

Revitalisation

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[0 : 0 0] 2 verses 42 down to verse 47. Acts 2 verses 42 down to 47 just a glimpse at the early church.

Acts 2 42. And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers and awe came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles and all who believed were together and had all things in common. They were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need and day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes they received their food with glad and generous hearts praising God and having favour of all the people. The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Let's turn me back now to the reading we had in Matthew chapter 16. I'll be honest up until about five o'clock this evening I planned just to do a prayer meeting tonight. That was the plan. I thought well it's been a bit of a busy few days as I'm sure you understand in the prayer meeting of it. But also I wanted us before the end of the year and before we start next year to start laying down foundations for where I hope we'll be going with the Lord's help in our preaching but also as a congregation next year.

So if I didn't mind just a very, there's a few thoughts. We won't call it a sermon, I'll call it a few thoughts together. The verse we had there, verse 18, second half of verse 18 in Matthew 16.

That phrase we know so well that Jesus says to his disciples, Jesus speaking to Peter the rock and that's a sermon for a different day but just take what Christ says to encourage his people.

I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now we'll look at it in wider context. As I said this verse will be our one of our many pillars we hope to anchor ourselves to this coming year. And really this evening I've got a word for you and if you've heard the word before maybe it has connotations with it, maybe you think things along with it. If you've not heard the word before you might think of this new minister of ours now he's finally showing his true colours and bringing in these newfangled ideas he's been storing up for last year. The word is revitalisation.

[2 : 3 8] Revitalisation. It's hard to say from a pulpit it's hard to say normally. Revitalisation. It's a word we'll be hearing for the next year or 10 or 20 as long as the Lord has us here and has me with you. In short that is our hope as a session, our hope as a church, as brothers and sisters together we will be revitalised. We will be given fresh life, we will be given that, or regain I should say, that love, that warmth. Not that we don't have that, of course we do, but every Christian, every congregation, year after year we remind ourselves again of why we are here and what we're doing.

And that revitalisation, it shows itself really in the two main areas of how we serve as Christians. And this is what we'll be focusing on for Lord's help this year. Evangelism and discipleship. Now these are not new terms for us, we all know these words off the heart, I'm not here to tell you what these things mean, but just to remind ourselves, discipleship is that work where we as a congregation, as brothers and sisters, grow together. We grow in our understanding, our theology, where we grow in our doxology, we grow in how we praise God, we grow in our service to one another, but also we grow in our service to the wider church. Discipleship is just simply saying how we grow as Christians. Individually growing in our own understanding and love, then together as a family growing understanding and love.

also evangelism, that word which I'm sure strikes fear into many of us, myself included at times, if I'm being very honest. But quite simply, to evangelise, it's not something we have to, we can choose or not choose to do. If we aren't seeking to do that, then truth be told, by any loose marks what a church is, we can't be called a church. We can't consider ourselves a church.

Now I'm talking about programs or schemes or ideas, we can use them, but I'm saying at the very heart of what we want to do, if we aren't wanting to see the gospel spread across North Tulsa and spread in our own homes, our own families, if we aren't wanting to reach out to those around us for the glorious good news of the gospel, then we have no right in calling ourselves a body of God's people. I'm not saying that tonight because I worry about that. I don't. I know we are a congregation who want to see North Tulsa and know Jesus. The POV reports, and I promise you copies of that once the TCDL offices open up again, we can print off copies for everyone, I'm sure, and many, and you'll see the report commends, and the report is encouraged, the committee was encouraged by the forms some handed in, that showed we're a congregation who clearly won't reach out to Tulsa.

So this year our minds are focused on discipleship, growing ourselves as a family, and then evangelism, reaching out to North Tulsa. It takes us back to our few words here of this verse. Again, a few thoughts rather than a sermon.

[6 : 04] The question is, well, what's all that got to do with our text this evening? Well, our text this evening, of course, it gives us our very basis for this. See, the idea, of course, of discipleship, it's not new. We've seen that since the early church.

