

The Church that God Builds

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Preacher: Simon Lawrenson

[0:00] Good morning. Good morning, everyone. All right. Be like that. Yeah, thanks. Like, I know it's cold, but I would apologize for the weather, but it's not actually my fault, so I'm not going to.

I also want to apologize if there's any grammatical spelling mistakes in the book. And I can't really take any credit for the book, honestly. And I also want you to know I don't make any money from these books, right?

So while it's true to say that I wrote most of it, it went through an arduous editing process. So if there's any spelling or grammatical issues, it's actually the elder's fault.

And, you know, I write what I write. And, you know, if it's come back with an apostrophe in the wrong place, that's on Andy and Joseph and Chris. All right.

So these are just our gift to you. We hope, we hope the elders don't know this, but I'm going to tell you now anyway. We hope to have another book ready by mid-Christmas. Is that a time?

Mid-December.

[1:13] Ready for our next teaching series, which that teaching series is going to last a year. So this is like a test run to see if you can keep hold of a book. This is just seven weeks, so next time it will be a year.

Joseph's like, oh, I've got to edit that. He's out of here. So just watch out for that. And any feedback from these books will be gratefully received. Any feedback can go to the elders and not me.

So is that okay? So they are just, there's loads out of the back. I think we got 75. We have some left. So feel free to use them. Bring them every week. You're going to, you know, they're just great to write notes on.

And, you know, if nothing else, they make great fire starters. So shush now. All right, Laurie's just rebuked me in public, so let's crack on.

Let's pray. And then we're going to, we're going to open God's word. Father, thank you for this time, Lord. We just want to just commit this session to you, this morning to you, this service to you.

[2:23] But also like this, this whole series, Lord. We just want to be just open and available to you, Lord, to be used by you, to see this city changed for you, Lord.

To see our own lives changed for you, Lord. And we pray, Lord, that you, Lord, that there wouldn't just be, there wouldn't be any distractions, Lord. And, Lord, we've made this book in good faith.

And we pray, Lord, that it would just, you would just use it, Lord. It's yours to use, Lord. And we pray that as we open your word, your spirit would speak to us, Lord. And, Lord, your spirit would either, you know, convict us or encourage us, Lord.

You know where we are, Lord. You know what we need, Lord. And so we just commit ourselves again to you, Lord. And ask, Lord, that you would help us with these things, Lord. These things aren't easy for us to understand often.

And we just ask, Lord, you just, you'll just be the center of our attention today, Lord. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, so turn with me to Acts chapter 2.

[3:24] And then, like, that's going to be our focus this morning. But then we're actually going to start in Matthew chapter 16. And if you've read ahead, you'll know that. So we're going to start in Matthew chapter 16.

Then we're going to move to Acts chapter 1. And then we're going to move to Acts chapter 2. So keep your finger in all of those. They're not going to be on the screen.

I can't remember. Matthew 16. So they're not going to come up on the screen. We really, really want you to bring your Bibles. Like we've said before, this isn't a theater.

It is not a show. Like, we put the screen, the verses, the cross references up for you. Most of those are in the book. But we just, we want you to bring your Bibles.

We want you to know that, like, we're not making this stuff up. It's here. You be a good Berean. Check out these things. See if they're true. So bring your Bibles. While we love having you here, it's not kind of like a presentation where you can just follow along.

[4:27] Right? Does that make sense? So as you have now kind of figured out where Matthew 16 is, let me ask you a simple question. If a friend asked you tomorrow morning at work, where's your church?

What would you say? You don't have to answer out loud, just in your mind. How would you answer that question? Where's your church? Most of us will probably actually in here give a bit of a garbled answer.

Well, it's in the main hall, but not the main hall this time. We're in the sports hall. We don't know how long we're in the sports hall for. We're hoping to move out any time because there's heating over there. This mystical thing that warms everybody's hearts.

But I wonder how you would answer. Would you maybe give an address or a time? Like we meet at such and such a place, half past ten on a Sunday.

And that's a good answer. We want people to come. We want people to meet Jesus. But notice the way, what our answer gives away. In our heads, church is a place you go to, an event you attend.

[5:32] And it is. Like there are many, many, many good reasons why Sunday morning worship service exists.

From a theological point of view, from an ecclesiological point of view, and all of those ological other views, Sunday morning service is a really, it's rooted in history and theology.

