

Acts 2:42-47

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 December 2020

Preacher: David Moser

[0:00] I invite you to turn with me to Acts chapter 2, in the beginning, verse 42.

I invite you to turn with me to Acts chapter 2, in the beginning, verse 42.

And many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And 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. And the Lord added to their number day by day, those who were being saved.

Friends, this is a short and a simple passage. And so it is my aim to honor it by preaching a short and simple, you thought I was going to switch that out, didn't you?

[1:55] A short and simple. The first thing that I want to point out about this passage is actually something that comes beyond the boundaries of these verses.

This is the first of a series of similar passages in the book of Acts that Luke writes.

Some people call them summary passages. After certain large events happen in the chronicle here of the early church in the book of Acts, Luke pauses and gives us reflections, summaries of how the early church was characterized, what was going on more broadly in the life of the church.

We're going to see moments like this again in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 8. They are heavily laden towards the beginning of the book of Acts.

Now, when we see repetition in the Bible, we should think a couple things. First, this is emphasis.

[3:07] There's no underlining or old script in the Hebrew of the Old Testament or the Greek of the New Testament. Repetition is one of the ways that authors communicate emphasis.

So Luke is going to bring us back to these themes again and again. And so we also recognize that they are what Luke sees as most important in the life of the church. First, these are the things that he cares to show us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

This is what matters in the life and character of the church. Second, repeated elements might indicate something of the structure of the organization of the book of the Bible.

For example, for example, the book of Genesis, famously, uses genealogies as a marker. You'll often read as you're walking through the book of Genesis, these are the generations of so-and-so. And then you'll see genealogy. And that kicks off a major section in the book of Genesis. We're going to see a similar pattern developed here in Acts.

[4:13] But instead of receiving it, these are the generations of, and it kicks off a new section, these summary statements tend to follow a major event. And so, Luke is going to say, here is Pentecost, and here are the results.

Right? Like, Pentecost was the last two Sundays. You saw Peter's great sermon after the filling of the Holy Spirit. And now, you get this summary statement of, like, here are the results of that.

Here's what's going on now in the life of the church.

Here's the impact. And last, if we look at something that is repeated in Scripture, like a similar idea going on in these summary statements, we're going to see that it's not, you know, this is not tedium.

When we get to the next one, like, oh, it's not going to be the same exact message. Why? Look, there's a different emphasis in each of them. And so what we're going to do when we compare them to each other, we're going to see that each brings out a unique thing that Luke is highlighting

in the life of the church.

We're going to see the same thing as we look at Paul as going to basically give his testimony, an explanation of the gospel, and how he came to be saved, several times in the book of Acts as well. [5:28] But they're all different. Part of that is he's talking to different people, as he's going to communicate differently, but also there are things that are going to develop in his life, in his ministry, that change the way he speaks.

And so by comparing these, we're going to get a more rounded picture of the gospel and of the church. Now, this teaches us something of how to read the Bible, doesn't it?

This is your first time in the book of Acts. You wouldn't have recognized this. This is the first of a series of summaries. And maybe even after your first reading, it wouldn't have necessarily resonated with you.

Like you wouldn't have noticed it necessarily. And so what this teaches us is that you only notice this, and you only start comparing these passages to one another, and developing, learning about this with familiarity.

It teaches us to be lifetime students of the Bible. Because if you've read the book of Acts, that teaches you to, oh, go back and read the book of Acts again, so that you can see how these things develop over time.

[6:46] It's important to study passage of context, to see where it's going, to see how the Lord develops it. Now, for shorter books, it's pretty easy.

You can read the book of Philippians in one sitting. A little harder to do that with the book of Acts.

You know, our modern, you know, Instagram attention spans, right?

It takes about two hours to read through. Two, two and a half hours, depending on how quick you read, how carefully you read the book of Acts. That's a tough sell for us.

Although, probably watch a two and a half hour movie all in a month ago. So there you go. And it's also an encouragement to us. To read the scriptures with the church.

Right? Most of you probably didn't walk in here today thinking, oh yeah, this is the first of the summary passages. And when I read this scripture, right, this is probably not you thinking, oh yeah, this is the first of the...

[7:49] No, because you're probably not thinking about the book of Acts all week, unfortunately. But, I am. And, so it is...

But like, haven't you in Bible studies together? If you have been in Bible studies... Like, the... The things that your brothers and sisters in Christ see in the scriptures are different from the ones that you see.

