

“Be The Church - The Church As A Movement”

Acts 1:1 – 8

Better Together #3

January 19 - 20, 2019

INTRODUCTION

I'm not sure what images come to mind when you hear the word “church,” but it's probably a good ways off from how they understood it in the first century.

- **We have tried to make your time more comfortable**
- **Sharing The Gospel-Download our app and it will tell you all about Jesus**
- **Giving is important**
- **The church at its inception was, essentially, a movement... a movement built around conviction that Jesus had died as the only Savior for sinners and that he had risen from the dead proving he was who he said he was; that he was the rightful Lord of the earth and all people everywhere were now commanded to repent and invited to come home to him.**
- **In the Greek NT, the word translated “church” is “ekklesia.” The word in Greek, it means literally, “an assembly,” or “a gathering” of people around an idea. In fact, if you break the word ek-klessia down, it comes from “ek” means “out of” and “kaleo” means “called out.” So, think of an ekklesia as an assembly of people called out around an idea.**

But over the years, a terrible thing happened. People began to think of church as a place that you went to for religious services.

- **Our English word “church” comes not from the Greek ekklesia but from the German word kirche, which meant “a sacred place where you gather for religious purposes.”**

That shift in thinking changed the fundamental way people related to the church. Throughout the Dark and Middle Ages people went to church; it was place you attended or an event you sat through, rather than as a movement you were part of. And so, the church became an institution that essentially provided services for people and was controlled by powerful people who used it to serve their own interests.

But then something awesome happened. God raised up a group of people called the Reformers. One of the main ones for the English-speaking world was **William Tyndale**. **Christianity was essentially a movement.** If people were going to be devoted to the movement they had to understand the message, and so his life's work was to produce the first translation of the Bible into common English.

- **And every time he came to this word ekklesia he translated it “congregation” instead of church, because he was trying to emphasize that the church was not a place you went to, but a movement you belonged to. That infuriated church leaders because it undercut their authority. Eventually Tyndale was tried as a heretic, hanged and burned at the stake.**

The **danger of the church in every age is to cease being a movement** and become instead a ministry that provides service to people, or, even worse, a place people simply attend. Movements move. And if you're part of the movement, you're moving.

- **That's the question for us this weekend: Are we, as a church, just doing ministry, running an institution—or are we part of a movement? For you: is the church a place you attend, or is it a movement you are personally part of?**

BIBLE STUDY:

- ***So, when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Acts 1:6-11***

This has got to be one of the strangest scenes, ever, doesn't it? He gives them the largest assignment you could ever imagine... and then, with hardly any explanation, or plan of action, he leaves. This is where it all began. 2000 years later, here we are—with more Christians on the planet than any other religious group, all stemming from a group of 12 fishermen, and carpenters, and tax collectors. How did that happen? **I think there are a few questions we need to ask...**

- **The Message Captured Their Hearts and Minds-Has it captured yours?** Their conviction was that Jesus had died as a substitute for sinners. He wasn't another prophet with another religious message; he was God himself, on a rescue operation to save us. We crucified him, because we are a rebellious, traitor race of people, who would rather run our own lives that submit to God our Creator—but in the universe's greatest irony, our murder of him, his sacrificial death, was the payment God accepted for our sins if we would acknowledge that and receive it.

They believed that Jesus had risen from the dead, and they believed that (some of them) against their wills (they didn't have any view of a Messiah who would die in weakness and be resurrected)...but they believed it because they'd seen it with their own eyes. This proved to them beyond any doubt that he was who said he was.

- **The Apostles understood that if this were true, that this was the greatest act of grace ever imagined: God, the Creator, dying for his rebellious children.**

And...it was the most important message ever given, because it was our only hope of salvation. They had also seen in Jesus' death a God so beautiful and glorious that he was worth giving away their whole lives for— a God whose glory deserved (they believed) to be spread among all peoples of the earth.

Here's my second question: **Do you believe this testimony?** Has it captured you until you can't shut up about it, are willing to go anywhere with it, and to give up anything for it? If not, you're not part of the movement. Movements move. Are you moving with this message? And if you have been captured by this message, you probably don't need a vision weekend to get you off of your rear end and into the game. There is no such thing as someone who really believes the gospel and sits on the sidelines.

