

What is the Church?

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Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0 : 00] The song you just sang ends with, Jesus, we turn our eyes to you.

Now, why would we do that? Why would we consider turning our eyes to Jesus?! Why does that matter? Why would a people who come to church on a Sunday morning ever consider to turn their eyes to Jesus and not to something else?

Well, of course, it's because we recognize that in Jesus, we have everything that we need for life and godliness, that Christ has accomplished for us what is required to bring us to God and to make us a people that are connected to God and to one another because of his death, his resurrection, because of his work on the cross, because of his perfect life, because of what he's done for us in establishing us as a people to God and a people to one another.

So because of what Jesus has accomplished, I think we can all appreciate the fact that we turn our eyes to him. We look to him. He's the one who's sufficient.

He's the answer. Last week, we began to see this church that began to be birthed, began to be born there in Acts chapter 2, and we got to see up close and personal what the ultimate goal of the church is.

[1 : 40] So I'm going to turn it to you and give you an opportunity just to think and maybe even respond. What is the ultimate goal of a church? The chief end of man is to glorify God.

So the ultimate goal of the church, of course, is to bring glory to God. We know that. And we got to see that last week. We got to see how this church is beginning to be born, and because of the work of God and the glory of God shining on this church, we see this glory that's kind of emanating in every piece and every component that is taking place here at the beginning.

That shouldn't be a surprise. We got to see the glory of God that was revealed in the presence of the Holy Spirit. We saw that Holy Spirit that came, this indwelling presence, in changing the people who were there in the upper room, in helping them to experience and to know that God was fundamentally making them into witnesses, empowering their witness.

The glory of God was present. And maybe just for a moment, we need to back up for a second. And what is the glory of God? Is the glory of God just His shining?

Is it just His majesty? Is it just His brightness? And last week, we came to see and reminded again that the glory of God is more than that. The glory of God is the manifestation of His presence, power, and authority among His people.

[3 : 17] That's where we see the glory of God. And so when the presence of God comes through the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem on a people, the glory of God was there because the presence of God was manifested.

We saw last week that the glory of God was revealed through the Word of God. That God's people, embracing the Scriptures, embracing the truth of who God was, then got to enjoy that presence of God and the nature of God through the truth of God in His Word.

We saw the glory of God revealed in His people. That Jesus came in the flesh, that Jesus became flesh and dwelt among us so that He could impart His Spirit and make a people for Himself.

That would then help the rest of the world participate in seeing the glory of God as well. We saw that the glory of God will be revealed in His Son. And it was revealed, of course, in Jesus Himself. But the glory of God will be revealed in the final moments, the end of history when Jesus comes back and Jesus takes His place, a place of authority, a place on a throne, a place of reigning as King forever and ever.

[4 : 32] From the very beginning, the church is set apart by the glory of God. And so it should be no surprise then that we see this theme of God's glory everywhere we look in the Scriptures.

Of course, all of creation testifies to the glory of God. Psalm 19, the heavens declare the glory of God.

And of course, everything exists for His glory. It's there to help participate and enjoy and express glory to God.

1 Corinthians 10:31, so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. So that then the greatest offense that we ever commit, those outside of Christ and even those inside Christ, the greatest offense we ever commit is falling short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:23 says, For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory. Isn't that interesting? See, we push away the presence of God. We push away the authority of God.

[5 : 44] We want nothing to do with that when we choose our sin over choosing God. We don't want His glory, so we fall short of His standard. And so the greatest strategy of our enemy then, of course, is to interfere with the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4 says this, That's Satan's strategy.

He doesn't want you to see the glory of God. And then the greatest blessing of the gospel found in the next couple of verses, verses 5 and 6. For what we proclaim is not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.

For God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God intends to shine His glory and to bless His people with a vision of God Himself.

And those who see the glory of God respond in faith and get to enjoy the benefits of His glory. And then the inevitable aim of salvation is to help us to be transformed by glory.

[7 : 09] We see that in 2 Corinthians 3:18. It says, If you are a child of God, if you have believed in Christ, ask forgiveness for your sins, then you have the indwelling Holy Spirit and His aim in your life is to change you.