And so that's important, that we read the scriptures in community. And it is through that that we see all that the Lord has for us in his word.

And so as I prepare to preach, just this week, right, Matt can testify that I consult him with other elders about a particular portion of this passage.

Not only that, but also I read, you know, as I prepare, with a sense for a history. But I have a sense for theologians and pastors in their writings and understandings of this.

[8:51] So this passage, just in considering what it is, its form, and how it fits into the book of Luke, teaches us, actually, to read the scriptures.

That is, both in the broader context, not just looking at this all by itself, looking at it in the broad sweep of the book of Acts, and indeed the whole scriptures, and teaches us to read it together.

But what does it say? What does this unique passage have to say to us? The first thing that we see is that the first Christians devoted themselves, verse 42, to four things, right?

Verse 22 says, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers.

These four things are often called by theologians ordinary means of grace. They are ordinary. They are simple.

[9:56] Teaching, fellowship, prayer, they don't seem that extraordinary. No great feasts. They are pleasing.

But God chooses to work through them. Extraordinary ways. Right? What we're seeing here in this passage are the results. Right?

In verses 43 and the following, we're seeing the results of a church that simply attends to the word of God, and to prayer, and to communicate with the saints, and to the saints.

Right? And those results are going to look like extraordinary fellowship and generosity among the saints. And a public witness.

That's pretty incredible. And the Lord continues to bless them more and more, brothers and sisters. And so, friends, this should be an encouragement to us.

[11:00] I hope that it is. Because the simplest, tiniest church, out in the steps, out in the apartments, with no trained clergy, or impressive people, you're very impressive to me.

Even if you weren't, we could still be a very faithful church, simply. And the Lord could work mightily through it. Because it's not about us.

And it's not about what we can do that's so extraordinary. The simple faithfulness of the church God works through. The things that the Lord has called his troops to do, to invoke himself to the word, to the prayer, to the fellowship, to the sacrament, they're simple.

They're ordinary. I hope it takes a broken off of our shoulders. As if we have to show up and do something extraordinary. Friends, the extraordinary thing is that Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, reigns on high, and has sent his spirit to his people.

And he works through that. He works through us. He is what's extraordinary. We do not need to be. As if we could. I've always been skeptical.

[12:18] Evangelical churches, you know, really bring their hands over their, you know, their church mission statement. That is the most American thing I can think of. I missed that passage in Titus, right?

When we went through that, as Paul instructed Titus, how to organize and structure and lead a church. I missed that. As if we could do better than devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, the breaking of bread of their prayers.

Right? That should be the mission statement. To be a faithful church wherever you are, wherever you are, wherever you are, and when God chooses to bless and grow a church, whether that's through the depth of their discipleship and fellowship, or whether that's the breadth, size of their congregation and their fellowship, right?

Whenever God chooses to do that through simple work, who gets the glory? It's not up to our marketing and our techniques and our psychologizing.

I guess the glory in the church, you know, it's death for anything. Because we didn't do anything special. He didn't do that. We're just looking to be the most special.

[13:35] Now, when I say that these things are simple, I don't necessarily mean that they're easy. Right? Prayer is often a battle. Right? The word takes a lifetime to know.

The people of God, they're wonderful, but, you know, it's messy. Always a challenge. These things can be challenged. They're not easy.

They're not. They're not. They're also sinful. God chooses to mediate his grace to the most ordinary means. So the church or the best marketing department isn't necessarily the one that God chooses to bless.

Or the one that the greatest preacher. Or the best website. Or the best letter. Because, at the end of the day, they all have the best God. And he is the God. Right? He is the God.

I've heard it said that a very simple preacher met a very prominent and famous preacher one day. Someone said, wow, you're really intimidated by that.

[14:44] He said, well, he can preach a better sermon than me, but he can't preach a better gospel. He can't preach a better gospel. Every church is entrusted with the one message of the gospel.

It is the only word. His mercy is his. Right? If it was ultimately up to us, the church would be in a sad state of the verse.

Crazy to know that it is. Let's consider what it would look like for a church to be devoted to its simple, ordinary, needs of God's prayer.

And actually, the first thing I want to know about 1st 32 is what it doesn't say. When we hear devoted to the apostles' teaching, it's super important that we don't think devoted to the apostles. Right? Right? Not personal loyalty to men. Right? devotion to their teaching. Why?

