

Acts 2:41-47

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[0 : 00] It's very good to be back and preaching today. I'm coming off a three-week preaching break, and I've been incredibly thankful for that for multiple reasons, which I've stated previously.

Please turn with me, if you will, in your copy of God's Word, Acts chapter 2, verses 41 through 47. Luke's account here follows the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost.

The great sermon that I would encourage you, if you're not familiar with, to go back and read. Peter answers the question, what is happening in this day of Pentecost? These people filled with the Spirit are starting to speak in other languages, and they're telling about the mighty works of God. And so he explains that, and then he goes on to give explanation to who Jesus Christ is and how to place believing faith in Him. This is the beginning of the church.

It's an incredibly important text. Because it's so important, I want to get your minds moving in the right direction before we read it together by presenting you with a couple of questions.

[1 : 34] First question, what is the church? What is the church? I think that readily all of us could come up with some answer to that question.

Is it the right answer? What immediately comes to your mind when I ask that question? Is it a building? Or a piece of property?

Borrowed, rented, or owned? Is it a particular preacher? Is it an event like a Sunday morning gathering? Is it a business set with the task of marketing to you Christ?

Employing the means of the world to accomplish the ends of God? We have, I believe, in our Christian culture, a lot of really bad examples of what a church is.

As we begin to look to the culture for those answers, I think we'll find that most of them will be wrong answers. I've been saving the past about week and a half just some of the things that I get in the mail and by email, marketing things that are sent to me.

[2 : 55] And most of these, some, are just wrong. Most of these are not, in and of themselves, wrong. But just to give you some idea of the type of things that we as a church are inundated with, catalogs to buy products.

There's lots and lots of them like this. I'm not particularly picking on this one. But when we received this, it still wasn't too late to order our Palm Sunday Palm Fronds, tied up and ready to go.

Or our John 316 hand fans. We could get those shipped to us very quickly. Another one with some adult coloring books for moms, which is a great gift for Mother's Day.

Pictures that say things, the teapot says things like, all women are special, which I agree. Or keep calm and color on. A bookmark maybe that says a mother's love knows no boundaries.

Not to leave the men out for Father's Day. Men, you could get a flashlight that says men who walk with God light the way. About some advertising for church cleaning.

[4 : 20] Also church building cleaning. Lots of local services for that. We've got a company that will do our VBS t-shirts for us. Go ahead and get those ordered up.

Some conferences to keep me from being arrested for tax fraud, which are always very scary.

Pastor Jen Wright is still in jail apparently.

From our own denomination, emails about webisodes and blogs that include things, some highlights from today's episode.

Your church worship facility will feel full to attendees when it's above 80% capacity. From a conceptual point of view, it's easier to deal with the too full problem than the too empty problem.

I did not take time out of my week to listen to this. Or how about a webinar being offered on how to recruit and maintain volunteers. Or another one on reaching and retaining church guests.

[5 : 25] Seems Facebook and all its intelligence has learned that I'm a pastor somehow. And I get ads after ads after ads for outreach strategy companies.

How to reach people via social media and get them to attend our fellowship together. Two that especially grieve me close by.

A large church in our area. Inviting pastors, lay people to a training to use a premarital and marriage counseling curriculum.

That has as its stated goals. So let's watch what I'm saying. This is a church in our area. In our denomination. Saying they'd like for us to come to a training to use this tool that they use.

This is what they're using to equip. And these are the goals. Explore strength and growth areas. Strengthen communication skills.

[6 : 22] Identify and manage major stressors. Resolve conflict using the 10-step model. Develop a more balanced relationship. Explore family of origin issues.

Discuss financial planning and budgeting. Establish personal, couple, and family goals. Understand and appreciate personality differences.

All of these are good things to be done. But I find it interesting that nowhere stated for the thrust of this curriculum. And I looked. And I looked very hard for it. Because I don't want to misspeak on the matter.

All over their website. Anywhere. How do our marriages magnify the gospel? How do we apply biblical principles and the disciplines of Christianity to our marriage?