It's also vital for your church, your Christian growth and witness. Vital. But a reality is also that for most people in this country, that's all that church is.

It's an address. It may be a time. Like it's a building you walk past. It's a spire on the skyline.

Somewhere you go for weddings, for funerals.

And if Nan's in charge, you go there for Christmas too. And increasingly, actually it's not even that, is it? Like in 2011, the 2011 census showed us that 60% of people in England and Wales described themselves as Christian.

[6:42] And 10 years later, by 2021, that was 46%. And one of the actual reasons we're seeing so much interest, and we talked about this a little bit last week, in the baptisms, right?

So 550 people baptized on Bridlington Beach last week or the weekend before. Why is there so much interest in that? Well, because it's out of the ordinary. Why were there 170 baptized down in Plymouth a month before?

Because it's out of the ordinary. And for the first time, actually, well, in 2021, for the first time, we have fewer than half of the UK population claiming to be Christian.

And actually, what is super interesting is of those people who say that they are Christian, only 13% of those actually attend church.

The number of people saying that they had no religion at all during those census jumped from about a quarter to over a third.

[7:47] Underneath those numbers is something important. For millions of our neighbors, church means an institution. And if we're honest, Britain has not been kind to institutions lately.

Like if we've watched trust drain out of our banks, right? Out of Parliament, the press and the church. And we only have our recent history in November 2024, when the Archbishop of Canterbury resigned after an independent review, found serious failings in the Church of England and how it responded to abuse.

So when your neighbor hears the word church, that is part of what they hear. And then there's us, the people inside.

We've been shaped by a culture that turns everything into a product. We rate drivers. We swipe through options.

And without meaning to, we bring the same instincts through the doors on a Sunday. In our minds, we're rating out of five how good the worship was.

[9:02] We're rating how or if the sermon ticked all the right boxes. Did I get anything out of it? Church becomes a service in both senses of the word.

It's something that happens at a set time and something that is provided for me. And so this morning, we're starting a new series on the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

And you can't understand what the Spirit came to do until you understand what Jesus promised he would do. And so we're going to look at three movements this morning in one story, spread over three chapters.

We're going to see a promise. It's come on the screen. We're going to see a promise in Matthew 16. Then we're going to see a pause in Acts chapter 1. And then we're going to see its fulfillment in Acts chapter 2.

So in Matthew 16, Jesus makes a promise to build something. And in Acts chapter 1, he tells his followers to wait. And then on the day of Pentecost, the builder arrives.

[10:17] And so here's where we're heading. And you can write this down. This won't be in your books, but you can write this down. At least I don't think it's in your books. You can write this down. And I think this is coming on the screen. We don't build the church of God.

God builds his church by his spirit on his son. And he builds it out of us. That's where we're heading. And we'll just leave that on the screen for a little while so that you guys can write that down.

And I think, look, this is both a huge relief for us, but it's also a huge challenge. It's a relief because the growth of the church doesn't depend on us. Okay?

It's also a challenge because the growth of the church depends on us. We talked about this a few weeks ago, didn't we? Like, it's not about you, but it's all about you. Like, the relief is that the growth of the church doesn't depend on us.

But the challenge is equal. It means none of us gets to watch from the sidelines. Let's look at the promise in Matthew 16. That Jesus owns the project.

[11:28] He is the one who is doing the building. And the context of the story is that Jesus has just taken his disciples about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee to a place called Caesarea Philippi.

And what I love about Jesus is he always picks his spots perfectly. If you don't know, Caesarea Philippi was a really pagan town.

It was known, actually, for its shrines. And one in particular shrine there was to the Greek god Pan. If you've ever seen Pan's Labyrinth, the film, you kind of get that same kind of imagery.

The Greek god Pan was all about the wild, all about shepherds and about nymphs. And this cave was considered the doorway or the gateway to the underworld.

There was also a white marble temple there created by King Herod to Caesar Augustus in worship of Caesar really, really early.

[12:31] And so it's that place that Jesus decides to take his disciples. And they are surrounded by every rival claim to power and worship.

And so there, Jesus asks them this question in verse 15. He says to them, who do you say that I am? I mean, can you imagine just kind of sitting around there?

You've got a kind of Pan's cave over there. You've got the temple over there. You've got some other shrines dotted around. And Jesus goes, who do you think I am? Who do you say that I am?