Here's the third question... **The Apostles Yielded Themselves to the Leadership of the Spirit- Have You?** Again, this had to be the strangest scene in the NT. After laying on them the Great Commission, he leaves. Never had a more important assignment been given to a less qualified group of people. But here's the clue. Go back to vs. 1:

- **In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, Acts 1:1**

"Began" implies continuation. It's not that in the Gospel of Luke Jesus worked, and now in Acts the church works; but Jesus worked in his fleshly body in Luke and now through his body, the church in Acts. He has invited the church not to do it for him, but to join him as he does it through them.

In Acts 1:8 he tells them wait for the Holy Spirit. Some of the Apostles were type-A, and I'm sure they were like, "Wait?" People are dying! We've got to get organized. That's not how the church moved in Acts. In every chapter of Acts, you'll get this sense that the Church is simply following the Spirit. He's the real mover. He's working in people over here. They simply yielded themselves to him!

Here is the last question... **Have you yielded yourself to him?** The book of Acts has no real ending. Paul has gone to Rome to preach the gospel, but he ends up in prison... is he going to win converts there? And then it just cuts off. Cliff-hanger. Why does he end the book this way? The movement had just begun. The Spirit of God is moving you into people's lives to complete this Great Commission.

I want you to read Jesus promise in verse 8 as a direct statement to you: ***But you (Insert Your Name) will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses. Acts 1:8***

Here's the question that remains: Do you really want to bring other people to Jesus? Charles Spurgeon when confronted with that question said...

- ***"If Jesus is precious to you, you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself; you will be whispering it into your child's ear; you will be telling it to your husband; you will be earnestly imparting it to your friend; without the charms of eloquence you will be more than eloquent; your heart will speak, and your eyes will flash as you talk of his sweet love."* Charles Spurgeon**
- **"Every Christian here is either a missionary or an impostor. In the midst of a generation screaming for answers, Christians are stuttering." Howard Hendricks**

It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about him...If you really know Christ, you are like one that has found honey; you will call others to taste of its sweetness; you are like the beggar who has discovered an endless supply of food: you must go tell the hungry crowd that you have found Jesus, and you are anxious that they should find him too.

Movements move. If you're not moving, have you really believed the message? These are the two core principles that started the movement:

- **1. Radical, deep-seated belief in the message;**
- **2. Yielding themselves to the Spirit who moved them.**

You are the church. Wherever you are-the church is there. Your location matters. Every week, somebody comes in here and sits by the location of where Christ is, the church of Jesus Christ right by you. I hear stories all the time about people whose lives weren't changed with the amazing reminder of who God is through song or because of anything I or anybody else might have said.

Their life was changed because they sat in a location out there next to one of God's people, his church, who cared for them, loved them, and said, "Hey, how can I serve you? We are the church. When you're dead, a little part of what God intends to live dies. We have to die to ourselves and surrender our lives to the one who gave it all for us.

There is an article I recently read that had an interesting thought. Here is what the article said...

- **"US hymnal publishers from around the nation confirmed Monday the release of new, updated hymnals...The new version of the tune, entitled 'I Surrender Some,' was written to refresh outdated language and theology in the 1896 song...Singing words like 'All to Jesus I surrender' just isn't in line with modern Christianity...Now, Christians can sincerely belt out lines like, 'Some to Jesus I surrender, some to him I conditionally give' without worrying if their hearts really line up with the lyrics."**

Crazy, isn't it? We look at that and laugh but let me ask you a question. The early church had about 120 people in the upper room before it began to grow through the preaching of the Word and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Folks who had come to Christ through his Spirit when Jesus was here were about to be used by the Spirit to bring many others to Christ.

- **Imagine if we were the only church God had so far in the world. Imagine if we were the only one that was going to equip the saints, the only one that was going to evangelize, the only means that right now God in his sovereignty allowed the Spirit of God to dwell. This is the only location. How would the future of the church look?"**

We want to empower and release you to follow the Spirit. The greatest ministry in our church happens outside these walls, by you. Here is an example of what that looks like.

William Temple said...**the church is the only cooperative society in the world that exists for the benefit of its non-members.**

Let's Go Church and Be who God has called us to be.