[15:59] Well, because what was Peter saying in the Pentecost term? Did he say, come follow me? Or is he saying, come follow Christ? it's good to demonstrate a healthy loyalty to your leaders.

Pray for them. Don't gossip. They say or do something wrong, correct them rather than writing them off. That's good and healthy and appropriate loyalty. But if a leader, and especially a leader in the church, begins demanding allegiance to themselves, friends, run, don't walk on the earth.

The church is not the place to aggrandize the net. It's a place to worship Christ. And right now, as our church is nominating elders and deacons, in the next season of ministry in our church, the primer that we sent out to you a couple weeks ago that explained in significant detail about the office and the qualifications and the process for elders and deacons, we were careful in the way we were.

We said that the elder or pastor is an office given to the church by Christ to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. It is the office, the role, the job of elder or pastor that is the gift given to the church, not the man.

Right? I am not God's gift to you. You're not surprised. Right? The office that I fill, that of the pastor, that's the gift.

[17:51] Right? In his goodness, God has seen fit to organize his church to include shepherds whose job it is to read and preach his words so that the church is devoted to the apostle's teaching, to fellowship, to breaking the bread, and to pray.

That's the gift. So that we are blessed and built. That's the gift.

So as you consider nominations, right, for elders, don't nominate somebody who thinks he's God's gift to the world.

Nominate somebody who thinks Christ is the Father's gift to the world, who thinks that the indwelling spirit is the Son's gift to his church. Nominate somebody who thinks that the Spirit breathed out the word through the church's prophets and apostles and that message is worthy of the church.

I'm not here, but his thoughts. 3,000 people did not become devoted to Peter on the day of the cross. 3,000 people became devoted to the Christ that he did.

[19:05] So if we're not devoted to the apostles, what does it look like to be devoted to the apostles' teaching? First, I think the content of that is pretty clear to us.

Certainly, it's the preaching that he, that Luke just recorded for us on the day of Pentecost. So does the message of the Pentecost sermon, which I want to recount again today.

And it's also, I think, we must include Jesus' command, we saw very recently in Matthew chapter from the end, as he taught them, teach them to obey all I have commanded.

I think the apostles' teaching looks like all the scriptures. scriptures. So friends, this teaches us, mom is for us, that we ought to devote ourselves to the whole suite of scripture.

Are we a people we love to do? Today, we have the apostles' teaching, the scripture for us, in the Bible.

[20:07] And just, you know, how did we get the Bible? Like, what qualifies for being included in a canon of scripture? Pretty simple. Who is authorized to speak for God to his people authoritatively?

The prophets of the Old Covenant and the apostles of the New. And so, all of the writings of the New Testament are those writings that were either by the apostles or, as Luke here, was Paul's companion under episodic commission.

Now, why is it so powerful for God's people to be devoted to his word? It's just, simply, the message of Jesus.

And Jesus, given for us, Edmund, raised up on cross for us on Good Friday, raised up from the grave for us on Easter, and raised up in heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father on the day of ascension.

That's the power. That's where all of it is. It's in Gim. And scriptures are the testimony of this Messiah. Where else would we go? Where else would we go?

[21:28] There's no story. There's no teaching. There's nothing more powerful than we follow a death-proof Savior. What else is there?

Who else is there? That's just what we've seen in these last two weeks where Peter has preached the apostolic message, the gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified, buried, raised, ascended.

By that message, we're cut to God. And by that message, we're turned to God. By that message, we came alive in church order.

And so friends, let us be a people, a fruitcake, God. And so as you, in your day-to-day walk, as you open the scriptures, oh yeah, expect it in the moment in power in your life.

Let us not neglect reading the scriptures together. Our community groups here, right? Do not have a glass. Assemble yourselves with the saints.

[22:37] I know this is a crazy time, but you know, if you can be here, be here. If you can't be here virtually, such a great accommodation of the town in the midst of a pandemic, but friends, this is where the power is.

The word of God. the power is coming back. Next, they devoted themselves. There are four things. Have they devoted themselves?

We're going to move for him at a more rapid pace here. This is in the, you know, three hours. first one. They devoted themselves to the fellowship.

Now, we're going to actually see what that looks like in these next couple verses. So, I'm only going to mention it. They devoted themselves to the fellowship of the saints.

