

# The early church

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Preacher: Rev Alan Montgomery

[ 0 : 00 ] This morning is taken from Acts chapter 2 verses 42 to 47. Acts chapter 2 verses 42 to 47.

Let us read together. 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.

And they were selling their possessions and belongings. And distributing the proceeds to all as they 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 with all the people.

[ 1 : 15 ] And the Lord added to their number day by day. Those who were being saved. May God add his blessing to the reading and the hearing of his word. Amen. And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching.

The fellowship. The breaking of bread. And prayer. The Lord Jesus Christ. While he was on earth. He told his followers.

As recorded in Mark's gospel. If anyone. Wants to come after me. He must deny himself. And take up his cross.

And follow me. And look. In his account. Emphasizing. Emphasizes. The word. Daily.

It's a daily commitment. A daily cleansing. That we need. It's not on our terms. But Christ's.

[ 2 : 23 ] It's not our agenda. But his. It's not our agenda. And as the Lord Jesus Christ. Went to the cross. He prayed.

Father. If you're willing. Take this cup from me. Yet not my will. But yours be done.

As we prepared for worship this morning. What was the main thing. On your mind. Individually.

What were you thinking about. What were you asking God to do. As you came to worship. That hymn we've just sung. Speak to me.

By name. O master. Let me know. It is. To me. Was that our prayer.

[ 3 : 26 ] Was that our desire. Was that our want. That Jesus would speak. To me. As an individual. As of what he wanted.

In my life. There are times. We long for God. For God to speak. But sometime.

We have that mentality. Lord. That's a good word for him. Or her. Or see that person. In front of the church.

It's for them. But we don't ask God. What do you want to say. To me. What does God want to say.

To you. To me. This morning. And that's maybe an answer. I don't know. So.

[ 4 : 29 ] I hope. I hope you're listening. Why was the early church. Effective. And how then. Did the early church grow.

We remember those words. That Jesus spoke to Peter. When he said. I will build my church. And the gates of hell.

Shall not prevail. Against it. It's in my authority. That I've been given. And I certainly.

Will build my church. And this is part of Christ's church. And he wants to build it. He wants to build each individual person.

To be able to go and share the gospel. The good news. That Jesus loved them. That Jesus died for them. And that Jesus promises.

[ 5 : 30 ] To come again. And take those who know him. And love him. To be with him in heaven.

And love him. And love him. And love him. And love him. And love him. And love him. Yes. We can look around the world today.

Even this country today. And note that the building program. That Jesus has put in place. Was at times exciting.

And rapid. And yet we look at other churches. And we see them struggling. We see them being unexciting.

And slow. In progress. Churches which are in the crest of a wave. They're full. They're overflowing. And others.

Which are half filled. And less. God is moving. Do you believe it?

[ 6 : 34 ] I'm glad you agree with me. God is moving. And we can either be comfortable. Complacent. Or challenged.

To do greater things. Those are the three options. We can sit here and be comfortable. I like the singing.

I like my friend. I'm sitting next to you. Be comfortable. Complacent. Nothing to do with me. I'll just come here and enjoy myself. Or we can be challenged. To do greater things. Sadly. Someone has said. In modern churches. It's hard to know. If people want a pastor. Or a spiritual concierge.

[ 7 : 33 ] Every member. In God's church. Every member.

Of the body of Christ. Has a ministry to perform. And that means. You have one. And I have one. Have you discovered. What your ministry is?

Have you asked God. To show you. And help you to see. What he wants you to do. To see what's happening.

In your life. In other lives. We need to get back to basics. Luke reminds us.

In Acts chapter 2. How those early Christians. Worked through their faith. With effectiveness. They devoted themselves.

[ 8 : 34 ] Devoted themselves. To the apostles preaching. Teaching. The fellowship. The breaking of bread. And prayer. I wonder how.

Dedicated we are. Regarding those issues. What did it mean. When Luke said.

They devoted themselves. Nothing other. Than giving themselves. Holy. To what God wanted them.

To do. In obedience. In following him. In doing what he wants. No complacency.

In love. And the moment. You receive the love of Christ. In your heart. In your life. You forfeited.

[ 9 : 38 ] The right to choose. Who you would love. There's no option. We don't have an option. God tells us. To go into all the world.

And to share his gospel. Not just the people. That we like. The people whose faces we like. We are to share that love. With everyone.

Forgiveness. Is a final act. Of love. Father. Forgive them. For they don't know. For they don't know. What they're doing.

And many people. In the church today. We will come across. Those. Who ridicule us. Who don't like us.

But we're asked. To forgive them. To love them. To hold them up in prayer. Before God. To be faithful.

[ 10 : 46 ] And we're asked. To consecrate ourselves. To Jesus. And his gospel. King of my life. I crown thee now.

Thine. Shall the glory be. Lest I forget. Thy thorn crowned brow. Lead me. To Calvary.

And that's where men and women. Need to be led. You were led there once. As God captivated. And capped your heart. And as you bowed at the cross.

