

Reaching the Hurting and Lost

Why the Church Matters • Message 1

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Prayer Points for Prayer Time

- Pray that everything you say and do points others to Jesus.
- Pray for opportunities to encourage and help those around you.
- Pray that Brookwood is a source of hope for all people.

Scripture Reading:

The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But an angel of the Lord came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then he told them, "Go to the Temple and give the people this message of life!" So at daybreak the apostles entered the Temple, as they were told, and immediately began teaching. When the high priest and his officials arrived, they convened the high council—the full assembly of the elders of Israel. Then they sent for the apostles to be brought from the jail for trial. But when the Temple guards went to the jail, the men were gone. So they returned to the council and reported, "The jail was securely locked, with the guards standing outside, but when we opened the gates, no one was there!" When the captain of the Temple guard and the leading priests heard this, they were perplexed, wondering where it would all end. Then someone arrived with startling news: "The men you put in jail are standing in the Temple, teaching the people!" The captain went with his Temple guards and arrested the apostles, but without violence, for they were afraid the people would stone them. Then they brought the apostles before the high council, where the high priest confronted them. "We gave you strict orders never again to teach in this man's name!" he said. "Instead, you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching about him, and you want to make us responsible for his death!" But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than any human authority."

Acts 5:17-29 (NLT)

A. Introduction

(John 15:5)

The fruit of the church.

So, as we start off, I want to show you this tree... (show tree with being and doing)

I have two convictions about this tree...

1.) God has called every one of us to be and do...

Think about it... during football season you have 22 people on a field who are in desperate need of rest... being watched by 60,000 fans who are in desperate need of exercise.

This is a picture of some churches... but not here... we believe God has called us to be and do!

Remember the story of Mary and Martha... Mary is at Jesus' feet and Martha is running around, fixing the house and getting everything ready... and she is upset because Mary was just sitting there while she was working... and it's Sunday so Chick-fil-A is closed... so she's like, *Jesus I need help*. The point is, we are to be both Mary and Martha... and if you aren't careful, you get some churches that pick one side or the other...

2.) The order matters...

Once you start walking with God, you will start to bear fruit. Where do I get that? Straight outta the Bible... listen to this... you don't get the branches or the fruit of the tree without the roots.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:5 (NIV)

Remember when you've been on an airplane? They will always say... *Hey, before you help anyone else put your own mask on...* it's because you are no good to anyone if you are passed out. You can help anyone if you are filled up spiritually. So, before you can do what Jesus did, you have to first be with Him!

When a church is rooted in the Spirit, is being with Jesus, is walking with others, and is growing stronger...

it will bear fruit.

But what does that fruit look like? How do you know a church is healthy? You know a lot of people go to the doctor once a year to get an annual checkup... there they are looking to see if they are healthy....
they measure certain things...

But how do you measure if a church is healthy? How do you measure if it's bearing fruit?
Acts 5 shows us four things that happen when churches are healthy...

B. In Healthy Churches...

1. People get LOVED. (Acts 5:16)

When someone walks into something new... there is usually one of three responses...

- 1.) Some get excited about seeing new things.
- 2.) Some cross their arms and say, *Let's see if Bryan burns everything down.*
- 3.) Some cross their arms and say, *I'll never call you Dad. I'll never call you pastor... I call you Step Pastor.*

But one of the things that struck me when I got here was that this wasn't how this church responded... it responded with a fourth category... love.

In fact, let me say one of the top things I hear people say about our church is that it feels like a giant home...

it's a loving space... we are doing really well in this area, but we have to fight for this.

We have a ton of new people in our church. Almost every week, I meet someone new who was invited by a friend... and Brookwood, can we let those who are new to our church know how excited we are that they are here? But listen, as soon as we lose a culture of love and hospitality, people won't be bringing their friends.

Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

Acts 5:16 (NIV)

Did you notice it said everyone was coming to the church? Outcasts, those with pasts, those who were different. And notice... people were bringing their friends to the church because they knew they'd receive love.

That's why we have a secret motto... No perfect people allowed.

Listen, this is so important...this should be the measuring stick for the church... the most important thing is not the volume of the music, if you have gluten free communion, if you didn't get your favorite seat, or if an event was full and you couldn't get in. Even when people say to me, *It's a big church...* well ok, but was it a loving church?

And do you know what makes this a loving church? You. People decide long before I preach what kind of church this is... it's the way you greet them. Say hello. Smile. Help those who are lost. Give a compliment.

The Greek word in the New Testament for hospitality is **philo-xena**, and it means to love a stranger.

Can I ask you a question? If I was at your house, just roaming around your yard looking lost or confused, or if somehow I broke my leg in your yard, would you just say, *Hey, I'm finishing a load of laundry. I will get back to you shortly...* or if you saw a neighborhood kid bullying another kid... would you just sit back and get the popcorn? No! If it's your home, you own it. You take charge. Because you have ownership, you take responsibility. That's your space.

Well, if Brookwood is your church home, can I challenge you to have the same kind of ownership... you are the ones who will create a loving culture here, not me... if you see someone lost or confused, walk up to them and help... if you see someone hurting, go help them... if you see something that doesn't look right, help them... Let's be a church that welcomes and love strangers well. That's what a healthy church does.

2. People get SAVED. (Acts 5:14,17-20)

Aaron Wren wrote a book called *Life in the Negative World*.

And in it he really talks about...

Christianity and Culture:

1. Positive World (1964-1994)

Positive view of Christianity, Granting Social Status with Christian Morality as the norm.

2. Neutral World (1994-2014)

Higher education and journalism secularized... Christians would be welcomed in society, but they

weren't necessarily shaping culture like they once had.