And Simon Peter replied, you are the Christ, the son of the living God. Not a dead God in a cave. Not a man pretending to be God in Rome. You are the living God, son, Messiah, king.

And then Jesus answered in verse 17 and said, Blessed are you, Simon, bar Jonah. So son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father who is in heaven.

[13:37] In other words, the church begins when with God opening people's eyes, not with human cleverness. I tell you again, he says in verse 18, Now look, there is a well-known word play here in this verse.

So Peter's name is Petros. It means stone. And the word for rock is Petra. So you have Petros and Petra. And Christians like throughout the ages have read this in different ways.

Like some say the rock is Peter himself. Others say it's Peter's confession. Others say that it's Jesus. And like to be fair, Peter clearly does have a unique foundational role in the building of the church.

Like we have to be fair. In a few weeks time, not now, but back then, he'll be the one preaching at Pentecost.

Right? The birth of the church. He's the one who stands up. But the rest of the New Testament won't actually let us build on a man. Right? Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, He says, No one can lay a foundation other than that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ.

[15:01] Peter himself, in one of his, well actually in his first epistle, he says, As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men, but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves, like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

And so Peter kind of seems to have understood that the rock was never really about Peter. It was about the one Peter confessed. Now look back at verse 18 and the four words that probably matter most in this verse.

Jesus says, I will build my church and the gate of hell shall not prevail against it. You might want to circle that word I and close by you might want to write not you.

Right? It's not you will build or even we will build together, but I will build. And then you might want to circle will build. That's a promise in the future tense.

And then you might want to circle and highlight and put neon signs around this one, my, because it's not Peter's church or the pastor's church or the elder's church.

[16:15] It's Jesus' church. And then finally, you want to write, you want to circle the word church. And you might want to then say, well, why have you asked me to circle the word church?

Because look, the word church is like, it's just pregnant with meaning. It's the Greek word ecclesia or ecclesia. And it's actually only used twice in all of the four gospels, both times in Matthew.

And it's really a fascinating word because it literally means to be called out. And in the ancient world, there were hundreds and, well, hundreds of thousands actually of Roman citizens spread all over the ancient world that had kind of left Rome and some of the major Roman cities and had gone to really colonize the ancient world and the towns and the cities and in England as well.

And they formed what's known as the ecclesia. This isn't a Christian word at all. It's not a Bible word, at least originally. Those people formed the ecclesia, the called out ones.

And as they gathered, they gathered to show the town that they were living or how to live, what it meant to live as a Roman.

[17:34] So you can imagine, you know, Romans had come in and they conquered England and they'd come down to Southampton and they found a whole bunch of red and white pagans and, you know, and they came in and, well, we need to show these people how to live like Romans, how to live civilized.

And they were known as the ecclesia. The Greek translation of the Old Testament uses the same family of words to describe Israel gathered before God as the ecclesia, as the called out of Egypt. Same idea. So when Jesus says, my ecclesia, he isn't talking about a building, he's talking about a people. A people called out by God from the world gathered around the king.

And then he adds this and I think this is, gives us so much hope. He says, that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

He says, I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Hades is the realm of the dead. Right? And the gates are this picture of, well, just keeping prisoners in.

[18:58] If you think of, if you think of it in that way, you won't go far wrong. The gates there are symbolic of power. They hold the power of the underworld to keep prisoners in the underworld, the realm of the dead, dead people.

And what Jesus is saying is that the church of God, his church, the called out one, and you can look around and you can go, oh, that's you. Because there's the people that we are here this morning. He is saying that the church of God, these called out ones, will go on the offensive against the powers of darkness. And there won't be a thing that Satan can do about it.

Now let that sink in. Jesus owns the project. He's the architect. He's the builder. He is the foundation. And he has guaranteed the outcome.

And the future of the church in Britain does not rest on clever marketing or whether Christianity is fashionable or whether there is a quiet or loud revival.

[20:06] It rests on the promise from Jesus, this promise. But here's the problem with that promise. When Jesus says, I will build, he was about to go to the cross.

And it's absolutely clear that he knew it. So the question is, how do you build a church after you've been executed? Which brings us to the pause.

Acts chapter 1. So, Acts chapter 1, Luke wrote both the Gospel of Luke and Acts.

They are two letters. And he opens Acts, Acts chapter 1, with this little phrase that's easy to miss where he writes, in the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and

teach.

