

This Is Church

[Community- Acts 2:40-47]

Introduction

This Is Church:

For the next several weeks we will look at the DNA of our church and any church: worship, community, and service.

For twelve weeks in the fall something amazing happens on Saturday:

48 million and 216 Million watch what we call American football (2013 #s).

What is amazing is not the sheer popularity and numbers but the community you see on these days:

Saturdays bring people together

Rally everyone around a cause

Calls people to sacrifice and accept one another regardless of social standing

Traditions and a love of the game that is passed down for generations.

On Saturdays, we find a unique and special community. **But in the Word of God we find a greater and eternal community. The community of Faith.** Today we will spend our time together examining the scriptures and how they call us all to a deeper relationship with the Savior and His Bride.

Read [Acts 2:40-47]

Community is God's Design and God's Desire for your life

That day those who believed were added to THEM. God from the very beginning designed you to be in community with others. Not only has he wired you for community but the Godhead models community

God is one yet three. The deity of our Lord is a model for our lives. We are knit together for community.

Luke 3:21 When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. 22 And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

IF God Himself exists in community, what makes my life any different? Why do I think I am above or beyond the design of my creator? We are communal by design.

This is again why God to the first man, Adam, said "It is not good for man to be alone." This is not only about a bride. Christ, who remained unmarried His entire life surrounded himself with 12 men.

God's design, desire, and purpose for you is found in the community of faith.

God gives you community for His Glory and for your good. God births you into community for **spiritual growth**.

The idea that my faith is personal, individual, private and a solo venture is not only foolish, it is not grounded on the truth of Scripture and is in direct opposition to God's design.

Those who gladly received the Word were added to THEM.

Community helps us **continually grow steadfastly**. The word used here means to "continually persist" **It is like the ancient Roman Roads found today**

in Israel. Even today you can see the ruts in the stone road made by chariots. Years of constant chariot wheels created permanent ruts.

This is what the community of Faith does for our lives: It creates eternal spiritual marks on our lives that keep us in the graces of Christ. **We live in a fleeting society: continually persist!**

God's community also keeps us grounded and growing through the **administration of the Word of God**. Instruction and doctrine is an important part of the new community.

Right orthodoxy leads to right orthopraxy. If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything. **Are you grounded upon the Word of Faith?**

Another key area of community growth is fellowship. Kononia- is association, communion, fellowship, close relationship (NAC).

There is a real sense of connection to, between, and for each other (ECNT).

Fellowship creates in our lives not a "I go" mentality but a "I **Belong**." The world wants you to "Go" to church → **Jesus wants you to "belong" to the body of Christ.**

Within this fellowship belonging to the body of Christ, we find the early church eating together and **praying**.

We can use the dinner table as an instrument for our Lord Jesus Christ. Who are you eating with? Eat with your brothers in Christ. Have breakfast with someone who needs the Lord.

Everyone eats, let us eat to the glory of His name!

A community at prayer is something Luke emphasizes about community life. It seeks God's direction and is dependent upon God because God's family of people do not work on feelings or

intuition but by actively submitting themselves to the Lord's direction.

Are you growing in Prayer? We have many gatherings of prayer throughout the week. Find a place to belong!

Community not only offers a place to grow, the body of Christ is in itself a testimony of the Risen Savior to the world.

Within the early church we see those who gladly received the Word being baptized and breaking bread together. These are not merely worship services but clear and powerful pictures of the Gospel!

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

1Cor. 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

The community of Christ is a powerful proclamation of the Gospel!

A second picture of Christ to the world is the unity of Christian community

John 17:20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

We have a oneness in Jesus Christ that cannot be manufactured. There is something that brings us together that is not of this world. Young, old, white, black, rich, poor, sick, health, from this side of the tracks and from the other...I does not matter. His grace is the same for all people. The world is taking notice!

Are you a tool for solidarity are you an agent for strife? Are you trying to do it alone? A lone-ranger mentality is rebellion against God design and desire for your life.

Community is where you find physical and spiritual refreshment.

We find no mandate in Scripture for the pastor, deacons, or leaders to take care of the church by their selves. It is the community's duty to watch, pray, and care for one another.

Here the early church held all things in common and helped those who had needs.

This intentional community of Christ requires sacrificial living. This community is only found in the power of the Holy Spirit. It requires that each one look out not only for his own interests but for those of his brother.

Our Mission Trips and commitment to Louisiana

This community requires a simplify of heart where people are not trying to impress anyone but joyfully living out the graces of Christ in their everyday environment.

Community is God's design and God's desire for your life. Are you living in his plan for will for your life?

Barriers to Community

If God has built and created us for community why is it so difficult?

1. The idea of **commitment** to a community is alien in this culture, characterized by transient relationships (NIV).

We are not more connected than ever yet experiencing a "loneliness epidemic." The Independent in a recent 2015 study concluded: "Modern life is making us lonelier, and recent research indicates that this may be the next biggest public health issue on par with obesity and substance."

abuse.

We have lost the spiritual truth of commitment and community. It is easier to connect with 1000 friends on facebook than it is one person face to face. The world's standard of community is an assault on the Biblical model.

The world says gather occasionally, attend when you can, listen online or on a podcast and that is enough. Yet, the transformation of Christ challenges us to do otherwise.

We can not find real fulfillment in life unless our community life is meaningful (NIV).

Are you committed?

2. **Business** is another barrier to Christian community. We must find Spirit led balance to our lives. We are prone to work too much, play too much, rest to little. This is not godliness. What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and lose his life

Is my life leading me into the community of Christ or away?