Christianity's status in the U.S. transitioned from favorable to impartial.

3. Negative World (2014-present)

His premise is that in many ways, cultural Christianity is now a threat.

Because of this, they want to limit Christian voices or challenge anything that threatens their way of doing life.

We live in a day where the cultural forces and the elite in society are against Christianity. We are tolerant of anything but Christianity, affirming of anything but the Bible, and inclusive of anything but Christians. Listen, if you go into a secular place and say, *I'm a Christian and I believe marriage is between a man and a woman...* you are going to be viewed as a threat... when you speak about the Bible, you will be viewed as a threat... but listen, this isn't the first time this has happened...

And listen to what happens when the disciples in Acts 5 were speaking about Jesus...

The high priest and his officials, who were Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But an angel of the Lord came at night, opened the gates of the jail, and brought them out. Then he told them, "Go to the Temple and give the people this message of life!"

Acts 5:17-20 (NLT)

What you will find is later, the disciples are getting beaten for speaking about Jesus... So let me ask you this question: In the book of Acts, what worldview are they dealing with?

Negative worldview... and guess what God is doing... working mightily...

So let me remind you, everyone is like...*Look how bad the world is...* but church, guess what God does... He works mightily in the negative world views... the book of Acts is one of the greatest moves of God around... Listen to what it says...

Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

Acts 5:14 (NIV)

Hey Church, can I remind you of something? God's light shines brightest in the darkest places... and in times like this, God is pouring out his Spirit, and may we be a church He finds ready.

Let me encourage you... did you know we had 170 people who said yes to Jesus last year? Isn't that amazing... And 10 people at Christmas...

So, who is the one person God has placed in your life that you could be praying for... because we believe the story of Jesus is too good to keep to ourselves! Amen!

3. People get HEALED.

(Acts 5:15. C/R: James 4:2b)

Did you notice that it said there were many signs and wonders that were happening?

As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

Acts 5:15 (NIV)

Listen, God still does miracles today... I know some people read this and they go, *Amen...* but others read it and go, *Hold up...his shadow is passing by?*

And let me just say, if you are skeptical or cynical of miracles, you may be guilty of quenching the Spirit...

3 Ways God Heals:

1) Miraculously.

2) Medicine.

(Mental health... someone got on an anti-depressant and some older judgmental Christian was like, *Man you should pray that away..* and you know what I said... *Hey, that's a great idea and maybe you could get off Lipitor, Flomax and Cialis- maybe we can just pray that away...* I'm working on my words... but listen, God gives medicine and it's a blessing from Him.

3) Grave. (In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, *Death where is your sting*)

Now let's pray for number one ...hey, when someone is sick, or someone has something going on... pray for them... pray for them right then... don't wait... like, I'm not saying be weird... like, if someone's walking in, don't sneak up on him and lay hands... but walk up to them and ask if you can pray... be bold and ask for God to work.

Church, we always say the greatest tragedy is unanswered prayers... but here is the actual greatest tragedy... unasked prayers.

You do not have because you do not ask God.

James 4:2b (NIV)

At the end of the service, if you have any sickness, why wouldn't you let us pray for you... we value that... at the end of the service, we anoint people with oil and ask God to heal.

4. People get DELIVERED. (Acts 5:25-26,28a)

Satan couldn't overthrow God, so the war in Heaven is now on Earth. Think about this... since he couldn't overthrow God, he goes after what is most like God, which is you and me. So he is going to attack you...

Let me encourage you, though... the same power that raised Jesus from the grave lives in you... which means you have the Holy Spirit in you. But have you ever thought about this? If there is a Holy Spirit, that means there are also unholy spirits.

Nowadays, people talk about being spiritual... *I'm a spiritual person*... people will ask about fortune telling, tarot cards, or the big one... talking to ancestors. Hey, let me send a warning shot...

AI: there is an app where you can upload videos, and you talk to loved ones who have passed... this is demonic... stay away from those things.

Watching the Olympics, and I loved it... like curling... I have never wanted to sweep the floor so badly...

But I was watching figure skating... why are the outfits so tight... do they like it? It mentioned some do... but then it mentioned sexual orientation....

But hey, Brookwood, can I tell you with all the darkness out there you don't have to be afraid... do you know why?

Because in the name of Jesus, darkness has to flee... so whatever dark thing you are facing... here's what you do... you speak the name of Jesus over it.

I love this... later on in Acts 5, the disciples are speaking up about Jesus and then they are arrested and beaten... an angel of the Lord frees them and then listen to what it says...

Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They

did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

Acts 5:25-26 (NIV)

Did you pick up on that... they were afraid of getting stoned... they were speaking about the Christians.

These were the kind of Christians who were all in on Jesus. They just hadn't gotten to the whole "love your enemy" part from the Sermon on the Mount. They were like, *If you arrest our preacher, we will send you to meet Jesus...* so, a little bit of holy and a little bit of hood. They are like people from Columbia, South Carolina.

And later, when they were arrested, listen to what the people said to them...

"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said.

Acts 5:28a (NIV)

They wouldn't even say the name of Jesus... now, the disciples would. And hey, Brookwood, we love the name of Jesus, Amen!

Do you know why we say Jesus at the Center?

Here's why:

If you love people, everyone's like, *That's amazing!*

If you heal people, everyone's like, *That's amazing!*

If you help and deliver people, they go, *That's amazing!*

If you feed and clothe people, they go, *That's amazing!*

But if you do it in Jesus' name, there is resistance... because your battle isn't against flesh and blood, Church... So you have to remember this... this is what the church will be doing.