

SERMON: “I Will Worship and Grow Together with Others” - Acts 2:46-47

April 10, 2016

Pastor Jon Haakana

Today, we continue what we started last week as we look at the nine traits of the outwardly focused Christian. Last week we looked at Jesus’ call through the apostle Paul to consider others more significant than ourselves; to look beyond phrases like “I am” and “I want” and “I need.” The apostle helped us to see the importance of responding to all Jesus had done for us in His death and resurrection by saying “I will” – by serving others, loving others, and seeing the needs of others.

Introduction: You have all seen products with warning labels...I should probably put a warning label on this series – some things will be hard to hear – because of their truth, and the truth sometimes hurts... Today, we look at two traits – worshipping and growing spiritually together.

Text: Our main text comes from the book of Acts and follows Jesus’ ascension and the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost - *“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 favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47)*

Text Summary: Whatever the early Christians did, they did with others (Acts 2:46-47)

- a. Devoted themselves to the Word and the apostles’ teaching
- b. Joyful in their actions
- c. Humble attitudes
- d. Favor with all the people

Point 1 – From Begrudging Participation to Joyous Commitment

- a. Mandatory Activities vs. Optional Church
- b. Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:23-24) – worshipping the Father in Spirit & truth.
- c. Corporate worship – God’s priority for us
- d. Paul to Philemon – “the church that meets in your home.”

Point 2 – 20th Century America - Shift to the Preference Driven Church

- a. From self-sacrificing worship to God to consumer-focused, self-serving attitudes
- b. “The music is not my style” - “I don’t like the pastor’s preaching” - “I am not comfortable in the worship services” – It’s all about us and not all about God.

Point 3 – Say “I Will” to Corporate Worship

- a. I will attend worship services
- b. I will pray before I attend worship services
- c. I will pray as I enter the worship center or sanctuary
- d. I will pray that I will be a worshipper instead of a judge
- e. I will focus on who I have come to worship and what He has done for me...(Gospel message)

f. I will realize the importance of worshipping with my family and church family

But fellowship and participation in a local church goes beyond just going to church. Again, look at the early Christian church – they met in the temple and home gatherings or house churches. Whatever they did, they did together. And their numbers grew daily. **Fact** - Church members involved in a group are 5x more likely to be active in church five years later (compared to worship-only attenders). More than 83 percent of those who joined and were involved in a small group were still active in their churches. But only 16 percent of those who attended worship services only remained in their churches five years later. Older faithful attenders – were active when younger or with families. Why?

What's the Value of Growing Together

Point 1 – There's the Relationship Factor

- a. The value of personal relationships
- b. The need to connect relationally by getting involved in a group

Point 2 – There's the Ministry Factor

- a. How does our church care for those in need? Pastors, Elders, Stephen Ministers
- b. Body of Christ functioning as "the Body" – ministry also taking place in groups
- c. In other words, ministry is more likely to take place with people who know each other well.
- d. The primary way we can know other church members well is to be in a group together.

Hugging TWO-gether

In the fall of the year, Linda, a young woman, was traveling alone up the rutted and rugged highway from Alberta to the Yukon. Linda didn't know you don't travel to Whitehorse alone in a rundown Honda Civic, so she set off where only four-wheel drives normally venture. The first evening she found a room in the mountains near a summit and asked for a 5 A.M. wakeup call so she could get an early start. She couldn't understand why the clerk looked surprised at that request, but as she awoke to early- morning fog shrouding the mountain tops, she understood. Not wanting to look foolish, she got up and went to breakfast. Two truckers invited Linda to join them, and since the place was so small, she felt obliged. "Where are you headed?" one of the truckers asked. 'Whitehorse' she said.

"In that little Civic? No way! This pass is dangerous in weather like this." "Well, I'm determined to try," was Linda's gutsy, if not very informed, response. "Then I guess we're just going to have to hug you," the trucker suggested. Linda drew back. "There's no way I'm going to let you touch me!"

"Not like THAT!" the truckers chuckled. "We'll put one truck in front of you and one in the rear. In that way, we'll get you through the mountains." All that foggy morning Linda followed the two red dots in front of her and had the reassurance of a big escort behind as they made their way safely through the mountains. Caught in the fog in our dangerous passage through life, we need to be "hugged." With fellow Christians who know the way and can lead safely ahead of us, and with others behind, gently encouraging us along, we, too, can pass safely. *Don Graham*

Point 3 – There's the Teaching Factor – There are different ways in which we learn:

- i. Preaching
- ii. Personal Bible study
- iii. Large group Bible study
- iv. Smaller groups

VI. Point 4 – There's the Evangelism Factor

- a. Why did the early Christian church daily add to their number?
- b. They were sharing with others what was happening in their churches and in their groups

VII. Conclusion – Groups Matter

- a. The health of the church is directly tied to the health of the groups in the church.
- b. Groups in the church help close the back door.
- c. As a church member, you should be committed to being a part of a small group in your church.
- d. Everyone in a group should be inviting others to the group.

TWO-gether

In conclusion, listen to a quote by Rueben Welch in his book, *We Really Do Need Each Other*. "You know something-we're all just people who need each other. We're all learning and we've got a long journey ahead of us. We've got to go together and if it takes us until Jesus comes we better stay together. And I dare say that by the time we get there all the sandwiches will be gone and all the chocolate will be gone and all the water will be gone and all the backpacks will be empty. But no matter how long it will take us we've got to go together. Because that's how it is in the body of Christ. It's all of us - in love - in care - in support - in mutuality - we really do need each other."

Whatever we do, we do it in Jesus' name, and then, let's do it together. Amen.