

5-19-24 Pentecost Sunday

Sermon- THIS is the Day!

Scripture- Acts 2:1-21 CTW- Ps 103:1-11

Hymns- 225, 507, 298

Theme- This is the day where we need to remind ourselves that we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and we are to "forget not ALL His benefits..." Spirit filled life is what we are called to...nothing less!

I. What Does Being a Holy Spirit Church Mean?

A. Broadway Presbyterian Church in Upper Manhattan, New York. Their story was reported in the January 26, 2002, issue of World Magazine. That article said that in the early 1900's through the 1960's the Broadway church was a powerful witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with more than a thousand active members. But their number shrank to about 120.

Why? Well, over the years a subtle change crept in as their emphasis switched from presenting the Gospel to helping the homeless. They set up soup kitchens in the church building & began massive feeding programs for those in need.

Now, at first glance we would think that helping those in need is a very worthy & Christian thing to do, & it is! And they should be praised for doing so. But, at Broadway, prayers were never offered in the soup kitchens, nor was the name of Jesus ever mentioned - because the leaders were concerned that someone might resent it. So, they turned away from Christ's command to "... preach the gospel...".

And the result was that they discovered that the same people were coming through the food lines year after year with no improvement, no change for good, taking place in their lives. They were feeding their bodies, but ignoring, starving, their souls. And the church itself there was almost dead.

B. Southeastern Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky...a church that started with just 53 members in 1962. They met first in an Elementary School; then bought an old building & met in its basement. The Lord blessed & 5 years later they dedicated a new 550-seat Sanctuary.

With nearly 300 members now, they added an all-purpose building, & began another worship service. Then on Easter Sunday, 1976, for the very first time their attendance went over 1,000. By 1990 their attendance went over 10,000, & they voted to relocate once again. They moved into their new location in 1998 & are now one of the 3 largest churches in the U.S.

The main difference here is that this is truly a church that is continually witnessing for Christ Jesus! **Their motto is "all the Gospel, all the time."**

So today on Pentecost it is appropriate to ask the questions: "What is our church supposed to be? And what is our church supposed to do?"

C. First of all, we must realize that the Church was planned & created by God. Do you remember the question Jesus asked His disciples at Caesarea Philippi?

Matthew 16:15-18 – Jesus asked Peter this question: "But what about you? Who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven... and on this rock I will build **my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Did you hear that? – The Lord's Church! That was God's plan from the beginning of time – through Jesus Christ to build His church as "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a

people belonging to God..." (1 Peter 2:9)

II. The Beginning Of The Church

A. Ten days of waiting & praying pass by - & then it happens! Starting with the first verse of the 2nd Chapter of Acts, we read about the amazing events that brought about the beginning of the Lord's Church.

Acts 2:1-8 - "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven & filled the whole house where they were sitting.

"They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated & came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit & began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

During all this excitement, the apostle Peter spoke up & got the crowd's attention. "They are not drunk" And beginning with those words he preached to them the Gospel story of Jesus.

He shared with them the Gospel...his first sermon, first opportunity to get this thing called the church together, and he shared the Gospel! "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders & signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know."

B. They had no church buildings, no formal organization. And yet with little of what we have today, but heavily armed with prayer & the power of the Holy Spirit, they were able to change the world of their day...with the Gospel!

III. What Was The Nucleus Of The New Church?

Who were these men who made up the nucleus – the core group

- of the early church? Look at a few verses in **Matthew 28**.

As Jesus prepares to give them the great commission, **Matthew 28:16** tells us, "Then the 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go." Judas, the betrayer, was dead, & now there were 11.

So let's take a closer look at these 11 disciples, & as you look at them, realize that in a lot of ways they are very much like us.

A. First of all, they were just ordinary men - fishermen, a tax collector, men from the hill country of Galilee. There is no indication of anyone rich or influential or highly educated among them. They were just ordinary people.

Later on, there were some rich & influential followers. Saul of Tarsus would fall into that category. He had a great education. He was part of an influential family. And he was well respected among his people before he became a Christian. But we also need to remember that Saul had to be humbled before God could really use him.