And said. Father. Forgive me. Take my life. And let it be. Consecrated Lord. To thee.

And if you need to do it. Then other people. Need to do that too. But we need to love them. Into the kingdom. We need to be faithful. In sharing the gospel.

[ 11 : 46 ] And they devoted themselves. To the apostles teaching. Now. You remember. That when. Luke wrote those words. At that particular point.

In time. Saul. Had not become a Christian. He was still breathing out threats. Against those Christians.

And today. We will face. Our persecutors. Our souls. In the community.

In our workplace. Even in our families. Who don't like what we're doing. And in their own way.

They'll persecute us. Remember. That's what the early Christians. Had to face. Jesus. And they came through that.

[12:48] Knowing that God was with them. God would bless them. God would help them. You see. They taught. Christ crucified. Christ risen.

Christ coming again. That was their. The mandate. That they were given. Their teaching. Was it Jesus Christ. Was crucified. Who shouldn't have been.

But because of your sin. And my sin. And their sin. He took it upon himself. Their sin. On the cross. There was a need for forgiveness.

And that's how God. Showed the world. That need. Forgiveness. Forgiveness. Seems a good thing. To do. Until we have someone. To forgive. Christ. And because.

[13:50] Of his resurrection power. We are guaranteed. The power of the Holy Spirit. Bless you. You.

You. Shall. Receive. You. Not you. Not you. You might receive. You shall receive. It's a positive statement.

I know that this building. May be filled with the power. Of the Holy Spirit. Where he flows. Through every life. Where he motivates. Every person. Where he challenges.

Every life. Where he sends us out. With that power. To share. His love. His forgiveness. And his holiness. And that Christ.

Would come again. Christ crucified. Christ risen. And Christ. Coming again. Christ. The Spirit's power. The Spirit's power.

[14:55] Enables us to live. For Christ. And serve Christ. Until. He. Comes. Martin Luther.

One of the great reformers. Said. We should live. We should live. As if Christ. As if Christ. Died yesterday. Rose this morning. And is coming back.

Tomorrow. Always living in that. Mindset. That Jesus. May return. We don't know.

When Christ. Will come back. But he may. Come tomorrow. You see. There's no room. For complacency.

In the Christian life. No room. For complacency. And that's what we need.

[15:52] To guard against. For that. Is what the enemy wants. He wants us. To be complacent. He doesn't want us.

To be challenged. To do something. He says. If I can keep them. In that attitude. I've won.

But we. Are on a march. For God. To do his will. To see his kingdom. Being built. In this community. To see people come. To find faith. And we give God. Thanks for those. Who found faith. On Friday and Saturday.

And I can say this. Some people. Who come to this church. found faith. On Saturday. Isn't that good?

[16:56] We give God thanks for that. Because he's on the move. And. We have to make up our mind. Do we want to move with God?

God. I hope. I hope. You'll say yes to that. The fellowship. What does that.

Comprise of? Various things. Quickly run through them. Unity. They're all together. In one place. Waiting for one thing.

The Holy Spirit. That was promised. To come upon them. Oh. That we might know. What it means to wait. In expectancy. Have you ever waited in expectancy?

You fathers. Waiting for your card. Your gift this morning. Has it come yet? Oh no. Well.

[17:56] I'm sure it'll come sometime. But let's wait. In expectancy. For God's Holy Spirit.

He's on the move. He wants to challenge us. He wants to change us. He wants to motivate us. Are you willing to be motivated?

And honesty. The fellowship. Were honest. The writer of the Proverbs says. An honest witness. Tells the truth.

And William Shakespeare. I know he's not in the Bible. But he said this. No legacy. Is so rich. As honesty. Listen to that.

No legacy. Is so rich. As honesty. Honest before God. We have to be honest before God. And honest before each other.

[19:08] Sometimes I find it difficult to be honest before other people. I don't know if you do. But I need to be honest before God.

Why? Because God can see my heart and my life. He knows what I think. I can't hide anything from him. And therefore I need to be honest before him.

As I ask for his forgiveness. To serve us. It would not be right. To neglect the ministry of the word of God.

Brothers. Choose seven men. Full of the Holy Spirit. Full of the Holy Spirit. And wisdom. Each individual. Has their skills. Their gifts.

Their talents. And that includes you. Did you know you've got a gift and a talent and a skill? It might be playing football.

[ 20 : 15 ] I don't know. But you've got a bigger talent than that. That God's given to you. And God wants to use it in your life.

But will you let him? Open my heart Lord. Open my eyes. Let me see Jesus. And as we see him. He fills us. To overflowing. And the breaking of bread. Does the breaking of bread.

Refer specifically. To communion. Sitting around the Lord's table. Having fellowship.

Or more generally. To shared. Regular. Regular. Meals. Probably both. There's a concept.

[ 21 : 23 ] Where the early Christians. Met together. At each other's house. Homes. Where they had meals together. And then.