How are we made competent for our sanctification in our marriages? Another local within our denomination.

[7 : 20] One that I spent part of my formative years at is going to serve as a satellite campus broadcasting something called the Global Leadership Summit.

It's put on by Willow Creek Church. Bill Hyvel, as you may be familiar with, is the pastor there. Since 1995, they've put on this leadership conference.

It's aimed at church leadership. And they bring in leaders from around the world, both Christian and otherwise, to help pastors better lead their churches.

In an article online, I read the following, a 1993 survey of evangelical pastors by seven seminaries found that while they said their education had prepped them well in church history and theology, amen, they felt undertrained in administration, management, and strategic planning.

Quote a pastor from Massachusetts, In the 1950s, a pastor preached on Sundays, did weddings and funerals, and visited the sick. He goes on to say, I have almost 50 ministries that need to be put together, scheduled, organized, and led.

[8 : 36] It's a different skill set. What he's saying is, the Bible doesn't teach you how to do those things. The article goes on to say, Church conferences do little to address that need.

Most of them are pastors learning from pastors. If you only hear preaching from the choir, you're never stretched.

You never see things from another perspective. This year, the speakers there, Melinda Gates of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and T.D. Jakes, who is a known prosperity gospel preacher and a modalist, meaning he denies the nature of the Trinity.

And this is being hosted in our denomination so that we can learn from the business world how we're meant to lead churches. That's just a little, that's a sampling, a small, small, small sampling. I'm just going to get it out of my way. I'm not mad at it. I'm just getting it out of my way. Well, I am mad at it, but all the same. A second and closely related question.

[9 : 46] What is the church? How do we recognize the church? What is the normative activity and quality of the church? What are the marks of a church? Is this a biblical church?

Is that a biblical church? What do we base that off of? You may ask some wrong questions, like does the church have a particular set of ministries?

Does the church have a particular style of music? Does the church create separate environments for middle schoolers and high schoolers? I think that was lost on most of you and I'm glad that it's to your benefit if that reference is lost on you.

Does it matter how I dress or what kind of hairstyle I have? It's my hope this morning, at least in part, to answer those questions for you.

But how do you tackle such a task? What is the church? What are the marks? What are the signs of a biblical church? Many pastors will speak of a vision for what any particular church should look like.

[10 : 58] But I don't believe that my innovation is of any value to you. None whatsoever. If I am to love you as an under-shepherd of our Lord Jesus Christ, who's the head of the church, he's given us a prescription for the church.

He has said what the church should look like and what it should be about. And the only way I can do it is to draw you out of the popular culture to ancient truths.

To bring you back to the Scripture. Beloved, I have nothing to offer you apart from the Word of God. I will tell you that there are many men in our culture who are phenomenal communicators.

Boy, they can wrap you up and take you in and say very little, but capture your attention. If I attempted to do that, if I tried to come up here and to preach each Sunday without humbling myself under the Word of God, recognizing it as the absolute authority, within a month I would run out of anecdotes and personal stories from my lives and metaphors.

I would just have to start rehashing them. You could say it's the second Sunday of the month.

Nathan's probably going to tell such and such story. I don't have anything to offer you apart from the Scripture.

[12 : 25] There's a fairly lost doctrine about the Scripture, which is the sufficiency of Scripture. The sufficiency. Defined by Wayne Grudem in his work entitled Systematic Theology, the sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history.

So, as the Scripture was being written, it contained within it everything that God intended His people to have for that stage in redemptive history. We call that progressive revelation.

And that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.

It's a closed canon. It now contains everything that we need for these tasks. The Scripture contains all that we need to know and to place believing faith in the personal work of Jesus Christ and to follow Him perfectly.

2 Timothy 3, 16 and 17. I hope you're familiar with this passage. It says, all Scripture is breathed out by God.

[13 : 44] The Scripture says in many places that God by His Spirit inspired the Word, that He spoke into men who pinned what He said. This is the only place that it's said differently, and it's speaking of another place in that process.