So Luke's Gospel was what Jesus began to do. Do you notice that? The clear implication is that Acts is what Jesus then continued to do.

[21 : 20] And so, 40 days after Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus appears to his disciples and started speaking to them about the kingdom. And in verse 4, he says this, while they were staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, you heard from me.

Now, think of how strange that might have felt. Right? They've got the greatest news in history. Jesus has risen from the dead, conquered the grave, and Jesus says, don't go anywhere yet, keep it to yourselves.

Why? Well, simply because he knew that the church can't be built on enthusiasm. I love enthusiastic people. Sometimes they're a little bit annoying, if I'm honest, but enthusiastic people are good people.

We need enthusiastic people, especially for the gospel. But Jesus says, look, you can't build a church based on enthusiasm. It's not built by people who have a moving experience and then decide to start something.

It's built by the Spirit of God or it isn't built at all. And so then in verse 6, look at the question that is asked. So when they had come together, they asked, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

[22 : 39] Which is an absolute fair question if you know your Bible. They're thinking about the kingdom in kind of national and political terms. Jesus doesn't correct them. Notice that.

He doesn't say, you guys got your theology wrong. He doesn't correct them. Instead, what he does is he redirects them and in verse 8, which is the key verse, he says, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. The word for power there at the beginning of the verse is the Greek word *dunamis*.

If you've ever heard anyone tell you that the power is like dynamite and it blows up, that is so wrong theology. I don't even have time to even go into that. It's called an exegesical fallacy.

Dynamite didn't exist until like the 1900s and so how can it be in our text? Anyway, I feel myself going off on one. Jesus specifically says that it's the kind of power that enables people to live for Christ.

[23 : 48] That's what he says in that text. That's what he says in that verse. You're going to receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Why? To be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria to the end of the earth. Or if you like, it's the power that enables people to live like the ecclesia.

Right? The called out ones. Like I don't need to see a show of hands to see how many people need power to live like Christians. Like we need that, don't we?

So whether that is in Jerusalem, whether that is in Judea, Samaria, or to the ends of the earth, we all need that. And then in verse 9 he says this, or we read this, 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 still gazing into heaven, as they went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

Because that's where Jesus is. That's what should have been their response. Right? Because I went to Sunday school and they said, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and that's what I'm doing. But they're looking at Jesus going away and these two guys, whoever these two guys are, they show up and say, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

And this Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. And so, we live between Jesus being taken up and Jesus returning because that hasn't happened yet.

[25 : 15] So, what do they do while they wait? What do they do? What do we do in the time between Jesus going up and Jesus coming back? Verse 14, Three quick things here.

Number one, think about who's in this room. Not who's in this room now, although you might want to apply it to that. Think about who's in this room. They devoted themselves to one accord, praying together with women, Mary, mother of Jesus and his brothers.

In this group of people were rugged, uneducated fishermen, a highly educated, former collaborator with the occupying Roman government, a political right-wing radical who's opposed to the Roman government.

Can you imagine those two praying together? Women who'd followed Jesus from Galilee and supported his ministry, a man who publicly denied knowing Jesus when the pressure was on, a doubter who'd struggled to believe basic Christian theology about the resurrection, people who'd experienced profound personal transformation, and a middle-aged mother and her boys.

And they're all praying together. And that's what resurrection life does. It brings together people who really shouldn't belong together. Second, notice the phrase with one accord.

[27:00] It's a single Greek word. It just means with one mind or with one passion. That's what they had. Then thirdly, notice the word devoted. In Greek, it means to keep doing something.

So you've got about 120 people, verse 15 tells us, praying together day after day, not launching, not planning a launch, not designing a logo. They're praying. And here's the picture that we get at the end of chapter one.

We get a small, mixed praying group with a promise and a commission with no power. They have everything except the one thing that they can't produce.

And I think the conviction there is, when did we last wait on God like that? Our instinct often is to fix, to strategize, and to build.

And there is a place for all of that. There's a place for planning. Don't get me wrong. But a church that only plans and never waits will build something. Absolutely. And it might even be impressive, but it just won't be what Jesus promised.

[28:06] Now look at chapter two. And this is where we're going to spend most of our time, having now spent most of our time. So Acts chapter two.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, this is verse one, they were all together in one place. So Pentecost is one of the great pilgrim feasts of Israel, also known as the Feast of Weeks.

