



## **HOPE Church Fall 2020 Life Groups – Sunday, 10/18/2020 sermon notes**

*This week's sermon explored what it means to be a part of God's Church. It reminded us that it does not start with our own personal point of view (i.e. not our ideas, or our opinions, or our experiences). Rather, it all begins with Jesus and His calling, His plan and purpose for His Church.*

**Acts 1:6-7** – 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

**Acts 2: 36-47** – 36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, 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 Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.” 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Pastor Keith shared with us that the local church – God's Church – all begins with Jesus. However, sometimes people have a tendency to take God's Church and shape it into something of their own design that can become misaligned with God's purposes. *We are His servants* and we need to remind ourselves to keep this *principle* first place in our hearts. Even so, we can find ourselves naturally turning inward and focusing our energy and efforts upon meeting our own needs. God uses the Church to work miracles in peoples' lives. We see this in Acts 2 as we watch Peter's transformation as he steps into his own role of ministry for Christ. We must keep in mind that our God wants to do the same today in our lives, through His church, as He did then.

James Hudson Taylor, a British Protestant Christian missionary to China wrote, “*All of God's giants have been weak men who counted on God being with them.*” Your own personal story is written in the history of the Church. This is a powerful truth for each of us to embrace: In God's Church, we are a part of something much bigger than ourselves and we must not forget this. John Wesley, an English cleric, theologian and evangelist wrote, “*The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.*” We need each other *and* we need Jesus. Further, regarding church attendance, Dr. Charles Stanley reminds believers that even though no church is perfect, we are to seek a gathering of believers that practically demonstrate God's love and accurately present Scripture. He goes on to say, “*Carefully consider how God can use you to help in your present church. You may be so intent on having your needs met that you are overlooking how powerfully God can use you to help others.*” This is not to say that our *spiritual* needs don't have a place in a local church. Rather, we must keep in mind, that this cannot be our main focus.

**Note** - *If you were part of a Rooted Group, go back and look at the readings in week 10 for additional perspective on church.*

### **Sermon points for discussion:**

- Point 1 (Acts 1:6-7): *We are called to serve Christ's Church and His purposes.*



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1. The Apostles were concerned about seeing their homeland, the kingdom of Israel, restored to its former state of glory and power, but Jesus explained that their mission was not to focus on that. Rather, they were become prepared to preach His Gospel throughout all the world!
  - a. Think about some of the ways you have served at your local church and be prepared to discuss your experience with your group. Here are some questions to guide your thoughts:
    - i. What prompted you to choose to serve?
    - ii. How did serving make you feel?
    - iii. What challenges did you encounter with serving (and, overcome)?
    - iv. What blessings did you receive from serving in the church?
  - b. If you have not served (or, rarely serve) in your local church, be prepared to discuss what is holding you back from serving with your group? Here are some questions to guide your thoughts:
    - i. Is there something you would like to do but feel like you are not able to do it? Why?
    - ii. Did you have a bad experience serving at a church? Are you able/willing to share what happened? Is this what's holding you back from serving now?
    - iii. If you are not serving, but need help to get engaged, are you willing to ask the members in your group to pray for you and to help you to find opportunities to serve?
- Point 2 (Acts 2:36-47): *We are called to share ourselves, our time, talent and treasure with others in the body of Christ and to actively enrich each other's lives with godly fellowship as well as draw unbelievers to Christ to the praise and glory of God.*
2. In this relatively short passage of Scripture, we observe the birth of the church through the power of the Holy Spirit. Further, we see key behaviors of the church that include baptism, fellowship and meeting together (with glad and sincere hearts), prayer, pursuing Scripture (teaching) and worship (praising God).
  - a. In your own experience, what makes practicing these behaviors in community so important to living out a Christian life?
  - b. Has there ever been a time when some of these attributes have been missing in your life? How did that make you feel? Did you do something to change that?
  - c. How do you perceive Hope Church embracing the Christian behaviors outlined in this passage of scripture? Is there anything you would like to see the church improve upon? What do you think that we can do – as a body – to facilitate this improvement?

***Going deeper...***



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3. Look at the 8 mission objectives of Hope Church (see website or participant guide). Which of them seems to you as being most applicable to this week's sermon lesson? Try to choose the one you feel is most relevant and, if time permits, share with your group the reason for your choice.

Other verses of Scripture to consider:

**Hebrews 10:24-25** – 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 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.

**Romans 12:9-16** – 9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

**Matthew 28:19-20** – 19 “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

**Galatians 5:13-14** – 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

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*“A Christian should always remember that the value of his good works is not based on their number and excellence, but on the love of God which prompts him to do these things” – John of the Cross*

*“But without the [Holy] Spirit there would not be a Christian in the world” – J.I.Packer*