So the first thing we notice is that the men who made up the nucleus of the first church were very ordinary. And that ought to be encouraging to us, because that is what most of us are, just ordinary people.

B. The Second thing we notice is that these men were imperfect. Listen as **Matthew 28:17** tells us, "When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted."

Don't you appreciate the honesty of Scripture? It never tries to gloss over imperfections. Here they were, meeting with Jesus after His resurrection. He stands before them, & even though they can see the nail prints in His hands & feet & the wound in His side, it says that some of them doubted.

They certainly weren't perfect! Take Simon the Zealot. Today he might be called a redneck. And how about Simon Peter? You never knew just what he would say next. James & John had problems with their egos, always wanting to be first. And then there was Thomas, the Doubter.

The men who made up the nucleus of the first church were far from perfect. And that ought to be encouraging to us because we're far from perfect too. Everybody in this room has problems. And we all have our areas of weakness.

C. But they had one characteristic which made all the difference. They loved Jesus with all their hearts & wanted to obey Him. Listen again to the last part of vs. 16. It says that they "went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go." They Obeyed!

So in analyzing these men, we discover that they were ordinary people with lots of imperfections, but they loved Jesus & desired to obey Him. They recognized Him as the Son of God who had risen alive from the grave. So whatever He commanded them to do, they sought to do it. They tried to put Him first in their lives.

That is what the church is. The church is made up of ordinary & imperfect people, who desire to make Jesus both Lord & Savior of their lives.

IV. The Mission Of The Church

A. The third thing we see is the mission of the church. Verse 19 begins with these words, "Now therefore go & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, & teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

ILL. In the 13th Century, Nicolo Polo, the father of Marco Polo, was visiting the court of the great Kublai Khan. Kublai Khan was the Emperor of All China & he had never seen any Europeans before. He was delighted to meet this visitor from Venice & was strongly impressed by the Christian character & faith that he saw in Nicolo.

In fact, he was so impressed that he sent a letter back with Nicolo to Rome urging that a number of Christian educators be sent to instruct his people in the teachings of Christ.

But this was still during what we call the "Dark Ages" in Europe, & the church leaders were too involved in the political upheavals of that day to give any serious attention to his request.

In the end, only 2 men were sent, & because the trip was so difficult, they lost heart & turned back without ever reaching China. So, because of the failure of the church of that day, Kublai Khan turned to Buddhism & that has been the predominant religion in that area ever since.

B. Remember, the mission of the church is to make disciples of "all nations." That's why we encourage you to give to support missionaries around the world. Our field is not just confined to Rutherford or central Pennsylvania.

We are to reach out to the whole world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, to make disciples of them, baptizing them in the name of the Father, & of the Son, & of the Holy Spirit.

IV. The Assurance Of The Church

A. The fourth thing we need to see here is the assurance, the promise that Jesus gives us. Listen to His words in Matthew 28:20, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

To the early Christians these were some of the most precious words Jesus ever spoke. Every time they gathered to worship they knew that at any moment soldiers might come & arrest them. They had seen many of their friends die. They had seen them tortured & heard their cries just because they were believers in Jesus.

So when Jesus said, "I am with you always," even in moments of persecution & death those were precious, precious words.

They are probably not that precious to most people today. But they might well become very precious to us in the future.

More & more we're seeing a widening of the gap between what the church is supposed to be, & what the world is, between the philosophies of the world & the philosophy of the church.

Already we are seeing the recognition of God being eradicated from our schools & public assemblies. Prayer, Bible reading, nativity scenes, Christmas stories, even the very mention of God are no longer welcome in most public gatherings.

We see the media turning against the church. And some are saying that committed Christians are a threat to our nation.

But despite all the problems, Jesus has promised, **"I'll always be with you. No matter what happens, I'll never leave you or forsake you."** And upon that promise our church will stand against all forces that may assault her!

Amen? Let us come to his table to celebrate His church!