It was inspired, but it was also expired by God. And that is to say that He is the very source. All Scripture is breathed out by God.

It's His book. He authored it. And it's profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. It's profitable.

It's good for this, for doing these varying activities that bring about righteousness. And the result of that, in verse 17, is that the man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work.

Not some good work. Not a sampling of the good work that we're meant to do as followers of Jesus Christ, but that we would be equipped for every good work.

[14 : 44] The Scriptures are sufficient for this. We don't need to look beyond the Scripture for that. The way we define and conduct ourselves as a church is included in this.

Every good work. It's included in that. Necessarily. It must be. If we believe in the sufficientness of Scripture, it must be. Now, I'm not saying that we don't read other books. I'm going to quote from a book I've been reading just this week again to you.

I've got a library full of books, but they're only of any value if they speak of the Scripture. If they help us expound and understand the Scripture. The saints of old called the sufficiency of Scripture as it played out in the life of the local church.

They called this the regulative principle. The regulative principle of the regulative principle. John Calvin said this, God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word. The Second London Baptist Confession, 1689, a really great Baptist confession. A lot of churches like ours with the same soteriological persuasion use the Second London Baptist Confession.

[15 : 55] It says this, the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by Himself and so limited by His own revealed will that He may not be worshipped according to the imagination and devices of men nor the suggestions of Satan under any visible representations or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures.

Sufficiency of Scripture. A good gauge for us as a church as we carefully and prayerfully consider what the Scriptures teach us about how to conduct ourselves as a church is to ask the question, does our church have a model of ministry that could exist in any place in the world at any time in history?

Do we do anything that couldn't be duplicated in any place in the world at any time in history? Does our church have a model of ministry that could exist in any place in the world at any time in history? This means that a follower of Christ from Iran should be able to come fellowship with an American congregation this morning and not find him or herself out of place.

Fly in Sunday morning. Hit the first place that they can find and not feel entirely out of place amongst those people. This means that a first century follower of Christ should be able to come fellowship with an American congregation this morning and not find him or herself out of place.

[17 : 35] Now I'm not suggesting that all churches should look exactly the same. We're given banks on the river, we're given some things in the Scripture that are very, very, very clear and that's going to express itself in different ways.

For example, Wes leads music for us and I don't know, he's a little folk rocky. That's why we do music in the way we do music. Not because we've tailored it in a certain way or because God has prescribed it but we do sing God-focused, Christocentric songs because the Scripture does prescribe that.

We don't sing songs about us and songs that are man-centered because the Scripture has us avoid that type of singing but the style is inconsequential.

It may look different and different places so somebody may come from Iran or from the first century and come and sit and say, I've never heard this song. This is an entirely new song to me but it's very similar to the types of song I may sing in my church at home, country, or time.

And not suggesting that we must meet in a straw and mud building and gather under the cover of darkness. Someone from Iran would probably say, it makes sense that you meet at 1030 because you can.

[18 : 51] We meet at 3 a.m. because we can't meet at 1030. I would hope, I think they would though, walk into many of our churches in America, these two, this time traveler and this person from Iran, and they would say, why did they build all of this?

Why are there so many spaces being so unused? Why are there fish tanks in here? How in the world did they get a first century Jewish village inside this building?

What is the guy on the stage even talking about? Why has he taken his copy of God's Word and cast it carelessly onto a side table and walked away from it?

Would they find a people who love the Lord Jesus Christ in the same way that they do and are about the work of pursuing his ways and his means?

Would they think that we worship Jesus or ourselves? Our entertainment, our preferences, our whims?

[20 : 05] At best, in many places this morning, the right God is being worshipped, but he's being worshipped wrongly out of ignorance, out of an unbiblically saturated ignorance.

At worst, many people this morning are worshipping a God of their own making, worshipping themselves. Beloved, I will not have you be ignorant this morning.

The sufficiency of Scripture also means that a follower of Christ from Iran should be able to come to fellowship with our congregation this morning and not find him or herself out of place.