Not to leave you where you are. To change you from one degree of glory to the other. It's incredible. And so the final outcome of the end of the age is to direct hearts to the glory of God.

Philippians 2:9-11 says, Therefore God has highly exalted Him, speaking of Jesus, and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Seeing and savoring Jesus. The glory of God is the aim of creation and is also the aim of the church.

That's the highest objective. But what is the church? We're talking about the church now. For the next couple of weeks we're going to be discussing what is the nature of the church? What makes up a church?

[8 : 36] Now we understand it's built on the glory of God, but what constitutes the church? How do we define the church? How do we understand the church? We're going to spend some time working through Acts chapter 2, kind of in the flow of our sermon series here, and I would just encourage you, if you would, to open up your Bibles to page 910, or Acts chapter 2, beginning in verse 22, as we endeavor to understand what the church is by looking at the scriptures.

John Piper has provided this helpful definition of the church. He says this, The church is a group of baptized believers who meet regularly to worship God through Jesus Christ under the guidance of duly appointed leaders.

I think that's a helpful definition, and we're going to break that out piece by piece as we're working our way through the text and see how relatable that is to our situation.

But we're going to see that the church is built on the foundation of Christ. The church has Christ as its central identity.

And right at the start, as we evaluate this definition, I want to provide maybe some defining statements. So as we have this helpful definition, what are some things that are true?

[9 : 56] Maybe what are some things that are not true that help us understand the fullness of what we're talking about when we talk about the church itself? This first defining statement, you may find it there in your notes, is this, The church is not the building, it's the body.

The church is not the building, it's the body. You see, the church is not the structure. It's not this piece of property that we're all gathered in.

This is a building, and it is a place where we worship as the church, but this is not fundamentally the church. Peter wants us to understand the living nature of the church when he says this in 1 Peter 2, verse 5.

He says, You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

And throughout the scriptures, the nature of the living organism of the church is expressed in a number of metaphors that Jesus will use throughout his teaching ministry.

[11:04] He'll refer to the church as a body. He'll refer to the church as a bride. He'll refer to the church as a flock, or as branches, and that he is the vine.

He wants to express to us and help us understand the living quality of the church. So we don't find our identity in this structure.

This building is not the church. This building helps to facilitate believers who are part of the church to enjoy worship and to be encouraged and to meet with one another and to carry out the purposes that God has called us to.

But fundamentally, this is just the building. But you are the church. We believers represent the church. And so when God gives directives and provides purposes for the church, those purposes are not meant to be carried out by the structure.

Those purposes are meant to be carried out by you because you are the church. So when God calls the church to action, he calls people to action.

[12:18] And as you are the church and I am the church, God has called us to carry out those objectives together as a collective unit of living people expressing our devotion to God in carrying out the objectives that he's called us to.

This is a radical shift in thinking. This is a radical way for us to begin to understand that when God tells the church to do something, he's not talking about something theoretical.

He's talking about something very concrete. He's talking to people. So just in a moment, just do this exercise with me. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the person sitting on your left, why don't you look to the person on your left?

I guess it's over here. Look to the person on your right. If that person is a believer, that person belongs to you. They belong to you.

And you belong to them because you are the church. That's important for us to understand. It's not just a theoretical gathering of people that just kind of show up once in a while in this structure, but that you are sent by God to carry out the mission that he's given you to carry out.

[13:42] What a blessing that is. What a responsibility that is. So as we come to our passage, we begin to understand fundamentally that the church are followers of Jesus Christ.

That's our first point this morning from Acts chapter 2, verses 22 to 36. We're going to see that Jesus Christ is the one who is the head of his church.

And those who follow Jesus can identify themselves not just as disciples of Jesus or followers of Jesus, but those who are fundamentally connected to him as the church.

Here's what it says in verse 22. It says, Men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

[14:50] front and center in Peter's sermon, he wants to direct attention to the one who got it all started. Jesus Christ is the reason why we gather.

Jesus Christ is the reason why we exist. And so Peter has just said in verse 21 that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

What does it mean to call on the name of the Lord? Does it just mean I say his name out loud? Does it just mean that once in a while I might direct attention to him? No. There's something quite specific that Peter has in mind.

