in Jerusalem for the holiday, for the holy day of Pentecost.

They knew something about Jewish people, because they were Jews themselves. Jews are people of the book. Now, their book is what we call the Old Testament.

They call theirs the Scriptures. And so the apostles decided they needed to teach these 3,000 people what the book says about Jesus.

That teaching eventually became what? The New Testament. So the teaching of the apostles spoken about in Acts 2.42 was the beginning of what eventually the church put together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the New Testament.

[5:06] These 3,000 people had large portions of the Old Testament memorized. They had never heard about Jesus in there, because Jesus wasn't specifically mentioned in there as Jesus.

So they had to teach some basic things that Jesus had taught them. They had to teach them that there is one God in three divine persons.

To a Jew in that age, that would have been strange indeed, that God comes to us as Father, as loving Creator, that God comes to us as Son, as Redeemer, who loves us so much that He would sacrifice Himself for us, that God comes to us as Holy Spirit, who enlightens us and brings us to Jesus, empowers us for that.

They had to teach them that. They had to teach them about Jesus being actually incarnate, in the flesh. You ever hear of chili con carne?

Chili with meat? Incarnate. Jesus was God in the meat, in the flesh. God with meat.

[6 : 26] They had to teach them. That was... They didn't know that. They had to teach them about the atonement, the at-one-ment. Jesus brings us at one with the Father by dying for us on the cross.

They had to teach them all these things, which for us are just second nature. They had to teach them about Jesus and the ascension. They had to teach about the descent of the Holy Spirit. They had to teach these new people what to believe if they were going to be Christians. But they also had to teach them how to live. Because at that time, the Jewish way of life was not what the Christian way of life was going to be.

For instance, they had to teach them about marital roles. In that day and age, women were property.

Jesus and eventually Paul raised the status of women to be equal with men. They had to teach these 3,000 that the woman God has given you is to be cherished and loved and cared for.

[7 : 42] They had to teach the 3,000 about divorce. In that age, Jewish society, divorce was common. And guess who initiated it? The man.

They had to move into a way, as Jesus had spoken, that divorce is discouraged. This is a lifelong relationship you're entering into.

So they had to teach them how to live. Eventually, they would have to teach the Gentiles, the non-Jews, how to live as well. They had to teach them that in that society, you could pretty much sexually partner up with anybody you wanted.

or with as many people as you wanted. Does that sound familiar? They had to teach them that sexual contact is a gift of God to be used between one man and one woman.

They also had to teach the Gentiles about what you do with dead bodies. Because in that day, dead bodies were considered just casings. When the person's dead, the casing doesn't make any difference.

[8 : 49] Casings were thrown along the side of the road. And so the early Christian communities were sometimes called burial societies. Because they would see the dignity of the body that God had given a person.

And they would bury that body. Interesting things that had to be taught back in those days that we don't even think about today. So that's what was going on.

The Word of God had to be cherished and honored before this group of 3,000 could become a church. And as you know, a number of these 3,000, once the holiday period got over, went back to their areas around the Mediterranean world.

And what did they do? Established churches that honored Jesus Christ. So that's the first part. And it is... I'm having trouble reading my little himidabber here.

Okay, so... Which means... Which moves us to point two. Do you know that most of what we live with in America, the laws, were founded on biblical principles?

[10 : 05] Not too many people think about that anymore. But that's the truth. So point two is, what's the context of Acts 2.42 for our present culture?

You may not have noticed, but we live in kind of a pluriform world. Whatever truth you see is fine. One God, many gods, no gods, all given equal footing.

What you need to do is, shut up, go to work, and don't talk about your religion. Right? That's kind of where it is.

Don't wear a cross. You'll be in trouble. You want to be called a bigot? Say something about Jesus. Jesus. So we live in a, it's sort of like that movie, We're Back. We're back in a pagan culture, brothers and sisters. This is a pagan culture we live in.

[11:11] Anything goes. In such an environment, we are sitting ducks for a militant culture that tells us to buckle down and get with the program.