You'll find it in Leviticus 23 if you want to do some background reading. It comes 50 days after Passover. which is where its name comes from and it's a harvest festival.

The first fruits of the wheat harvest there were offered to God. And so Jerusalem is actually packed with Jewish pilgrims at this time from all over the known world. And I want you to see the timing because Jesus dies at Passover as the Lamb of God and 50 days later at the Feast of Firstfruits God begins the great harvest.

Okay, that shouldn't be lost on us. And suddenly, verse 2, they came from heaven and we're going to see three signs that come together. Okay, so they came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

[29:17] And so the first thing that happened was that there was the sound of wind. And in both Hebrew and Greek the word for wind or breath or spirit are really closely related and often they're used simultaneously or, you know, they're interspersed.

So remember in Genesis chapter 2 God breathed into Adam. Right? In fact, in Genesis chapter 1 it was God's spirit that was hovering over the face of the waters and then God spoke.

He spoke his breath. The breath of God raised the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37. Right? And so the first thing that happened was that there was a sound like a mighty rushing wind.

So it doesn't say that it was a mighty rushing wind. It just sounded like it. And then the second thing is in verse 3 was divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

And so fire in Scripture signals the presence of God. The burning bush Sinai glory over the tabernacle. And here's what's astonishing.

[30:34] Like in the Old Testament the fire of God's presence rested on a building. The tabernacle and then the temple. But at Pentecost it rests on people.

Not just on the apostles it rested on each of them. Like notice nobody in that room is left out. nobody was a spectator. And this is the moment the dwelling place of God moves from a building made of stone to a people made of flesh.

Right? Paul will later say outright in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 he says do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you. And a moment of clarification is that when Paul says that he's not speaking to you and he's not speaking to me he's speaking to us.

So he's not like oh we've all seen those memes you know I have a temple of my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Theologically there's some room for that but Paul's not saying that he's saying you

lot are right together.

So whenever we say I'm going to church actually what we mean to say is that we are going to a gathered we are gathering as a people where God dwells.

[32:03] Right? When we gather this morning who else is here? God is here. The Holy Spirit is here. And then the third thing verse 4 they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And the rest of the story in chapter 2 is that there is now a crowd that started to gather outside of the room and in verse 5 we see that there was dwelling in Jerusalem Jews devout men from every nation under heaven and at this sound the multitude came together and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in their own language and they were amazed and astonished saying are not all these who are speaking Galileans which was not a compliment okay they were known as being like uneducated kind of you know they weren't being nice how is it that we hear each of us in our own native language Parthians means Elamites residents of Mesopotamia Judea Cappadocia Pontus Asia Phrygia Pamphylia Egypt and part of Libya belonging to Cyrene and visitors from Rome both Jews and proselytes

Cretans and Arabs we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God and so look these aren't nonsense sounds I don't know why that's an amen but still I love it these aren't nonsense sounds right they were real languages being spoken by Galileans who'd never learned them so what's going on well actually the answer in part is in Genesis 11 which we certainly don't have time to look at this morning but in Genesis 11 if you know the story it's the story of Babel and you remember that at Babel people tried to build a tower and make a name for themselves and God scattered them and he scattered them by doing what confusing their language and so at Pentecost God builds something to make a name for

Jesus the church that's what he's doing and people from every language hear the wonderful works of God and so this is the fulfillment of what happened at Babel if you like at Babel humanity was scattered and the nations were set aside at Pentecost people from those nations hear the mighty works of God in their own language see Pentecost wasn't just God giving the church some supernatural experience it was God declaring that his mission to reclaim the nations had begun he says you will receive power to do what to be witnesses to where the nations so how does the crowd respond in verse 12 while they were all amazed and perplexed saying to one another what does this mean and others mock saying well they're drunk they're filled with new wine and that's always the way when God moves some people ask questions others reach for an explanation that lets them stay where they are and look

Christians over the years have thought carefully about how Pentecost relates to believers today and there is a there is a fierce argument back and forward and if you and this is not my recommendation but if you go online that recommendation is like crazy and we'll come we will come back to some of those arguments in the weeks ahead but don't let those debates distract you from the main point the main point is that the spirit came to make Jesus known and to form a people and any experience of the spirit that doesn't do those two things has missed what Pentecost was for the spirit came to make Jesus known and to form a people so we see a promise in Matthew 16 Jesus makes a promise to build something a pause in Acts chapter 1 where Jesus tells his followers!