And that looks like confessing our sins and encouraging each other in Christ and reminding each other of the gospel and correcting one another when we need it and pointing each other always to Christ.

[23:41] That's what we're excited about. And the breaking of the bread. I think that the breaking of the bread there is most likely a liturgical reference to the Lord's sacrifice.

Next. And again, I'm not going to spend a ton of time on that right this moment because we have cups today. and we'll reflect on that as we the power of that and the why of that as we come to the community table in just a few minutes and devote our attention to it more the elements of the elements.

And then we're going to go into the prayers. Why is that? Why is that something that Lube points out to them? Well, friends, if Jesus is what he said he is and if Jesus did those scriptures promised ahead of time and testified about his life and if Jesus is risen and ascended and if Jesus sits on the throne of heaven and if he has sent his spirit friends, there is little else.

In fact, there is nothing in this world more powerful than the bread. That's why they put themselves to bread. where else can we go except to the throne of God?

What higher authority can we appeal to except the king of kings and lord of gods? As we said a few weeks ago when we looked at Luke's first reference to prayer in chapter 1 verse 14, the book of Acts is just saturated chapter by chapter the references to the prayer of God's people.

[25:31] We're going to see it again and again and again. What did we say at the outset? We said, prayer is what happens when you believe that Jesus is risen.

and again it is easy for us to look at this passage and treat it like a checklist.

Are you good then? No, no, no, no. And certainly Luke intends for us to follow after this example. It would be sharing with us other words. But if we come here and first see a to-do list we will have missed the point of that.

Luke signals this point of the concluding verse. Lord, verse 37, add it to their number of to find out those who are being saved. So as we pursue these things together let us remember that, well, where does white tennie come from in church?

Not from leaders whipping their congregation up in the oppressed. Not from slick marketing or not from a checklist. Not even from our faithfulness to the ordinary means of grace.

[26:52] Vitality in the church comes from the Lord. Otherwise, it's not even the vitality is it? It's just us. It was God who shook the place that they were beginning of the chapter.

It was God who added to their number. It was God who empowered their message. And it is God against the Lord. Amen. Amen. Briefly, before we conclude, the idea of fellowship here.

I think that's, right, we said each of the summary statements in the book of Luke here, these passages. Each of them has their unique focus and play. How do we just say focus and play? That's weird. here. Here. This one brings into focus the community of the saints.

And what does put it to tell us? Verse 34, 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.

[28:07] Now, the idea of the early saints in Jerusalem having all things in common, being together, some people have suggested that this is socialism.

Now, as this is the first of Luke's summary statements, we don't have all the details yet on having all things in time. The next summary that we're going to see is in chapter 4.

And it's going to focus more about the believers sharing their belongings and how that works. And we're going to see then why this clearly is not socialism. But, if you're like, oh, at least it's not that, right?

Oh, that would be too much to ask of it. You need to know that this is asking much more. This is a heavier burden than that. Luke isn't talking politics or economics.

He's talking fair. This is more than civic duty, not this. This is more than even a deep friendship with the clients.

[29:18] Friends get together. The church was together. Friends share their things. The church have all things in time.

Who has an ownership interest in your stuff besides the IRS. It's your family. Children have an inheritance interest in their parents' property.

Spouses share a common, right? A marriage, a man and a woman form a family and share a household. They have all things in common. That's the very language of this passage, isn't it?

This isn't a political or economic statement. It's a theological, practically theological statement that God made them a family. And it showed.

We don't necessarily have to live it out the same way that they did. but this puts upon the people of God the responsibility of family.

[30:30] And what that does is it not only gives us this pattern of life, but it also provides a witness to the watching world. The focus of this passage and others like it, Ephesians chapter 4, 1st chapter 5, when generosity is talked about, the emphasis in the New Testament is first, and actually in the Old as well, is first to the people of God.

It doesn't excuse us for being generous for we're not among the people of God, but the Testament in the Scriptures is first to the household of God.

And the results of that, having all things in common, making sure that nobody has need among the people of God, is that verse 46, day by day, attending the tabloid, breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with gladly generous hearts, and look at this verse 47, praising God and having faith with all of you.

And the Lord added to their number of days, and the Lord will be saved. Friends, the vibrant, generous, invested life of the church is a testimony to the Lord.

God draws people to himself. In other words, the world ought to be able to look at the church and say, wow, they take care of each other in incredible ways.

