

An Evangelizing Church

Acts 2:47

Pastor John Miller

I want to read verses Acts 2:42-47, with verse 47 being the verse we will focus on.

Luke said, “And they continued steadfastly...”—that is, the new converts in verse 41 that were added to the church—“...in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people...”—and here’s our text—“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Many years ago, Billy Graham said that Vance Havner was one of the most quotable preachers in America. Vance Havner, over 50 years ago, made this statement: “This is a day of anarchy in the world, apostasy in the professing church and apathy in the true church.” He made that statement 50 years ago, but it is still so apropos to the day and age in which we live today. We see “anarchy in the world, we see apostasy in the professing church” and sadly, we see “apathy in the true church” of Jesus Christ. If there is ever a time in which the world needs the church, it’s right now.

Jesus said that we are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand.” So we are to be salt and light. “Salt” indicates that we are to have a preserving influence, and “light” indicates we are to have a proclaiming influence by preaching the Gospel. That is the commission that God has given the church: to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel.”

Now to bring us up to date, we have seen three things so far about the church: number one, it is to be a learning church. Verse 42 says, “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” or “teaching.” So they were learning apostolic doctrine or the Word of God. Central to a true church, a living church, is the Bible. We want to be a Bible church. We want to focus on God’s Word, preach God’s Word and live by God’s Word. It’s our foundation for all we believe and how we behave. That’s what the early church was: they were a learning church.

The second quality of the church, verse 42, was that they were a loving church. They had “fellowship” or “koinónia.” That means we have fellowship with the Father, His Son, Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. We have a common relationship to God, as brothers and sisters in Christ. So we are to have a loving fellowship.

Thirdly, we saw that the early church was a worshiping church, verse 42. They were learning, loving and worshiping God. Worshiping is seen in the expression “breaking of bread, and in prayers.” “Breaking of bread” seems to be the formal gathering for the Lord’s Supper, and

“prayer” would have involved praise and worship to God. Literally in the Greek it would read “the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers.” They gathered in the temple and in their homes. So they were worshipping God.

These three things, in and of themselves, in verse 42, do not give us a complete picture of the early church. This would still be an imbalanced church. And many churches are imbalanced today; they study the Word, they worship God and they fellowship, but they don’t reach out. God wants us to have an outreach as well as an upreach and an inreach. So far, we haven’t had the full picture; it doesn’t tell us anything yet about the outreach of the church. It has just told us about the interior life of the church.

So now we need to look at verse 47 to see what Luke tells us. He said that they were “praising God and having favor with all the people.” Then here it is: “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” This was a Spirit-filled church that reached out to the world around them, so, number four, they were an evangelizing church.

Before Jesus ascended back into heaven, in Mark 16:15, He gave us the great commission. He said, “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” That is the commission of the church. Jesus gave the early church that commission, and it still applies today. So the church has a mission to go into all the world; that is the church’s job.

In Genesis 12:3, God promised Abram that “In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” How could God bless the world through one man, Abram? It was through Jesus Christ. Through Abram’s lineage and seed, the Messiah would come and be the Savior of the world.

In Acts 1:8, before Jesus left to ascend back to heaven, He told His disciples, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”

So even as far back as the Old Testament, God had a loving plan to reach out to save the world. In the New Testament, Jesus said to “go into all the world.” And Paul the Apostle said, in Romans 1:16, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

The good news of Jesus Christ is for the whole world. Someone said, “It is the whole church’s job to take the whole Gospel to the whole world.” I like that. We have a mission to preach the Gospel. We are called out of the world, but we are also called to “go into the world” to share the good news of Jesus Christ. So this is the church’s mission mandate. Our calling is to have a mission to reach out to the world around us.

Now there are three things I want to point out from the statement at the end of verse 47, which says, “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Number one, the Lord Himself added to the church. He did the evangelizing, opened hearts and saved them. “The Lord added to the church.”

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said, "I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." That's consistent with what we are reading in our text. It was the Lord who was adding "to the church daily those who being saved."

The question now is, how does Jesus build His church or how does Jesus add to His church? I've reduced the answer to three basic things. Number one, He adds to His church by and through the preaching of the Apostles. All the way through the book of Acts we find the Apostles preaching the Gospel, preaching the Word, heralding the good news. They were involved in the proclamation and communication of the Word of God and the Gospel of God.

There is no substitute for preaching the Gospel. We must never, ever stop preaching the Gospel. It is man's greatest need. That's the most important thing we can be doing as a church: worshiping God, loving one another, building up the saints and going back into the world with the good news that Jesus died, Jesus rose and Jesus can forgive you of your sins.

In 1 Corinthians 9:16, Paul said, "Woe is me if I do not preach the Gospel!" I like that. And again, in Romans 1:16, Paul said he wasn't ashamed of the Gospel, and he knew the necessity of preaching it had been laid upon him.

Too many churches today have abandoned not only the preaching of the Word but the preaching of the good news of Jesus Christ. That is to be our central theme: "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

Secondly, notice that Jesus builds His church through the missionaries sent out by the Lord from the church. In Acts 13, as they were gathered together praying, fasting and waiting on the Lord, the Spirit spoke, perhaps through one of the prophets who was there in the church at Antioch. He said, "Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." They were sent out by the Holy Spirit, in verse 4: "So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus."

