

The Church within

Acts 20:7
28 May 2017

TO THE TEXT

Let me direct your attention to the **first verse** of our passage. I think this is a **neat outline** of an early church service...then verses 8 – 12 is what **happened in this particular** gathering.

Acts 20:7

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

1. They met **on the first day of the week.**
2. They **were gathered together**
3. They **broke bread.**
4. **Paul talked** – and it wasn't just a short sermon either – it says midnight
5. **Urgency to impart knowledge.**

OBSERVATION #2

The early church actually gathered together.

They came together. And not once or twice a month but on a regular weekly meeting! I'll talk more about the day of worship **next week**. But for now, **let me emphasise** the actual gathering!

If you find yourself **despondent** and **miserable** and **low**...

- **do you think it is because you meet too often** with Christians?...
- or hear **too much about God**?

Is that what **makes us miserable in this world**? too much fellowship with Christians and too much talking about God?

or could it be that we neglect to meet with the saints? **I'll leave that up to you...**

But listen to Hebrews 10:23ff

Hebrews 10:24–25

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another **to love** and **good works**,

How?

25 **not neglecting to meet together**,

[look what he says here, its like a cheap shot]

as is the habit of some,

So here in Hebrews we read that some people, some Christians are going to avoid and not want to hang out with other Christians!

Don't be like that!...

but encouraging one another, and **all the more** as you see **the Day** drawing near.

You see what he says...do this all the more – do this more often, gather more and more often - **as the DAY draws nearer**; That day refers to the return of the Lord...**the closer the return of the Lord** the more we should aim to meet.

I don't know a great deal about logic, but today is closer to the Lord return than yesterday – this means – each day I should aim – all the more - **to meet up with you**, and stir you up to love and good works! To encourage each and every one of you...

The early church gives us the example to gather together as the church!

OBSERVATION #3

The early church gathered to break bread.

This is Luke's way of saying they **shared a meal** and **within** the context of the gathered church. **This meal** would gain a **special character** that **the church would eventually** celebrate as the Lord's Supper.

The risen Lord approaches these two guys ask them what they're talking about. **And verse 16**

Luke 24:16

16 ...their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

So these two chaps think that Jesus has been living under a rock.

“What you don't know what's happened in Jerusalem...?”

So they tell Jesus how **they thought their King** had arrived, their **prophesied Messiah** who was to **supposed rescue** the nation of Israel from the tyranny of the Roman Empire arrived... **But!!!** this Jesus who they thought was the Messiah **is now dead**.

“Oh, how we thought he was the one...”

Then Jesus says to them **Oh boy you guys are slow to understand** let me explain to you what was prophesied from over a millennia ago...

Luke 24:27

27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

These guys can't believe the standard of theological awareness of this stranger so they invite him over for dinner – **their eyes still kept from recognising Jesus...**

Now listen to what happens;

Luke 24:30–31

30 When he was at table with them, **he took the bread** and blessed **and broke it** and gave it to them.

31 **And their eyes were opened**, **and they recognized him...**

See!!, **it is in the breaking of bread** that the disciples of Jesus recognise their Saviour!!! **It is by the bread that is broken** that God's people **see** their King!!

But there's more to the story...

These same two guys run back to Jerusalem, they've got to tell the rest of the disciples that **Jesus is alive**...**we have seen Him**...no more than that, we have **recognised the King – We have recognised the Messiah!**...

But listen to how they retell the story!!

Luke 24:35

35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and **how he was known to them** **in the breaking of the bread.**

See...**It is through the breaking of Bread** that Jesus makes Himself **recognisable** and **known** to His disciples!!...

And on the flipside; the disciples of Jesus **recognise** their saviour and come to have a **fuller knowledge** of who Jesus is **through the breaking of bread**!!!

It is in **the breaking of Bread** that Jesus **reveals Himself** to His people.

Why? Because it was Jesus who said;

John 6:32–35

35 ...“I am the bread of life; whoever **comes** to me **shall not hunger**, and whoever **believes** in me **shall never thirst.**”

Because it was Jesus when he broke bread and gave it to His disciples He said;

Luke 22:19

19“This is my body, **which is given for you**. Do this in remembrance of me.”

So when Jesus offers you bread, he offers life!

Jesus says come to me all who are hungry and I will give you satisfaction

Isaiah 55:2

2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Why do we keep trying to fill our stomachs and our lives with the things that will never satisfy – that make us hungrier??

You see, **every time** the **church gathers** as a people **and they break bread**...they **recognise** their saviour through the bread...

The body of Jesus was given **for me**, for **His people**, for **His glory**.

Every time the church gathers as a people and they break bread together they **remember** the **bread of life** **who gave** **eternal life**.

When Providence comes together to break bread, to share in the Lord's Supper, we remind ourselves **it's all about Jesus!!**

The early church gives us the example to break bread together

OBSERVATION #4

The early church gathered to hear someone talk a lot about God!

There is just no other way to put it.

It was Paul's mission to spend himself for the salvation of many;

2 Timothy 2:10

10 ... I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Paul cared and loved the church so much he laboured for their steadiness in the faith! He knew that he needed to prepare them for the onslaught of false teachers and the enticement of the world that would lure them away from the faith...

Not to tap into too much of future sermons but his heart was always for the church...further along in this chapter Paul says;

Acts 20:20–21

20 .. I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house,
21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:24

24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 20:27

27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Acts 20:29–30

29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;
30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

PERSONAL

You know I had a pastor once tell me that doctrine didn't matter, all that matters was that we preached Christ and His love. Now without going into the nonsense of such a statement, listen to Paul speak about doctrine;

1 Timothy 1:3

3 As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine,

1 Timothy 4:6

6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of **the good doctrine that you have followed.**

1 Timothy 6:3

3 If anyone teaches **a different doctrine** and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

Titus 1:9

9 He **[that's an elder]** must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to **give instruction in sound doctrine** and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Titus 2:1

1 But as for you, **teach what accords with sound doctrine.**

It's why Paul's sermon is so long. There is much to teach and he knows this will be the last opportunity...and it's why he labours...because people will soon depart from solid doctrine...

2 Timothy 4:3-7

3 For the time is coming when people **will not endure sound teaching**, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions,
4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

5 As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

The early church gives us the example on the pre-eminence of preaching!

And this brings me to the last observation for this week

OBSERVATION #5

The early church gathered with a sense of urgency.

Each sermon, that focuses our attention on God must be given the weight of seriousness it deserves and the preacher must be prepared to deliver the Word in season and out.

2 Tim 4:1

1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom:

2 **preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete **patience** **and teaching**.

What Paul means by **in season and out of season**...has nothing to do with climate change. Paul means for Timothy to preach the Word...**whether** it is **convenient** or not, **whether** **the culture** will **accept** it or not, **whether** the preacher will be **praised** or **disrespected**

Timothy must be faithful to the Word of God and deliver his message in all times as though his life depended on it!

2 Corinthians 6:1–2

1 Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” **Behold**, **now** is the favorable time; **behold**, **now** is the day of salvation.

The early church gives us the example of the urgency in preaching!

CONCLUSION

This is the example of the early church

1. It **gathered** - together
2. It **broke bread** – to reminds us it’s not about me, but all about Jesus!
3. It **preached weighty sermons**. **There are no other!**
4. It had a sense of urgency...

Amen.