[32:05] And that is one way that we adorn the gospel of the good works of the song of Titus chapter 2 just a few months ago. And friends, I want to encourage you, I see an invested, generous people when I preach to you.

I see a people who opens their homes to one another in hospitality and does some incredible acts of service one to the other. And I'm profoundly grateful for some of the helps that you've given me in my home.

some of you have opened your homes to foster and adoptive children. Some are preparing to. And some have helped those families with the burdens that are associated with them.

I've seen this church family give time and attention to one another, putting the least of these in some incredible ways for these five years that we've been.

I've seen you care for new parents in ways that are unlike the ways that the world around us does, their neighbors and friends.

[33:20] And the list goes on. I wrote about even more things, but the point is this. I have seen and I want to encourage it. I feel like sometimes when we look at the testimony of scripture that we don't necessarily see our lives lining up.

And what I want to say is that I see this in you and I am encouraged and I want to encourage us to even more. I want to call us to walk even more deeply in this.

Look around this room and see not just like people attending a show, but see your very family and then actually that.

And that's where I want to conclude. I want to conclude by asking, why is this? why is it that we are here?

One of the profound truths of the gospel is that when the Holy Spirit unites us to the Son, we are attacked as Son.

[34:39] Paul in Ephesians chapter 1 says, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that any of us, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless for Him in love.

He predestined us for adoption to Himself as Son through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will and to the praise of His glorious grace.

with which He has blessed us in the Lord. For everyone who has come to faith in us, if I have been adopted and so have you, what does that make a family?

a family? And this reality was taking hold in the young church.

God has knit us to that. We are able. Why was there no lack of need in the Jerusalem church, not just their politics, but their economics?

[36:16] Because parents don't let their children go home. and they were a family.

And so they acted out. So let me call you today. First, if you've not been adopted by the Father, the whole message of chapter 2 has been called on the name of the Lord.

Repent and believe. And you will be saved. And this will be true of you. Not just your salvation into Christ, which is phenomenal, but the family into which we have answered.

And if you have prayed, have you seen that you have a family in Christ?

And friends, if we have, let us devote ourselves the word of the fellowship, that's the family part that we was highlighting in this passage today.

[37:41] The breaking of bread which we're going to do in a moment. So, let us try. How good you are, our Lord, for making us your own.

Not just your own servants and your own citizens, but your own children. children. Please help us to go in that.

And not just as individuals, but recognizing that you made us your children together. Please help us, Lord. To honor you, to serve one another, and to show what you and watch and we are a family.

All because of Christ. We pray these things in his name. Amen. I'll be right there.

We intend now, devote our attention now to one of the ordinary means of grace, the Lord's suffering.

[39:35] Why is this part? Why is this something that we, in the inspirational Holy Spirit, put it out and put it out as one of the things that is so important?

Well friends, it is because there is no more powerful a message that this is my blood of the cup. Because we can do more powerful action than this is my body given for you.

The power of the church is not in what we can do. The power in the church is what he has done.

And so a church that is centered on, focused on, devoted to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[40:51] That's where the power is. That's where life is. That's where our life is. And so, that's why Luke said, they devoted themselves to the breaking of the world.

He is a church that is centered on the gospel. And this is how the Lord has taught us to preach the gospel to ourselves. It is promised of the gospel to us. The church that centers here is a church that has the power of God.

So friends, let us devote ourselves to this message.

The Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took to heaven. And when he had given him a promise, he broke it. He said, this is my father, which is for you.

Dream us in remembrance of you. For every person who has come to repent and believe in Jesus Christ.

[42:14] This is his promise, his testimony to you. This is what power lies. If you have not come to repent and believe yet, don't take those ornaments.

They're meaningless to you now. Instead, you're sincars. You're right inside of the Lord. The body takes care.

And then, this promise, this testimony to you from the Lord will be of utmost beauty and honor.

I'd love to speak with you more about that. If you need to come to Christ. But for all of his blood rock will be in this testimony to you. So friends, let us take the bread.

Let us eat.

[43:30] In the same way, also, we have a cup after saying, this cup is the new covenant in my life. Do this as often as you read in a long way.

Amen. As often as we eat this bread, we drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's name.

Let's do it again. Lord, thank you for this sure and certain task. Thank you, Son, of your love for us.

And your power for working for us. And that he is coming for us. It's him.

We thank you and we praise you. Please stand with us.

[44:35] We thank you. We thank you. you