[36:30] 2 when the one who is doing the building arrives and then what we see in the rest of Acts chapter 2 is the nature of the building itself what is the building supposed to look like and the first thing we see is the foundation Christ crucified and risen verse 14 Peter standing with the eleven lifted up his voice and addressed!

them this is the same Peter who just seven weeks early had denied knowing Jesus to a servant girl by a fire he now stands up in front of thousands and he preaches with total boldness that isn't personal growth he hasn't been on some kind of personal growth strategy or he hasn't got a life guru that he's now able to stand up and proclaim Christ this is the Holy Spirit and he says this! men of Judah and all but this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel and now he quotes Joel chapter 2 and in the last days it shall be God declares that I will pour out my spirit and all flesh and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams and that is if you've ever wondered men if you are getting old if you start to dream dreams rather than see visions you are now old even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my spirit and they shall prophesy!

Look at the scope sons and daughters young and old servants why this is so fascinating is that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit obviously did exist the Holy Spirit obviously was at work but the Holy Spirit only came on individuals at certain times for certain things so he came on prophets he came on kings he came on the odd craftsmen in Numbers chapter 11 Moses says I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and the Lord would put his spirit on all of them right and at Pentecost God starts to answer that prayer isn't that beautiful the spirit is for everyone who belongs to Jesus not spiritual elite not there's no first class or economy and here's what I want us to see is that Peter doesn't spend most of his sermon talking about the spirit have you noticed like honestly if you ever go into a church service or please if you ever come here correct us but like if there is more talk about the spirit than there is about

Jesus and we've gone wrong because Peter here doesn't spend his time speaking about the spirit he spends his time speaking about Jesus and what happens the spirit shows up men of Israel hear these words verse 22 Jesus of Nazareth a then verse 33 being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing so who poured out the spirit

[40:19] Jesus poured out the spirit and Pentecost is the risen! reigning Christ keeping his promise he said I will build my church and now from the throne of heaven he sends his spirit to do it and then verse 36 let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified and this of course isn't the Peter that we saw a few chapters ago now when they had heard this they were cut to the heart the Greek word for cut means to be cut just in case there was any clarification needed actually means to be stabbed pierced through these these were devout religious people they were pilgrims who had traveled some of them long long distances to be there to worship

God and they realized that in their religion they rejected God's own son and I think there's an uncomfortable truth in that for all of us the foundation of the church is laid on people discovering they are not as good as they thought if we say that the foundation of the church is Christ what do we mean well we mean that Christ came and he came for a reason to save people like nobody gets into the church God builds by being impressive religious people don't respectable people don't pleasant decent Sunday attending British people don't you get there the same way these pilgrims got there cut to the heart stabbed to the heart pierced through and look I think it's safe to say like you know some of us probably need to hear that this morning we've been around church for a long time you know the songs

I almost love it sometimes only sometimes don't let Chris know this but sometimes I love this when the words don't work and we keep on singing right we've been around church a long time we know those words we know the songs you'd tick Christian on the census form but I guess the question is has the message of Jesus ever actually stabbed us cut us have you ever seen that your sin your pride and your quiet self rule put him on that cross but listen to what happens next because the knife isn't there to kill it's there to heal they say in verse 37 what shall we do and Peter said to them repent so that word just means change your mind turn around be baptized publicly identify with Jesus every one of you in the name of

Jesus Christ for the forgiveness! of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy fall on the apostles or these 120 is offered to the people who crucified Jesus do you know what that's called that's called grace for the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off everyone who in the Lord our God calls and there's that word again the ecclesia is the called out assembly God does the calling to himself verse 40 and with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them saying save yourself from this crooked generation so those who received his word were baptized and they were added that day about 3,000 souls and so here's the foundation of the church that God builds not good people but forgiven people not religious achievement but a crucified and risen