“Having lost the security of being rooted in the eternal reality of the Word of God, we are looking to busy activity to fill the void that has been created in our lives. And under that bondage to activity we find it difficult to linger with the Word simply for the joy of it. In fact, we may be afraid to stop our busyness lest it expose the shallowness of our lives. So we go on from activity to activity, from project to project. But activity is a dangerous source of fulfillment.” (Ajith Fernando)

Are you too busy for Christ?

3. A third barrier to Christian community is **individuality** and **pride**.

Most of us have a “I can do it own my own mentality.” We let down our defenses to accept the free grace of Jesus Christ and his finished atoning work in the cross and then go right back to our modus operandi (habits of working)

Remember this: **Do not cut off your nose to spite your face.** If you cut yourself off from the community of faith, this will have devastating consequences to your faith.

18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

You can't do it on your own. This is the power and the beauty of unmerited favor and grace. Do not go back to worshipping at the idol of self and pride.

Now What?

Are you part of the community of faith? What is keeping you from being connected as Christ has commanded and designed you to be?

Are you holding back? Now all those who believed were together and held all things in common (V. 44). Have you been busy building your kingdom and neglected the community of Faith? Today the Lord is calling you back and calling you to belong.

God's design and purpose for your life is Growth → Testimony → Refreshment

Is the Lord raising you up as a leader in His community and among his people? **Maybe you are like me** and are pushing back against God's call upon your life to lead, teach, and be used.

Our Response

The community of Faith is a light in darkness and a powerful testimony to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Maybe you are here today and you have not yet "gladly received his word." Today I want you to know that Christ is calling you to faith and community. Maybe you were hurt by the church in the past and this is keeping you from following the plan God has for your life.

You have heard the Word of the Lord today. As was true 2,000 years ago. The gift of salvation is freely offered to you today. And as in the book of Acts (2:41) and true of any gift you must **receive** salvation.

It is free because you cannot earn it. This is why it is called mercy =unearned favor from the Lord. Even if you could earn it you and I have nothing good in ourselves. We have all fallen short.

Today God is calling you to community of you receive him. Will you join the community of faith today?

Will you trust in Him today?

Are you in a life group? A community of believers? Is God calling you to open your house to your neighborhood that they might hear that He alone is good and His love endures forever?

Two ways to respond: In this service or by card.

Notes

This passage gives us a picture of early Christian community life. For this reason we will use this passage to teach us about effective community life (NIV).

The idea of commitment to a community is alien in this culture, characterized by transient relationships (NIV)

We can not find real fulfillment in life unless our community life is meaningful (NIV).

Acts 2:40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”

Perverse

OT language for a generation that is stubborn and rebellious and not faithful to God (NAC).

Appears only here in the NT and refers to a generation that is ethically crooked, spiritually off the path of God (ECNT).

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

Receive

Receive is another way to summarize the response to the gospel in this chapter. Receive goes along with “call on the name of the Lord” and repent (ECNT)

Peter’s focus is not only what God provides in salvation but also on the identity of Christ Jesus (ECNT).

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The immediate involvement of new believers in regular follow-through care

reminds us of the importance of making plans for this when organizing an evangelistic program (NIV).

An openness to being fed by the Word is key evidence that one is truly regenerated. Many people come to God to have a felt need met (NIV).

Quite possibly v. 42 should be viewed separately, and provides a picture of how new believers were incorporated into the community. Vv. 43-46 thus would appear to introduce a new section that deals with the life of the whole Christian community (NAC).

The newly formed community functions by the believer's devoting themselves to these activities (ECNT).

There was an immediate, regular follow through care of the first converts in the early church (NIV).

Doctrine

Instruction is an important part of the new community (ECNT).

Fellowship

Koinonia- is association, communion, fellowship, close relationship (NAC).

There is a real sense of connection to, between, and for each other (ECNT).

Community life is an integral part of the basic Christian life because Christianity is by nature a community religion. So we get together not only because it is helpful, but also because we are a vital part of the body of Christ (NIV).

43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Fear/Awe

These people could sense that God was at work (NIV).

44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,

Together

It seems to be the gathered community, with a strong emphasis on their unity

(NAC).

Breaking of Bread

Here and only in Luke 24:35 refers to table fellowship.

Prayer

A community at prayer is something Luke emphasizes about community life. It seeks God's direction and is dependent upon God because God's family of people do not work on feelings or intuition but by actively submitting themselves to the Lord's direction.

45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

The Bible places a priority on community equality, of sharing with the needy so that "there will be no poor among you" (NAC).

The sharing of material things in common is not a required communalism but a voluntary, caring response to need, as the end of verse 45 shows (ECNT).

Acts 2:46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

One accord

This is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Unity derives from and is guided by the gift of the Spirit that lies at the heart of its life together (NAC).

House to house

We see the earliest believers worshiping together in their every day environments (ECNT).

Simplicity of Heart

The joy came from the heart, because people were not trying to impress anyone (NIV).

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

When God's people come together and enjoy fellowship, 'praising God' is the natural result (NIV)

Such fresh and powerful community life would win the admiration of people outside the church (NIV).

Luke never says that preaching was the vehicle that led these people to be added daily. The favor that all the believers had among the people would have given opportunity for them to give the reason for the obvious transformation evident in their lives (NIV).

Illustrations

Application

We as human beings are communal beings. We cannot find real fulfillment in life unless our community life is meaningful (NIV). Therefore, groups, both within and outside the church, that encourage strong community life often experience growth (NIV).

True hospitality comes before pride. It has nothing to do with impressing people, but everyone to do with making them feel welcome and wanted (NIV).