This should feel normative to them. It means that a first century follower of Christ can time travel and come fellowship with our congregation this morning and not find him or herself out of place, but rejoice that God is doing a work amongst his church in America.

So our text today, Acts chapter 2, beginning in verse 41. Psalm. Beloved, this is God's word to us.

[21 : 22] It was written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it this morning in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. So those who received his word, Peter's word, were baptized.

baptized. And there were added that day about three thousand souls. 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 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 favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. So, what is the church?

[22 : 30] What is the church? I've defined it for you this morning simply this way. And there's more complex answers to this. Simply the community of regenerate followers of Jesus Christ in all places for all time.

So, everyone who will ever place believing faith in Jesus Christ is the church, capital C, the global church. Certainly, that has local expressions of church. again, regenerate followers of Jesus Christ. Here we find both the global and local expression at the same time. It's the only time in history this will happen.

The church will soon be scattered as we read Luke's account in Acts. But right now, it's both global and local expressions. The church, whether we are speaking globally or locally, whether for all time or today, is made of true followers of Jesus Christ.

Not merely people who profess to believe in Jesus Christ. While they may fellowship with a church, they may be tears among wheat.

[23 : 43] But people who are actually regenerate, who have been given the regenerating work of the Spirit of God in their life. Regenerate followers of Jesus Christ. It's the gathering of those people, the ekklesia, which is a really simple word in the Greek.

It just means gathering. In Greek, it could have been used of any other type of gathering as well. Just a gathering of those who believe in Jesus Christ.

It's not a gathering to events. It's people gathered around the event of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and now His working in the world.

That is what the church is. Verse 41. So those who received His word were baptized. And there were out of that day about 3,000 souls. What word did they receive?

If you back up to verse 38, you see that Peter says, Repent, turn from your sin, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

[24 : 46] And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Repent and believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the word that they received. And this was the way that they were to, verse 40, save themselves from this crooked generation.

They responded in faith to the gospel preaching of Peter because they had the gift of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration precedes faith. It's given to us as a gift so that we cannot boast.

Right? They had this regenerating work that happened in them and they believed in the person and work of Jesus Christ. These are regenerate people who are about this activity of the early church. So how do we recognize the church? The church is in one way of answering it. How do we recognize it? What are some of the indicators, the normative activity and the quality, the marks of the church?

And there's three we can find here together in the text. Number one, the Spirit-filled church's devotion. The Spirit-filled church's devotion.

[25 : 57] In verse 42, and they devoted themselves to a number of things. Four things. And they devoted themselves.

They collectively. Not some devoted themselves to. Some decided they were going to be really sold out for Jesus. And some decided they were not.

They were just going to be nominal Christians. Fire insurance policy in the back pocket. I'm going to ride this out. They, collectively, were all devoted.

If you are regenerate, you are part of the church, and you are to be devoted to these following things. It's a commitment, a firm commitment, and you each have a part to play and are each responsible for your part.

To be devoted speaks of constancy, diligence, firm commitment. It means that it takes work.

[26 : 59] It means that to be devoted to the things we're going to talk about here momentarily takes work. You have to apply yourself to these things. And, beloved, while we're talking about the church broadly today, the church is made of people, primarily, and you're one of those people, I hope and pray.

So it means that you're to work and to be devoted. You must be disciplined individually so that we can be disciplined corporately.

We can together be devoted to these things. So what are they devoted to? They're devoted, number one, to the apostles' teaching.

To the apostles' teaching. So in this day, this early church day, the apostles are there and they're beginning to expound to them the Old Testament Scriptures as Peter's already done in chapter 2. They're explaining all of the things that they need to know about Christ. They're going to go on later, these apostles, to pin letters to the churches. These letters are canonized into our Scripture today. [28 : 01] So we can understand this for us as a devotion to the truth, the truth found in the 66 canonized books of the Bible. Devotion to the truth is foundational for the definition and health of the church.

Any people, you're going to like this one, it's bold, any group of people claiming to be a church that are not devoted to the truth of Scripture is no church at all.

And any church that doesn't continue in that devotion to the truth of Scripture will very quickly become anemic and die. Beloved, this is the problem with so many of our churches today.

