

Community on Display

Sermon Text: Acts 2:42-47

Study Text: 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:1

Sermon Recap: Acts 2:42-47 gives us a glimpse into the life of the early church as the Holy Spirit came to dwell in each Christian and, through His divine power, formed the Church. We note several important things that arise from the text. First, the early church was devoted to the authoritative teaching of God's Word. God's Word formed the heart of this community. Second, we see that the early church was devoted to sharing meals together and praying together. There was a divine unity among this community of people, and one of the tangible expressions of this unity was their willingness to give what they had to meet the needs of others. Out of the overflow of God in their hearts, they were generous. We come away with a sense of "this is a gospel community on display for the world to see."

Sermon Connection: God designed His Church to be a particular and purposeful kind of community. He designed the Church to be a gospel community, a place where the gospel is embraced individually and corporately, and a place where the gospel is on full display. In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul is describing how the gospel creates and shapes God's Church, the gospel community. He notes that there is a fundamental change in how we regard ourselves and one another. No longer are we fleshly; we are godly, and we are godly through the gospel. Jesus Christ has caused something miraculous within each member of His Church...new birth! Paul goes on to help us see just how the gospel shapes and defines God's gospel community on display.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Goal: To see that the gospel radically redefines our view of life together and our shared mission

Lesson Points:

Point 1: Our New Identity in Christ (vv. 16-19)

Point 2: Our New Mission in Christ (vv. 20-21)

Point 3: A Time of Group Reflection

The Context: 2 Corinthians is a letter of love. Paul deeply loves the Corinthian church and has labored throughout his years to see it healthy and thriving. In his absence, other false teachers attempted to lead the church astray, and 2 Corinthians is Paul's letter of warning and correction. In chapter 5, we find Paul reflecting on the radical effects of the gospel in the lives of the people of God.

His point is that only God does the work of the gospel, and He does so with a purpose. God intends for us to lead a certain kind of life because of our salvation.

Point 1 - Our New Identity in Christ (vv. 16-19)

- What do vv. 16-17 teach us about the nature of the gospel and its work in our lives?
- How do vv. 16-19 help us to better understand how we are to relate to one another in the context of God's gospel community (the Church)?
- Verse 18 reminds us that salvation is God-centered. Why is this important?
- What astounding message does v. 19 teach us about the gospel?

Point 2 - Our New Mission in Christ (vv. 20-21)

- In v. 20, Paul lays out the mission of the Church: Reconciliation. What is the basis/foundation for this? See 2 Cor. 5:18-19.
- How does this understanding of mission help to shape and define the purposes of gospel community for us?
- What does Paul intend for us to understand in v. 21? What life-giving elements does this hold for gospel community?

Group Reflection Activity: Asking the Hard Questions...

- Why does Paul say in 6:1, "*...we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain*"? Considering what we have studied, what might it look like to receive the grace of God in vain?
- What assumptions have we made about being a part of a growth group? Have those assumptions lined up with God's purposes for His community?
- What aspects of gospel community have we been in conflict with or perhaps ignored?
- How does God's purpose for His community affect how we experience and participate in community?
- Based on the text we've just studied, 2 Cor. 5:16-6:1, what is the mission of God?
- How do you, the individual, view the mission of God as it relates to your life? How do you view the mission of God in relation to your growth group?
- Our lives can get busy fast. How often does the mission of God enter your mind when you make decisions about what events fill up your calendar? (Things like your children's extracurricular activities, your work schedule, entertainment, etc.)?
- How would you rate your ownership of the mission of God personally? As a group?
- What are some practical ways for us to encourage one another toward owning this mission?
- What are some things we can start doing this week as a growth group to respond to God's call to own His mission?

Intentional Prayer for Community

- Pray that God would begin to bring clarity as it concerns true gospel community.
- Pray that God would reveal areas where you have misunderstood community, and therefore, had wrong assumptions.
- Pray that God would help you to better understand both His mission and His community.
- Pray that your growth group would help you in these things through intentional and loving discipleship.