That's what we read together in Acts 2. We read together in Acts 4, we see the same scene. What do we see in Acts 2? We're signs, there's miracles, yes. But underlying all that, we read in Acts, what do we see?

Verse 46, Forget the specifics, but note what we often miss out is that repeated phrase, day by day.

There's signs, there's wonders, there's big glorious things happening. But with that and behind all that, day by day, the Christians are living their lives, both privately and publicly, in a way that glorifies Jesus.

So much so, so much so, that they even grew in favour with the people around them. Their friends and family of the culture of their day, they saw the Christians.

[7 : 24] And the Christians shared about Jesus, we see their interest grew. And God grew his church in that simple way. Nothing's changed. I will build my church.

And again, we'll look over this in the year to come, again and again. But just this evening, just to see what this small encouragement, this small phrase, why it gives us the greatest of encouragements.

I will build my church. First of all, I and my. It reminds us, of course, of who is speaking. This is his church. I know we know that, but just to remind ourselves, this is his church that is being built.

It is not the church of Donald. It is not the church of your new minister. Although I say that, it's almost been a year now, a year February. But it is not the church of any one minister. And if the Lord blesses his congregation to survive past another ministry, I will come or I will go one day.

But it won't be my ministry. The Lord is putting all his bets on. The Lord is building his church. It's not my church. It's not even our church.

[8 : 42] We will come and we will go. And we hope to serve in the meantime whilst we're here. But he is building his church. It's his kingdom that he's gathering his people into.

And because it's his church, it gives us hope that his will will be accomplished. His purposes, I should say, really. His plans will be accomplished.

We can sit and plan. And as I say, I'm sure this year we will sit and plan this and plan that. And we look forward to that. And there's great need in doing that.

And we'll see that more in a second. There's nothing wrong with having strategy plans and mission plans. In fact, if you look to the early church and Acts, look at Paul's journey. Look at the early church.

They're always making plans. Gathering together. Discussing. It's a good thing. It's a healthy thing. As long as for a good reason. For all our planning and all our hopes.

[9 : 39] It's all with the understanding we are here to serve him. As he builds his church. I will build my church.

It's a certainty. It's a certainty that because he has his people here. As we seek to serve him. That's the important part. We'll get to that in a second.

But as we seek to serve him. He will use us. And he will use us to build his church. And you think to yourself. Well. How?

You know. This past year. If you look back on your own. Your own year review as a Christian. You think. Well. Of all the conversations I have had. Of all the missed opportunities that I have had.

I include myself very much here. Of all the times I could have shared the glorious gospel. And I engaged in mindless chat instead. Of all the times I have a chance to bring Jesus into a situation.

[10 : 43] To comfort someone. Or to remind someone. Or to show someone some hope. Or whatever your situation is. But I didn't do it. All the times I could have invited someone to church.

Or invited them to a service. But I just didn't want to do it. And as you look back. And look to yourself. And look to my. As I look to myself. And I think. I should have said that. I should have preached that.

I should have done that. But. We look to this verse. And we see. He will. Build. His church. We will fail. And we praise the Lord.

That the church. The building of it. It is not up. To a succession. Or a minister. A presbytery. A general assembly. A denomination. It's not ours.

We seek to represent. As best we can. We seek to serve. As best we can. Of course. That's our next point. But it's not ours. And he is doing it.

[11 : 40] And because he's doing it. He does it in his own direct power. We get tired. We get very. Very tired. I'm looking for sympathy.

But I'm saying to myself today. I planned a premium tonight. Because. It's been a busy few weeks. Your minister gets tired. Your elders. I'm sure get tired. Sometimes your elders get tired. Of hearing your minister.

But we all get tired. And we get tired. To our shame at times. Of doing even the gospel work. It's tiring work. We'll close later on. Singing Psalm 126. It's work that brings tears to us at times.

We tire. We feel frail. And feel thinly stretched. The Lord does not. He will. Build. His church. He will build.

He doesn't just. Drop. His church. His church. Fully created. From the heavens.

[12 : 40] To land in a place. We know that. It's that. As we read in Acts. It's that day. By day. By day. By week. By week. By month.