And over the next several verses, he'll develop that when he's talking about who Jesus is and the faith that needs to be resident in the hearts of believers of what we believe about Jesus that leads us and helps us to enjoy saving faith in him.

I'm just going to touch on it briefly in our time this morning. And then next week, I want to just develop this a little bit more because it's really important for us to understand Jesus, understand what faith in Christ really looks like.

[15:58] In verse 22, we notice that Jesus was fully man. He was fully man. That's the first thing I want to draw your attention to. It says, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by signs and wonders.

You see, Jesus came from a real place. Jesus had a real heritage. Jesus lived as a man with flesh and blood.

Jesus came to a real time and a real space as we saw last week. John chapter 1, verse 14, you know this. The word became flesh and dwelt among us.

We have seen his glory, the glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth. Jesus became a man for you. And that's important for those of us who want to have saving faith.

We must believe that Jesus was fully man. But second, we need to believe that he was also fully God. We see that also in verse 22, the second part of this. A man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst as you yourselves know.

[17:09] See, throughout Christ's life, he was validated not only through the words that Jesus spoke, he was validated by the miracles that he did. There was prophecies about this future Messiah and what this Messiah would do.

And Jesus takes this prophecy that's found in Isaiah chapter 61 and he applies that or places that onto himself. That's in Luke chapter 4, verse 18.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me. And what is he going to do? Well, he's going to proclaim good news to the poor. He's going to open the eyes of the blind. He's going to release the captives from prison and certainly that's what Jesus did.

Jesus healed the blind. Jesus raised the dead. Jesus cast out demons. Jesus accomplished miracles. He did that in a way to help not only align himself or identify himself with these prophecies but also then to confirm himself that he was in fact Jesus as God.

He was the son of God himself in the flesh. The fulfillment of all these promises. And so at his baptism what does the father say from heaven?

[18:19] He says this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased. The father's confirmation of the son his identity this is my son.

He was fully God. Third, he died for sinners. We find that in verse 23. This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Jesus was not a victim of circumstances. Jesus was not overpowered by wicked men. This was not God's backup plan because Adam and Eve fell in sin in the garden.

This was God's plan A through his son Jesus Christ this definite plan of God built from the foundations of the world that Jesus came to die.

Why did Jesus come to die? Why was that so important that Jesus had to die? Just yesterday as I was making my way here to the church to do some last minute studying I went to a store and saw one of the younger guys he was there waiting on me and he was wearing a cross I said hey so what's up with the cross?

[19:44] Oh yeah wearing a cross what's that all about? Well you know Jesus Jesus died okay well why did he die? Well he died to show that he loved us okay well why else did he die?

Why did he have to die? Well he died this is a good question he said he had to die because because of sin he wouldn't die for our sin that's what it was and of course that is true too but what our world doesn't understand is that yes Jesus loved us for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son and yes Jesus died for sin but he didn't die for his sin right and what was it about dying that was required?

well we know that Romans 6 23 says the wages of sin is death everyone in this room deserves not only to die in a physical way you deserve to die I deserve to die and be separated from God forever because of my sin and Jesus by his grace died for that he became sin who knew no sin that we might be called the righteousness of God now can you wrap your head around that you are called righteous before God even though you're a sinner because of what Christ did for us on the cross by becoming sin for us hallelujah that's why he had to die he had to die for sinners fourth he was

raised from the dead notice verse 24 God raised him up loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it and then for the next several verses Peter will go on to describe the wonder of his resurrection and the essential quality of his resurrection and why that matters for you you see Jesus through his death and then through his resurrection says finally I have conquered death and the grave and sin I am triumphant and then he extends and offers to those who believe in him newness of life he was put to death in the flesh he was raised in the spirit so he could offer to us the hope of eternal life John chapter 11 verse 25 and 26 says this Jesus said to her I am the resurrection and the life he who believes in me though he may die he shall live and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die do you believe in the resurrected savior so you can enjoy the benefits of life with him fifth he's at the right hand of God we see that in verses 34 and 35 being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the father the promise of the holy spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing for David did not ascend into the heavens but he himself says the Lord said to my Lord sit at my right hand then verse 36 let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus who you crucified the work of salvation is complete and Jesus is now at the right hand of God demonstrating his once for all authority over everything he is Lord over all and so he is worthy of worship our next defining statement is this the church is about Jesus and our connection to the head the church is about him Jesus died for the church so that we could enjoy the benefits of being joined together with him and joined together with one another