It seems that you either have churches that are fizzling out because they've traded the truth of God for the traditions of men. They're doing things some way because it's always the way that they've done it and there's no foundation for it in the Scripture itself.

Or they're innovating themselves to a place of cool and attracting a crowd. Both are damaging. They were devoted to the apostles' teaching.

[29 : 06] They're also devoted to the fellowship. And there is so much to be contained in here. We have a schedule for the book of Acts. I was tempted just to rewrite it all this week and park on this for the next couple of months.

They're devoted to the fellowship, the koinonia in Greek, which is not merely a potluck meal after a service. But it can include a potluck meal after the service.

Word carries the idea of it with partnership or sharing, but specifically in the things of life. In the comings and the goings of life, they were in partnership with one another.

The details of what koinonia looks like for a Bible-believing, Bible-defined church are expressed in all of the one another's in the Bible.

And there are too many for me to give them to you this morning, but just a few. John 15, 12. Jesus says, this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Again, Romans 12, 10.

[30 : 14] Paul, love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Romans 6, 16. Paul says, greet one another with a holy kiss.

And that was a practice of showing someone that they're a part of your family. You're part of our family. We are a faith family together. Galatians 6, 2. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Their devotion to the fellowship included discipleship. It included counseling. It included sharing meals together. It included helping each other with yard work.

It included all of these types of things that Christians are meant to be drawn into together as the people of God. Expansive meaning the fellowship.

They were also devoted to the breaking of bread. And I think, some will say this is referring to meals taken together. I'd like to put meals in the fellowship.

[31 : 13] I think that specifically, Luke, is referring to them practicing the ordinances. This is them practicing the Lord's supper together as He had commanded them to do.

I broaden that to talk about the ordinances because we saw in verse 41 that they were baptized. They didn't need to be as this early group of people continually devoted to baptism because they had already been baptized.

But they go on to now be devoted to this continuing practice of breaking bread with one another. Practicing the Lord's supper. Remembering together what Christ had done on their behalf.

What He was doing and what He had promised to do. They're celebrating that collectively together. They were remembering together that their fellowship was a divine reality.

It was something that was accomplished by the personal work of Jesus Christ. This is the continuation of His ministry on earth.

[32 : 13] Do you think about the church in that way? Do you merely attend a church? Or are you in fellowship with a group of believers because of what Christ has done on your behalf?

We have, if we're in the faith, the greatest uniting commonality between us. We could come from all various different backgrounds. We have Christ.

Christ. We have community and fellowship together. And the Lord's supper is meant to remind us of that. I'll read to you from a little book by a man named Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

If you don't know who he is, please learn who he is. You'll be encouraged by him. A little book called Life Together. He says, I am a brother to another person through what Jesus Christ did for me and to me.

The other person has become a brother to me through what Jesus Christ did for him. This fact that we are brethren only through Jesus Christ is of immeasurable significance.

[33 : 21] He pulls out some significance for us. He says, first, that Christian brotherhood is not an ideal but a divine reality. It exists already because of what Christ has accomplished.

Second, that Christian brotherhood is a spiritual and not a psychic reality. By that he means it's something that exists in spiritual places and not necessarily caught up in the way we think or feel about it at any given time.

He goes on to explain this and he talks about our feelings and the things that we want to get from Christian community and he calls those wish dreams. So when you hear a wish dream that's what I'm talking about.

He says, every human wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive.

He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.

[34 : 27] Beloved, do you know people like this? I think a lot of you college students may. A person who's always looking for the perfect church make up of a certain set of somethings that make them feel a certain something to know that they've finally arrived at the place or those people who will come and commit and only stay for a while and then they'll go someplace else and commit and stay for a while and they'll go someplace else and they give so many very many very reasons why and fail to recognize that the common denominator in all of that is them.

That's some weird ideal set up in their mind for what church must be and they fail to recognize that it exists because of Christ and we're doing that together when we take the Lord's Supper every Sunday.