And it is, there is a fly that does not like my preaching. Must be a pagan fly. This teaching has already inundated our children and grandchildren.

It is what is given in the education system all the way up through graduate school. It is what is given on TV. It is what is in the media.

It is what is in politics. We are slowly but surely being encased in a little society that nobody pays much attention to.

I don't know if you noticed that. I was in, it is funny how you, if you wear a collar and you get into conversations with people. Well, so a couple of weeks ago, a gentleman I was in conversation with, said, I don't know about you guys.

[12:26] You are just so hung up on sex. What is so wrong with two people who love each other, who happen to be of the same sex, being happy together?

Why do you make such a big thing of that? Now, my first temptation was to say, I'm sophisticated. I don't want to be embarrassed.

I'll just say, well, whatever, whatever smokes your pipe is fine. But I couldn't say that, could I? So, in a compassion, there was somebody some years ago who said he was a conservative, a compassionate conservative.

Some of you remember that? Okay, well, I try to be a compassionate conservative, and so I tried to spend some time with him talking about God's principles of complementarity, and how it's not just a verse or two from the Bible.

It is throughout the Bible that God's loving plan for fulfillment is a man and a woman together in marriage. And so it's not so much that we want to shoot all gay people.

[13:35] It's just that we want to hold up what is honorable and good. And that's what we're going to bless as a church. And we finished the conversation, and I was just so nice to him, and at the end he said, you know, that's great, but I don't know why you people are so hung up on sexual relationships.

Well, we do need to tell the truth in a climate that really often doesn't hear us or doesn't want to. The Word of God, the teaching of the Apostles, applies today just as much as it did 2,000 years ago when the church was being founded.

And it is a key for us to be lovingly conservative on these issues, to follow the Word of God.

And I was not always that way. I was the typical, yeah, it's in the Bible, all right, but that's a very ancient book. and we need to interpret it by our culture.

I found out that was totally bankrupt. That was a bankrupt way of looking at life. And so I had to move my thinking to be in line with Jesus.

[14:53] And it wasn't until I gave my life to Jesus that I was able to do that. There was just, there was just too much coming at me that said, Jesus, are you serious?

You're going to use a guy that lived 2,000 years ago to measure how you live your life today? I had to learn that, yes, that's what I'm going to do!

Because that's what God calls me to do. Which, this moves us to point three. How do we apply Acts 2.42? They devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles.

How do we apply that to Holy Trinity Church? And to all who are associated with this fine church?

How do we do that? Well, you know, it's not hard.

We simply need to be a church devoted to God's Holy Word. And this parish has always been devoted to God's Holy Word.

[15:55] Word. It's in there. We believe it. Let's live it. That needs to be our motto. We need to, as the early 3,000 did, need to know what to believe and how to live.

What to believe is in the Scriptures. Every day, we ought to be in the Bible. Every day, listening to what God's telling us for that day.

Pick a minute. Pick five minutes. If you can, pick a half hour. Spend time loving God back for all the love He's giving you. Take a minute every day to recommit your life to Jesus Christ, the author, the author of salvation.

It's not just about the life today. It's about eternity. Every day, commit ourselves to living an ethic of love in our own business.

How do you do it the right way? At the right time? In the right manner? How do you do the right thing? Everything we do in our life, in our business life, needs to be based on that ethic of love. [17:13] love. The conclusion is, God will be bringing people to Holy Trinity Church. It's coming.

Let's be ready. God is going to bring people to this church to be loved, to be converted to Christ, to be trained in the gospel that they might become disciples who will make disciples in the world.

Let's be ready for it. Let's be praying every day that God will grow us in our hearts, in our faith, and use us to grow others so that, I started with this, now I'm going to finish with this, so that the Bible will once again inform the culture, rather than the culture informing the Bible.

Let us pray. Lord God, we thank you that you would call us to such a task, just as you called those early disciples, those 3,000, to come and love you, and then to take their place in your world.

We give this time to you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.