[23 : 48] Colossians 1 18 says this and he is the head of the body the church he is the beginning the firstborn from the dead that in everything he might be preeminent you see the church belongs to Jesus it's been given to him by the father he's purchased it with his precious blood he is we have placed our faith in him and by faith we believe in his death and resurrection so the church belongs to Jesus and because it belongs to him then we belong to one another and because it belongs to him then the way you treat your brother or sister in Christ is the way you treat Christ how you treat the body of Christ is how you treat Jesus himself ever considered that the significance of our oneness and the way that we interact with one another is not just a reflection of what we believe about them but more importantly it's a reflection of what we believe about God what do you believe about God how does it show up in the way that you interact with your brothers and sisters in

Christ if we don't care about the body of Christ how could we ever say that we care about Jesus himself so God came in the flesh he was he was came to death he was buried he was risen again so that we could enjoy oneness with him as a church next we see that the church is a confession a people who confess faith and repentance in Christ Acts chapter 2 verses 37 and 38 says this now when they heard this they were hearing Peter talk about the significance of what Christ had done for them they heard this they were cut to their hearts and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles brothers what shall we do and Peter said to them repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit this concept of asking forgiveness this concept of even sin and guilt in our culture has really been minimized you see the culture wants to excuse what God condemns our culture wants to soften sin until it no longer sounds offensive we want to name rebellion or rename rebellion so that we don't have to repent from it we have new titles for our wickedness we call it a struggle rather than calling it an offense against God how many times have we done that well I'm just struggling today I'm really having a hard time it's really been difficult for me well let's name it what it is yes maybe you're struggling but let's call it wickedness let's call it sin let's call it rebellion and it's only when we begin to embrace the real titles that God has assigned to them that we'll come to a place of true repentance you see we want healing without true holiness we want relief from our consequences but not release from sin itself we want our burdens lifted but not our hearts changed and that's the problem and that's what Jesus has come to fix that's what repentance is all about you see repentance is this

Greek word that helps to communicate this idea of a changed mind a changed heart a changed perspective a change of direction it's not simply a life that is moving in a direction as comfortable there but once you become aware of your state your sinfulness your rebellion there's a change of heart a change of direction a change of posture we see this in 2nd Corinthians chapter 7 verses 9 and 10 Paul will talk about the difference between godly sorrow that leads to repentance and worldly sorrow that just wants to relieve itself of the burden of shame and the guilt that it's feeling or

those consequences he says as it is I rejoice not because you were grieved but because you were grieved into repenting for you felt a godly grief so that you suffered no loss through us for godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation without regret whereas worldly grief produces death you see worldly sorrow is just wanting to remove consequences it wants to remove the shame that is associated with sin godly sorrow is the kind of sorrow that recognizes the offense that it's caused against god there's an earnestness there's a resolve in your heart to do away with the damage that sin has caused there's a hatred of how that sin has violated god's standard and a zeal to remove those habits once and for all from your life you see true repentance leads to true change not a change that's manufactured but a change that is as a result of the indwelling spirit's power and work in a life our third defining statement is this the church is not about the program the church is about the people you see we've been called to be a redeemed people a regenerated people a changed people a people that express this new identity as a result of what

Christ has accomplished for us and so as a people of god god has put us into a family and because we belong together the church and its programs are just meant to be a catalyst for helping us to love one another better and to fulfill the obligations of the ministries that god has called us to not just a program that is meant to serve our needs and to help us feel a sense of accomplishment how easy is it to be involved in ministry and I'm speaking just personally here how easy it is for me to do the ministry that is right in front of me I'm teaching a lesson I'm seeking to communicate truth I am helping somebody memorize a verse maybe I'm mowing a lawn or weeding around the flower beds or maybe I'm shoveling snow and how often the ministry or the program that I'm involved in has nothing to do with people and I'm okay with that

