Church is About Sunday, Isn't It?

Chris Staples 3 December 2015



No, it isn't! When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, the immediate impact was the creation of a dynamic (and probably chaotic) community of believers. Acts 5 gives us a glimpse into the life of this early community: 'And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.' (Acts 5:42) This was happening in the central meeting place, but also in and out of homes.

The Greek word used for house in Acts 5:42 is 'Oikos'. Its usage here probably implies a wider household of perhaps 8-15 people, rather than a nuclear family. Today, it might embrace neighbours, close colleagues and church family. The Gospel was being preached and taught in smaller community groups in the early church, which must have multiplied at a rapid rate. It is then, in this setting of temple and home, that we discern some distinctives of the church emerging. [1]

Distinctives of the Early Church

They were a Loving Church

We see they shared life together (koinonia). 'And they devoted themselves to …the fellowship'. This bears witness to fellowshipping with the Trinity (1 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 13:14) and the life we

share together. Koinonikos is the Greek word for ‘generous, having everything koinos (in common)’. Koinonia is the word Paul used when organising collections for the poorer churches (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13).

They were an Evangelistic Church

‘And daily the Lord added to their number those who were being saved’ (Acts 2:47). They always inclusively reached out. ‘And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ’ (Acts 5:42). The verb ‘adding’ here is imperfect, meaning ‘kept adding’. Those being added were also saved (sozomenous—timeless, a progressive experience for us), so belonging to the church and salvation go together.

They were a Worshipping Church

‘…they devoted themselves…to the breaking of bread and prayer’. Being a worshipping church is expressed here in corporate, shared worship. We see that this is formal and informal—’in the temple courts and in their homes’ (Acts 2:46). Their worship was joyful and reverent—’with glad and sincere hearts’, which literally means ‘in exultation (agalliasis) and sincerity of heart’. The same Greek word is used in Revelation 19:7 for the wedding of the Lamb: ‘Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.’ And in Acts, ‘everyone was filled with awe’ at what God was doing.

They were a Learning Church

They were being discipled to grow in maturity—’devoted…to the apostles’ teaching’. The Holy Spirit leads us into learning the truth. He leads us into submission to the Word of God and grows our understanding. The church was also accompanied by ‘many wonders and miraculous signs’. As we build church, this culture of exhorting each other to grow has an urgency to it. ‘And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.’ (Hebrews 10:24-25)

So, is church just about a Sunday gathering? Scripture and church history clearly tells us ‘no’. Church is about sharing life together in one another’s homes, worshipping together, learning together, and reaching out together. It’s in this way that we become a true community of believers.

[1] Source: Stott, John R. W. The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World. Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1994. Print.