By month. By year. By decade. Work. The Lord does. In our own hearts. And in this place. And every single encouragement.

Is from the Lord. And every single encouragement. Is evidence. He is building. His church. And like any good builder. He uses means. And we know. That one of the means.

He uses. It's us. He uses us. What misshapen. Useless. Stones and bricks.

We are. But he fashions us. He forms us. And he uses us. And who are we. To tell him. Not to use us. Or who are we. To assume. He can't use us.

[13 : 33] That's to put our power. Before the Lord's power. And he is able. To use us. Now I'm not saying. This is. Anything I've heard. Here. I actually haven't heard it. Here. But. I'll say it.

Just because I know. It does exist. In the minds. Of many Christians. And again. I've never heard it. Since I came here. In the last year. And I hope. I wouldn't ever hear it. Here. But just in case.

Perhaps you might hear it. yourselves. There are some Christians. And they're brothers and sisters. In the Lord. And they will think to themselves. And they will say out loud at times. It's not for us to do that.

He builds his church. Therefore. It's not for us to get involved. We shouldn't really be engaging. Too much with the community. We shouldn't be seeking.

To do this. Or to do that. Because it's his church. To build. It's not for us to do it. He does it. Well that is. The most anti-reformed.

[14 : 31] Anti-biblical. I will say it. Nonsense. That is the thinking. Which kills congregations. And has killed many a congregation. It is anti-scriptural.

We'll see. God willing. This here. That the Lord. Uses his people. To reach out. With the gospel. And if we think. We're any different. In our age. In our day.

Then we'll be sadly mistaken. Of course. We were very privileged. And that we grew up. Even myself. I was a latter. End of things.

Very much so. Where people came to church. Naturally. It was part of our culture. We have praise to God. For that culture. But that culture. Is not normal. We are. A strange.

Strange. Part of this world. Where our culture. Was a church going culture. It doesn't take a minister. To tell you. That culture is gone. Recently. And this is why. It's not a sermon.

[15 : 26] I'm saving. Just a few thoughts. Recently. We had a presbytery. Meeting. A presbytery evening. A gathering. To encourage one another.

And Reverend Calmer. Smith was showing. And sharing with us. The recent statistics. Of our own island. Our own presbytery. And our presbytery. By percentage.

One of the strongest presbytery. Church going presbyteries. And so on. Our area. What wish Niles. Brothers and sisters. The numbers. They are declining.

Those going to church. The numbers. Are declining. It didn't start yesterday. Or ten years ago. Or twenty years ago. The decline is there. Our neighbours.

Our friends. Our family. They're not going to church. Culturally anymore. Fair enough. Humanly speaking. That doesn't look like it's going to be changing. Any time soon.

[16 : 24] So the question is then. If God is building his church. Then. How is that to be? Where do we find the people? Well. If they're not coming to us. The maths is very simple. We go to them.

And that will be our. Our strategy. This year. And the next ten. Twenty. Thirty. Forty years. However long. We're here together. It's not a new strategy.

It's one. The early church. Took great joy in doing. The early church. Went to the people. Again. And again. The apostles. The first Christians.

Went to the people. Again. And again. And again. And God blessed them. That. And day by day. He's read in Acts. Day by day. The Lord added. To the number of those.

Who are being. Saved. He builds his church. How? By making use of us. As his people. By making use of us. And our own families.

[17 : 19] Places of work. And it's. It's not complicated. It's not complicated. As we get to know people. In the community.

As we seek to serve the Lord well. The Lord will give us opportunities. If we prayerfully ask for them. The Lord gives them. It's then up to us.

As we are. To make use of his opportunities. He gives us. And we saw that. Even last Lord's Day. We saw families. Come out. People come out. Some.

Who are. A real blessing for us. To see them there. Even myself. The last few weeks. I've had conversations with people. Who have responded. To a simple invitation. With at least.

A hope. Of coming out. To church. Again. And some for the first time. This new year. The Lord is doing his work here. Let's not be mistaken. And he uses us for that.

[18 : 15] And we think we're too small. We're too weak. We're too. Whatever other excuses we have. The Lord is building. His church. I will build my church. And the gates of hell.