You may not have known that. You are. They're also devoted to the prayers. Now the NASB which is the other translation I enjoy and appreciate in equal measure to the ESV which I typically preach from doesn't include the article V.

It just says prayer. A little interesting when you begin to look around and look at the original language that the article's not there in the original language either. I think a button just made that happen.

That's weird. I think that ESV rendered it this way because of the context of them collectively being devoted to understanding that it was likely referring to corporate prayer.

[35 : 55] So this doesn't diminish the need for personal prayer but here we see them together devoted together to the prayers. So times of corporate prayer I believe.

The vitality of the church depends on this. Acts 3.1 we see that Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer. So it seemed to be a practice in this day that the church was doing that and still participating in those Jewish times of prayer that were practiced in that day.

Do you recognize prayer is necessary? Do you get that the power of God is necessary for the work of the church? Have we outgrown our need of these things, these devotions?

Have we innovated beyond the necessity of the basics Christian living? In some places it seems to be the case. Some churches seem to say we don't need the Bible.

We have multimedia presentations and funny quips, movie scenes, skits. We don't need fellowship because we're just all too busy and besides we have social media groups.

[37 : 12] We don't need to empty ourselves of our individuality for the sake of service to the whole. We have so many varied ministries that I can find one that meets my needs and my conveniences.

We don't need prayer. We have a website and a kiosk sign and a window sticker. Some churches these days seem to be what Todd Friel calls silly factories because he's unwilling to call them churches.

Let it not be so among us. Let us be a church devoted to the scripture, to partnering in Christian living together, to gathering regularly in worshiping God in observance of the Lord's Supper, and to praying individually and corporately.

Their spirit-filled devotion, secondly, produced spirit-filled character. Their spirit-filled devotion produced spirit-filled Spirit-filled character.

And I'm going to start speeding up for you. Spirit-filled church's character, point number two, verses 43 through the first part of 47.

[38 : 31] Notice first that they were awe-inspired. The beginning of verse 43 says, an awe came upon every soul. They were amazed at the work of God and the people of God.

Verse 43 goes on and says, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles, which certainly fed the awe, but it wasn't the primary thing. Awe came upon every soul and miracles were taking place.

The apostles were doing miracles. So whether or not you think that this is a gift that's still active today or that it's not active today, you can see that as a church, we are meant to be enthralled by the work of God in the people of God.

If you have witnessed or been part of and believe that possibly miracles do still happen in these evidencing kind of ways, we have to recognize that the greatest miracle that happens ever is that dead hearts are made alive.

People who were once enemies of God have now been made His friends and this was happening on the regular in their day. They were awe-inspired. They were motivated by the goodness of God to them in Christ and what He was doing in the church.

[39 : 45] They were generous. They were generous. It was 44-46. They were together. They had all things in common.

They were selling possessions and belongings and distributing proceeds to all as any had need. Day by day, they were together, attending temple together. Before the Jews prohibited them from doing so, and they're breaking bread in their homes, Lord's Supper, and they're receiving their food. We live in an interesting political climate right now where many socialist arguments are being made. This is not an argument for that. It's not a government reigning over them in this.

This is a compulsion that's being brought about by the Spirit of God in their hearts. So, beloved, I'm not absolving you from caring about other people. What I'm saying is you need to press it up.

We need to be more generous as the people of God. I'd just rather do so personally to my neighbor, not through a program. They were generous. This is being generated in them by the Spirit of God.

[40 : 52] They were joyful. Last part of verse 46, they're doing all this with glad and with generous hearts. First part of 47, they were praising God.

They were joyful. They were filled with joy. They were glad, generous. NASB again renders that they were sincere. They had sincerity of heart, which is to say simplicity of heart.

They weren't divided. They weren't pulled in multiple directions. They were glad and joyful and focused on the Lord, praising God, offering up praise to His name for all that He was doing in their midst.

So that was second. The Spirit-filled church's character. And lastly, and thirdly, the Spirit-filled church's effect. These are all things that we should be able to observe in the church of God.