Lord and then finally we see what grows out of Pentecost and this is where many of us probably need to adjust our picture just slightly verse 24 it's the building what God builds when he builds they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers so notice in Acts chapter 1 there was 120 devoted themselves to prayer whilst they waited for the spirit and in Acts chapter 2 3,000 devote themselves to four things once he had come and that tells me that the work of the Holy Spirit doesn't produce casual attenders he produces devoted people look at what they're devoted to they're devoted to the apostles teaching they want to know

what Jesus taught and what it means and for us that's the

[45:41] Bible that's the scriptures and can I just say as clearly as I can that the spirit filled church is a Bible hungry church the spirit who inspired the word doesn't lead people away from it if you have a growing hunger for the word praise God that is the Holy Spirit at work in you so they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching to fellowship the word is koinonia which means sharing something in common or being partners with in something the breaking of bread which almost certainly includes the Lord's supper but is not limited to that like they kept coming back to the cross together that's the point and then to prayers and it's the prayers it's not just that these people were praying people they devoted themselves to the definite article the prayers which most likely means that they kept the set time of prayer at the temple and you can see that

Peter and John went up to pray at the set time they met a beggar it was a set time that they went they carried on going at the set time and in verse 43 as a result of all of that awe came upon every soul and many signs 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 favour with all the people and the Lord you could argue and the Lord was true to his promise to build the church the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved this isn't a picture of a perfect church

I almost I laugh inside me I guess I do I laugh inside me myself in my brain when people say we just need to return to the book of Acts as a church and you clearly haven't read 1 Corinthians this isn't a picture of a perfect church at all keep reading Acts and you'll find that people lie there are arguments there are ethnic tensions there are people that steal!

I guess not a perfect church the church God builds is a building site and not a show home and if you're waiting for a perfect church before you commit you're going to be waiting until Jesus comes back but it is a picture of what life looks like when Jesus builds by his spirit you get a group of people in this case we're up to 3,120 devoted to the word hungry to find out what Jesus thinks about something devoted to each other devoted to the cross devoted to praying full of awe generous joyful outward facing and people are being saved would you like to be part of that church at the beginning of my message

I asked the question where is your church and maybe for some of you the answer starts today at the very foundation you've been around church but you've never really been cut to the heart and you've never really personally turned to Jesus Peter's words for you are these repent turn to Jesus receive forgiveness and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit the promise is for you and you can respond to him today right where you're sitting you can respond to him later you should respond to him sooner rather than later for others maybe you've been a Christian for a long time and this passage exposes something else that we've become consumers we come to receive we criticize the music and rate the preaching and we switch churches when we're not getting enough of it and we rarely ask what the

[50:37] Lord might want to build through us and if I can name it boldly it's a quiet form of self worship that makes the church a supplier to my spiritual needs and the answer isn't guilt the answer is exactly the same answer that Peter gives to everybody else it's repent respond turn to Jesus for receiving forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit that is for you today you can't you can't stay a consumer once you realize what the church cost Jesus so for some of you it's simply this be filled again let's not be an audience let's be a building that

Christ is building by his spirit let's pray together father thank you that you own this church lord we want to declare again lord that this is your church that you we desire lord that you would build this church and that you would build it lord by your spirit and so lord we confess again lord that this is not about us this is about you lord all glory and honor goes to you lord for the building for laying the foundation for building up the church of God in this place and yet we also confess that as it's not about it's all about you it's also about us you don't you don't call us to the sidelines you don't call us to the grandstands to watch lord we pray that you would forgive us of all the times we treated church as a service and in our minds we've rated one out of five and for sure there are things particularly here that need to improve that we need to do better with lord we pray lord that you by your spirit would be raising people up to do that exact thing lord to help us to be the church that you have called us to be to call us out of this world lord and lord maybe we've we have been on the

sidelines for too long and you're calling us back in and so lord as we just spend some time in prayer and in worship lord we ask that your spirit who is building would call us lord we would hear his voice that you would convict us convict us of our sins lord of bringing the worldly culture in here lord help us to become a church that is devoted devoted to you lord lord we want to thank you for your word lord we want to submit to your word lord whatever i've said this morning lord that's not of you lord would we forget it and lord only the things of you would remain lord we just give you the struggles in our own hearts lord the things are in our own minds lord and lord we want to be so much i guess more than we are but everything that you've called us to be and lord we recognize this morning our part in that and maybe we come in at the foundation maybe there's some here this morning that don't know you as their lord and savior maybe we've been following you for many years and the call is the same to come back to the cross and so as we sing lord we pray that you would remind us lord of just what you've done for us how you are building us what you still want to do here lord may you make us instruments for that lord we ask in jesus name amen