Shall not prevail. Against it. Against the whole sermon there. But just. To conclude. Our thought just now. As we seek to grow.

In our understanding. And love. Of our saviour. Our discipleship. With that. We then seek to grow. In our evangelism. Our reaching out. Our sharing. Of the glorious gospel news. As we seek to grow.

In these two areas. Brothers and sisters. We said this before. But I'll say it again. If it's here in the text. We. Will. Face. The very attacks. Of the wrath.

Of the kingdom. As it were. Of this world. Of the gates of hell. Now of course. The gates of hell. Won't prevail. But the power of hell. We could say. Won't prevail against it. We know that. But that implies.

[19 : 12] It's trying to. And brothers and sisters. It will try to. As we seek. To share. The gospel. In Tolstair. As we seek.

To grow ourselves. In our own faith. As we seek. To see. The lost. Coming to hear. The gospel. For the first time. There will be attacks. Spiritually.

On all of us. I am. Quite confident. In saying. All of us. Who engage. In that work. There is a pay. There is a. An attack. Back. As we attack.

As it were. The gates of hell. By sharing the gospel. The gates of hell. The powers of hell. They fight back. The powers of evil. It fights back. We touched this before. We have had. Spiritual attack.

After spiritual attack. Even ourselves. The last few months. It's been. Pretty hard going. At times. It's been pretty. Clear.

- [20 : 06] At times. If evil one. Is not happy. What's taking place. And brothers and sisters. That's good news. That's very good news. See the gates of hell.
- Aren't bothered. The powers of the evil one. Aren't bothered. Where there's no good work. Taking place. Where the church. Isn't growing. Where God's people. Aren't seeking. To see the good.
- Of the gospel. In their own land. The powers of hell. Have no concern. For these places. Or these Christians. Because they're no threat. But brothers and sisters. As we seek. To see the gospel.
- Grow. And be seeded. And be loved. In Tolstice. We will become targets. Increasingly so. Of the attacks. Of the evil one. And as we face.
- These attacks. Come back. To the verse here. And remind ourselves. Through all the assembled. Powers of hell. All the assembled. Powers of the evil one. The gates.
- [21 : 03] The gates. The image there. Is the gates. Of course. Were the strongest. Most reinforced part. Of the city. It's where you attack first. So the very strongest. Part of hell. The very strength.
- The very centre. Of the power of hell itself. Of evil itself. Even that. Cannot overwhelm. The work of the gospel. The work of our saviour. As he builds.
- His church. This new year. As long as the Lord gives us. As we seek. With the simple means. Of gospel proclamation. Of prayer.
- Of fellowship. Of being brother and sister together. As we seek. The good. Of the gospel. As we seek. The good of God's church. As we seek. The growth of God's church. As he works through us.
- We can be guaranteed. Of pushback. Guaranteed. Of attack. Guaranteed. Of satanic. Powers. Railing against us. We don't welcome it.
- [22 : 02] We don't enjoy it. We don't. We don't want it. But we'll face it. As we face these things. There is evidence to us. Our saviour is building his church.
- In this place. In our homes. In our village. And our prayer is. That this new year. As we seek.
- To begin that journey. Of revitalisation. Of growing. In our evangelism. In our reaching out. In growing. Of our own internal growth. As disciples. We will see.
- The gospel spread. In our homes. In our village. And see. Those. Who are once darkened. To the gospel. Become glorious lights.
- For our saviour. God. It's his work. He will accomplish it. Using the means. He has used. From the start. His word. His people.
- [23 : 00] And the gates of hell. Themselves. Will not prevail. Against it. A few thoughts. For us. From. That verse. A few thoughts. While we are.
- Of 18 hundred people. Hebrew clothes. Maybe. The last year. 40 hundred people. I felt too Fotos. I don't know. I meant that he needed us. It wouldok. What unity of the community.
- To know. Hardly. används away. So, the mini■■ite logo. Of its raw.obiabacklenys.
- Tampa wud■■■■■■. touchwpokof-