And beloved, these are indicators. These are litmus tests. These are barometers to us. These things exist in the life of our congregation. If not, we need to be really looking at why.

[41 : 56] Why do they not exist? Are we not regenerate? Are we not devoted? Are we not Spirit-filled? These are the things that are happening as a result of this. The last part of verse 47, you'll see that they were attractive.

They were having favor with all the people. And this is going to come and go. We're going to get just a couple chapters later in the book of Acts, and a great deal of persecution is going to come to the church. They're not going to be quite so favorable any longer.

together. But the thing that we need to learn from this is whether or not people hate the message that we preach, they ought to consider the world better for us being here. Your boss should appreciate the fact that you work for him or her.

Your professors should feel that way. I had a lot of professors that did not agree I was a sociology major with my world view at all. I hope that they all appreciated the work I did in their classes and the way I made my case.

They were attractive. People were drawn who were gods to the church of God. And they were multiplied. And they were multiplied. And the Lord added to their number, day by day, those who were being saved.

[43 : 16] Now, church, I have made the argument before that we could possibly live in a time like Jeremiah lived in, labored his whole life as a prophet of God, saw we think maybe possibly a convert, one person who turned from the sin of Israel and back to God.

I think that when I've done that, I've used it as a cop out ultimately. Oh, we're doing the work of God, we're doing the work of God, we're doing the work of God. God just isn't blessing it yet. We're persevering in faithfulness. We need to be doing this thing. I think we need to really to consider whether or not we're doing the work of God if we're not seeing people added to our number.

And we as a church have had the benefit, the joy of receiving so many college students across the years. Hear me, college students, we're really thankful that you're here. Having people who have come out of churches that are entirely unbiblical and see that at least in some ways we're getting it a little more right.

I said that with a great deal of humility, we're attempting, we're pressing at being a biblical church together and I'm so thankful for you who have transitioned over and are helping us build together a church for the glory of God.

[44 : 34] This is good. This is a good thing. We don't want to stop doing that. We don't want to stop being a place where college students can come up and have a church up here as they begin to reestablish a different home for their time in college.

college. We don't want to stop taking in people who have been wronged by unbiblical models of church and serving them and loving on them and growing them in the truth.

We don't want to stop doing that. I think we're really missing the point if we're not growing through conversion. And that troubles me. And I think as a church, it's easy for us to be excited each year because we get a little bit bigger.

because there's another recruit of college freshmen that come around and they come here and it feels like stuff's happening. Things are happening. Things are happening. I want to hear, Sunday morning I want you to come up to me and don't ask me where the paper towels are stored and say, guess what?

I've been preaching the gospel to my roommate and he came to faith in Christ. I think he'll be here next Sunday. I couldn't get him here today. Or here he is. And our community outreach groups as we're being accountable to one another and we're trying to press at each other to be sharing our faith constantly, that people are converted.

[45 : 48] We're preaching the gospel to them. It could be that we're not preaching the gospel. It could be that we're preaching some version of the gospel. We're preaching the gospel to them and they're converting to faith in Jesus Christ and they're beginning to come around and we're adding in that way.

We can praise God for his regenerative work in the lives of his church. They were multiplied. They were multiplied.

So the local church is a community of regenerate followers of Jesus Christ who are devoted to the scripture, to living together on mission, to celebrating our oneness in the Lord, and to prayer. And it is characterized by its worship of God, its generosity, and its joy, which makes it, by God's work, attractive, and growing.

Has this been your understanding of the church? Has your understanding of church been defined by the popular church culture or by the truth of God? Do you recognize that you have an important role to play in the life of a biblical church?

[47 : 02] church? In what ways have you failed at this? How much do you repent of those failures? In closing, I'll read to you a David Platt quote.

It's on the front of your bulletin if you'd like to see it. You and I can choose to continue with business as usual in the Christian life and in the church as a whole, enjoying success based on the standards defined by the culture around us.

Or, we could take an honest look at the Jesus of the Bible and dare to ask what the consequences might be if we really believed Him and really obeyed Him.

Let's pray together.