[31 : 03] I feel quite satisfied that I've accomplished something for God I've done my ministry I've made God look beautiful in how I am serving others but see in that service there's so little to do with the people that God has put me in fellowship with see even something as simple as coming to church on a Sunday morning and sitting in the pews and singing good songs and hearing a message or joining a connect group how easy it is to come at the last minute and show up and do that service and be served but have nothing to do with the people that God has put you in community with that's so comfortable that's so normal that is so that's so me okay to be quite honest

I would just rather punch the clock do my deal get out of the way and have nothing to do with people that's that's what my flesh wants because that's the easy thing but what does God want I've been so convicted over the last couple of months at the compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ Jesus here he is he's served all day long he finally has an opportunity to get away with his disciples he's encouraging them to enjoy a vacation so they cross the sea of Galilee they show up on the shore and there in the distance are all the crowds he just got away from so he could have vacation but what does the Lord do he doesn't get back on the boat and go further he gets off the boat and he serves because of compassion for the crowds

Lord please help me to be a person of compassion help me grow in love with your people help this church love the people that God called into relationship with him and into relationship with us may it never be that we check in and check out of the program but that we understand the program is meant to be a catalyst for knowing and loving the people that God has put us in community with and to serve them instrumentally so we can carry out the purposes that God has called us to next we find that the church is a testimony has a testimony of believers baptism and I don't have time to to really dig into this the way I would like to but we're going to develop this more as we as we talk about baptism it comes up many many many times throughout the book of Acts but but we see here that this testimony of believers baptism these individuals who have come to faith in Christ what are they commanded to do we find in verse 38 and Peter says to them repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit there's a lot in this verse but I touch on them one at a time those who follow in faith in Christ are those who are marked by Christ and then will carry out the example of Jesus and what did Jesus do he fulfilled all righteousness by being baptized that's in Matthew chapter 3 Jesus came remember Jesus comes he comes into the Jordan and he comes to Galilee and he wants to be baptized by John the Baptist and like no I can't baptize you you should be baptizing me because it was a baptism of repentance did Jesus need to repent for anything of course not

Jesus was perfect Jesus he fulfilled the law he didn't need to be baptized so what is he doing why was he baptized well he was baptized as an example for you and me who need to repent he was an example to us to fulfill righteousness this example for us to know that in the Christian life those who come to faith in Christ have sin to deal with and repentance is the way that sin is handled but also recognizing now Jesus will turn this baptism this illustration of repentance and washing and he'll turn it now into something even more because now it's a picture of him it's a picture of his death his burial his resurrection and so when we get baptized we're not getting saved it has nothing to do with salvation but we get baptized to associate ourself and confess what Christ has already done for us in our hearts

[36 : 24] Christ has saved us we've been buried with him in baptism we've been raised with him into everlasting life and so we are confessing in baptism the work that Christ has already accomplished for us and we do it once because it was a once for all work of Christ you don't have to be saved many times so you don't have to be baptized many times but it is a mark of those who have come to faith in Jesus we see that in Acts chapter 2 41 so that those who received his word were baptized we see that all the way through we see it in Acts chapter 8 verse 12 with the Samaritans we see it in Acts chapter 9 with Paul we see it in chapter 10 with Cornelius we see it in chapter 16 with Lydia every time a person comes to faith in Christ they're baptized it's an expression of their identity with

Christ in a desire to demonstrate a heart that's repentant changed changed by God and desiring to follow him in obedience we we also find in verse 38 these are people who were indwelt by the Holy Spirit indwelt by the Holy Spirit it says again repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit this gift of the Holy Spirit what does it do what does that gift of the!