Shared. The Lord's supper. After that meal. Oh how. Amazing it is. When Christians. Come together.

For fellowship. And they share. A meal together. And at the end of that meal. They remember him. Whom they were fellowshiping with. And they share. The Lord's supper. As a church. We need to get back.

To basics. Fellowship together. Not just round the Lord's table. In each other's homes. Eating a meal.

[ 22 : 23 ] Giving thanks. Praising God. And then. Celebrating. That God. Whom we've been with. Remembering what he's done.

For us on the cross. Fellowship. And sharing. His. Body and blood. Symbol of it rather. Recognizing the oneness.

And keeping. In the forefront. Of her minds. The centrality. Of Christ's. Sacrifice. And yet.

Never forgetting. It's only. Until. He comes. Doesn't that excite you? It's only.

Until he comes. But are you ready. For that day. When Christ. Returns. Will he call you home. Do you have that certainty?

[ 23 : 31 ] And it denotes friendship. And intimacy. As gleaned. In the passage. That Luke records. In the Acts of the Apostles.

Or rather. Luke. In his gospel. The Emmaus Road. Those two disciples. Disturbed. Uncertain.

Uncertain. Unsure. Discussing what had happened. And this stranger comes along. He didn't know him. Didn't recognize him. But it was only as he invited himself.

Into their house. Let me stay with you. And as he opened. The word. And broke bread. Then their eyes.

Were opened. And as God. Speaks into our lives. Of those things. He also asks us.

[ 24 : 25 ] To pray. Prayer. Was an integral part. Of their lives. In family.

In private. In public. Remember. The time spent. In prayer. Is never. Wasted.

I don't know. How many people. Have heard. Of praying. Hyde. Missionary to India. Who took. God's. Command. To Isaiah.

In. 62. And. Verses. 67. And made it. His personal prayer. I have posted. Watchmen. On your walls. O Jerusalem.

They will never be silent. The day or night. You'll call. On the Lord. Give yourselves. No rest. And give him. No rest. Till he establishes.

[ 25 : 24 ] His creation. Jerusalem. And makes her. The praise. Of the earth. Commit yourself. To praying. A prayer a day.

Keeps the devil away. Surrounding ourselves. In prayer. Knowing that intimacy.

That wants us. Day by day. To call upon. The name of the Lord. To bless us. To chastise us. To keep us on track.

Daniel Defoe. In his famous poem. The true. Born Englishman. Wrote these words.

Whenever God. Erects a house of prayer. The devil. Always builds a chapel there. And will be found.

[ 26 : 33 ] Upon examination. The latter. Has a largest congregation. Take those words in.  
Let's. Commit ourselves. To reverse that whole thing. That the church. That Jesus. Will have the  
largest congregation.  
As been said. About praying Hyde. Regarding his behavior. That Hyde.  
Missed meals. Missed meetings. Missed preaching appointments. But he never. Missed meetings.  
With God. In prayer. That was his. Desire.  
[ 27 : 39 ] I'll go without food. I'll go without. Meeting people. I'll go without. Preaching. But I cannot  
afford.  
To go without. Meeting. By God. This nation. I trust you'll.  
Agree with me. Is needing to be. Spiritually revived. Revitalized. Christ. And only a church. Which is  
in touch.  
With the. Paul. Spirit of God. Can begin. To exert. An influence. Which will count. And this morning.  
God. Calls us. To be part. Of that church. A body. On the move. A body.  
[ 28 : 38 ] Willing to be. Motivated. A body. Willing to follow. But how. Will we respond. The future.  
Can either be. Static. And uninteresting. Or. Unpredictable. And exciting. With the living.  
God. In the midst. And in control. Where do you want to be? Jesus said.  
I will build. My church. Only the other day. I came across.  
Part of my father's diary. In which he had written. In the early. 1960s. The first.  
[ 29 : 48 ] Turf. Was taken out of the ground. We were going to build. The Elam church. Church.  
And that was a starting point.  
For him. In a sense. Because. As he got working. On that building project. Volunteers. The minister  
of the church.  
Came. And visited our home. And I can remember it well. Because. Because. Because. He said.  
Said to my father. Are you a Christian?  
My dad said. I think so. And Richard Leighton. Turned to him and said. Well you're not.  
You either know. Or you don't know. You don't think so. You don't know. And that was the day. My  
dad became a Christian. He gave his life to the Lord.  
[ 30 : 58 ] And I saw. I was only early. Early years. That time. But what a difference. I saw. A man  
on fire.  
For God. God. And that can happen. To us all. The Holy Spirit. Can come down. And fill our souls.  
And fill our lives.  
And enable us. To be in fire. For him. But the choice. Is yours. God bless you.  
Father God. Bless us this morning. Let your Holy Spirit. Fill each and every life. In this place. Touch  
us.  
Till we're overflowing. With your love. Your forgiveness. Your holiness. In Jesus name.  
[ 31 : 58 ] Amen. Amen.