

Programs, Polity, and People

(Acts 2:47)

Yearly Theme: “Joy is...”

Series Title: “Church & Culture”

November 1st, 2020

Something to think about:

In his book entitled, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements*, author, Alan Hirsch writes, “In so many churches the mission of the church has actually become the maintenance of the institution.”¹

All too often the American Church finds itself in maintenance mode: maintaining buildings, budgets, banquets, carry-ins, nursery schedules, youth events, women’s events, men’s events, VBS, and the like. But, when this becomes the dominant factor for the Church’s existence, the mission is lost.

So, what is the mission of the Church? Has it changed in 2000 years? The mission of the Church is directly tied to Jesus’ mission on this earth. The Body of Christ is the extension of Christ to the world. And, as the Holy Spirit empowers the Body of Christ, the Church finds its fulfillment in making disciples of Christ, and this is done *organically* rather than *programmatically*.

What has the church in America missed, or lost, that the early Church had to make it add daily those who are being saved? Instead, the church in America is in decline. Have we focused on the wrong things? Is God doing something different? Has His mission changed, or have we? How can we get back to living the mission that God called us to through Jesus Christ? Let’s start by taking a look at our key passage of Scripture today...

Acts 2:42-47 (NLT),

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Do you notice something significant about verse 47? Who added to the Church’s fellowship daily those who were being saved? How did He do this? What are we missing in the Church in our culture today?

Here’s the key point...

Key Point: “More than programs or polity, Jesus called us to be lovers of God and of people.”

In order to become lovers of God and people, we have to ask ourselves a few questions to see if we’re on the right track. First, we need to ask...

1. What is the mission of the Church?

The mission of the Church is to Love God, love others, and make disciples (Mark 12:30-31; Matthew 28:19-20).

Second,...

2. What happens when the Church doesn’t accomplish its mission?

It dies. Sometimes it dies slowly, and sometimes quickly, depending on the resources it has. However, the bigger issue is that disciples are not made and people do not hear about the Good News of Christ that can save them from sin and death and bring them eternal life (Romans 10:13-17; John 3:16).

Third,...

3. Since the Church’s mission is to make disciples, what does a disciple look like?

They should look like Jesus. A disciple (or in Greek, a “mathetes”) was a person who reflected the image of their master/teacher. In essence, Jesus’ disciples are a reflection of Jesus. In order to understand what Jesus looked like one must read and understand the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).

Something to take home:

More than programs or polity, Jesus called us to be lovers of God and of people. Jesus said that the world would know that we are His disciples by our love for one another, not because of our buildings, or programs, or politics. Jesus died so that we might live, and the new, regenerative life He gives is meant to be given to others.

Our focus as the Church must find its way back to Christ and His mission. Our strength and power must come through the Holy Spirit. We must learn, once again, to wait upon the Lord so that our strength can be renewed. We must learn to live in such a way that our lives glorify God and become living sacrifices of His grace and mercy to the world around us. We must learn to love again the way He first loved us.

It’s not about lights, music, buildings, budgets, or programs. It never has been, nor will it ever be. It’s not about our entertainment or comfort. It’s always about God and His desires for us. His ways and thoughts are so much higher and beyond what we can ever imagine. It’s in the waiting that we learn to trust. It’s in the waiting that we learn to grow. It’s in the waiting that we learn to soar on wings like eagles, walk and not grow weary, run and not faint. It’s time for the American Church to *re-surrender* to the authority of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and begin to live on mission once again.

Key Point: “More than programs or polity, Jesus called us to be lovers of God and of people.”

¹ Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements* (Brazos: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2016),