Spirit accomplish for us we saw the indwelling that happens on the believers there in Jerusalem but the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the upper room as he's meeting with the disciples he wants to help them recognize the significance of the Spirit and what the Spirit will accomplish for them we don't have time in our time this morning to really go into this in depth but I want to draw attention to a couple of verses in John chapter 14 verse 16 this is one of them Jesus says I will ask the father he will give you another helper to be with you forever even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him you know him for he dwells with you and you will and will be in you I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you one of the things that Jesus has done for the church for those who believe in

Christ in salvation he has given you the Holy Spirit so that you never have to be alone you are never alone because God has given his spirit to live in you he's not going to leave you like orphans and there's power there there's confidence there's support there's help there's encouragement to know that the spirit will not leave us alone he's with us John 14 26 says this the helper the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name he will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that I have said to you the Holy Spirit in his power uses the word of God to inform believers what to know how to believe he teaches us he informs us he instructs us he helps us and so many other things that we could talk about John chapter 16 speaks about verses 13 and 14 when the spirit of truth comes he will guide you into all truth for he will not speak on his own authority but whatever he hears he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come he will glorify me for he will take what is mine and declare it to you now this is really important especially in our day and age because the prophetic witness of the spirit is speaking from the word the words of

Christ no new revelation the revelation has been fixed Christ has fixed that word the spirit is reminding us of the things that Christ has already said! Beware of anyone who says God told me no he didn't unless it's in the word of God next we find that those who believe in Jesus are distinct from the world they're distinct from the world we find that in verses 39 and 40 it says this for the promises for you and for your children and for all who are far off and everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself and with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them saying save yourselves from this crooked generation one of the one of the results of salvation is transformation God fundamentally changes his people he makes them new he makes them blameless he makes them holy remember what

[41 : 42] Peter says be holy for I am holy you have a holy God he's making a holy people a people to himself that's his desire and so we save ourselves from this crooked and perverse generation by understanding what the word of God is and participating and allowing the Holy Spirit to change us

from one degree of glory to the other and to shape us into people who are holy here's a defining statement number four the church is not about consumerism it's about community I think one of the ways that our church is most like our culture is this we are most like our culture in that we are bent on consumerism we are bent on materialism we are bent on entitlement what is in it for me that is the spirit of our age that is what

God through his son is trying to fix in our hearts the church is not about consumerism it's about the community that God has put together everywhere everywhere you look it's about Amazon purchases and Google business reviews right it's about product reviews and customer service so there is no wonder why when we show up to church we have that same consumer mindset well how did so and so greet me on Sunday morning how did that music make me feel how did the sermon how I don't know whatever about the sermon I don't want to talk about the sermon I'm frustrated about the sermon too do they have ministries that meet my needs do they make me feel like I belong all of these things that seep in to our psyche because we are so immersed in culture it's not about consumerism not about what is what's in it for you it's what

God has made you and allowed you to do for others God has made you to be like Christ and Christ came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many that's what that's what God has done for you to fundamentally change you and I oh may God help us not to be gripped by the spirit of our age!

this! connected as a chapter 2 verse 42 notice and they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching notice in verse 44 of chapter 2 and all who believed were together everyone together notice chapter 2 verse 46 and day by day attending the temple together and then in chapter 4 verse 32 now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own but they had everything in common there was such unity among the thousands of believers that had gathered it was as if they gathered together as one person one heart one mind one purpose one goal one spirit one affection one love one joy connected in heart devoted to

God that was the expression of this group all together and our final defining statement is this the church is about a gathering that strengthens the going yes the church does gather together yes we we do gather that's the joy of our corporate worship we belong together so we come together we enjoy the benefits of this corporate oneness that we get to experience when we're all in one place expressed to us in Hebrews chapter 10 verses 24 and 25 it says and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching if you think things are getting bad right now in the world it should intensify and strengthen our gathering not cause us to be more disunited more disjunct more isolated it should draw us together that much more but the purpose of our gathering is to help strengthen the mission that God has called us to

[46 : 55] God has called us to make disciples in all the world and by the way that's not just Africa or China that is Columbus where God has placed you that's the world that's the world where you live and so that's the world where you are to serve you are agents of God in the places where he's called you where he's placed you and so as we come together we strengthen that witness we strengthen our resolve we encourage the faint hearted we help the weak we do all those things that help to make us a stronger stronger body fulfilling the purposes that God has called us to fulfill and so this morning as we come to our time of communion this is the final piece this is the final element of those who recognize this work of Christ his death his resurrection and we see again the central element of this is what Christ has accomplished for us making a people to himself let me pray

I'll invite the deacons to come forward and we'll take our communion together together