So notice it was the Holy Spirit who spoke, the Holy Spirit who separated, the Holy Spirit who sent them out. The Lord was working to reach out to the world around them. In the book of Acts, the church starts in Jerusalem, and then by the end of the book of Acts, it closes at Rome; they went from Jerusalem to Rome and spread the good news of Jesus Christ along the way. It's our mission to send out missionaries.

By the way, you're all missionaries. When you leave church, you enter the mission field. The mission field may be your home; you might have heathen in your home. Maybe they're in your bed at night, lying next to you. Maybe your husband needs Christ. Maybe your wife needs Christ. Maybe your kids need Christ. Maybe your mission field is the workplace. Maybe it's your neighbors. Have you gone across the street and shared Christ with your neighbors? Have you invited them to church? Have you shared the good news with them? All the world becomes our mission field, and we should be engaged in telling other people about Jesus.

So Jesus builds His church through the preaching of the Apostles or through the "kerusso" or

proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ and through the missionaries that are sent out. Thirdly, He also builds His church through the personal evangelism of God's people.

It's interesting that in Acts 6, they were having a problem in the early church. The problem is that they were feeding Jewish widows—which wasn't the problem—but a group of them were following Greek culture, known as "Hellenist Jews." When the food was distributed, the Hellenist Jews were being neglected; they weren't getting their proper portion. So they went to the Apostles, the spiritual leaders of the church, with this problem. The leaders said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables....We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." They said, "Seek out...seven men....full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

An aside to this is if all Christians were Spirit filled, they wouldn't have to give that qualifying statement. So we want Spirit-filled men to lead the church. We want Spirit-filled men to lead our church.

So the church leaders were going to keep praying and preaching. They weren't going to be distracted from their priority.

I said all that to say that of those seven men, two of them were used by God to evangelize and to spread the Word. One was Stephen, in Acts 7, and the other one was Philip, in Acts 8. These men were deacons, chosen just to "serve tables," to feed widows. They were men "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom," full of the Word of God, and God used them.

The point is that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Stephen preached the Gospel and was martyred for his faith. It's interesting that his name means "crown" or "stephanos." He was the first to wear the martyr's crown.

And Saul was in the crowd the day that Stephen died for preaching the Gospel. Later he became Paul the Apostle in Acts 9. He was converted on his way to Damascus, where he was going to persecute Christians. He became the great Paul the Apostle. So Stephen was used to preach the Gospel, to lead Paul to Christ, and as they say, the rest is history. It's amazing what God can do through the Gospel being preached.

Then we have Philip, who is the only individual in the Bible who was actually called an evangelist. God, in Ephesians 4:11, said He has given to the church "some evangelists." They are gifted individuals for the church.

Philip's story, in Acts 8, is that he went to Samaria, where Jesus said, "You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Now the Jews hated Samaritans. You talk about racial prejudice, it was there! Philip could have very easily said, "No, Lord; I don't want to go down to Samaria! The Samaritans deserve to go to hell! Just let them go." But he didn't say that. He went to Samaria, and God used him; there was a revival. People were coming to Christ; it was glorious and wonderful.

Then the Lord spoke to Philip and said, "I want you to go out to the desert toward Gaza, and I want you to talk to an individual there."

Philip could have said, "Lord, this can't be right; I'm in the midst of a revival here right now. But You want me to go out into the desert to talk to one person?"

It would be as if you were in Orange County in a church, thousands were coming, but God tells you to leave the OC and go to Barstow. You say, "I rebuke you, Satan! This can't be God." But God leads in mysterious ways.

God is not only concerned with mass evangelism; He's also concerned with personal evangelism. You can lead people to Christ in a grocery store, at a shopping mall, in your neighborhood or while you are watering your front yard. God can use you to tell other people about Jesus Christ.

So Philip goes to Gaza, he was walking along a dirt road, and a man came along, riding in a chariot. He was from Ethiopia. He had left Jerusalem to return to Ethiopia. While he was riding along, he was reading a scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet, which said, "He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter," Isaiah 53:7. He didn't understand what the prophet was talking about. Then Philip ran up alongside the chariot, as the Lord had directed him.

Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The Ethiopian man said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" So Philip went up into the chariot. From that verse, he took off preaching Christ, which means that he was "ready to give a defense to everyone who asks...a reason for the hope that is in [him]."

If you were in the mall and saw someone reading Isaiah 6 about Jesus, would you be able to explain to that person who He is? Know your Bible; be ready to give an answer.

The Ethiopian eunuch got saved. They came upon some water, and he said, "What hinders me from being baptized?"

Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." So they got out of the chariot, and Philip baptized him. Then "the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away" to another place. No doubt the Ethiopian went back happily to Africa with Christ in his heart and took the good news of Jesus Christ to that area. What a marvelous story that is!

So that is the mission of the church: mass evangelism, that we saw with Stephen and Philip, and personal evangelism, when we share the Gospel.

But the point I want to make before we move on is that the Lord is the one who is working by His Spirit. He is guiding, directing, leading and He opens up hearts, so we need to depend upon and rely upon the Holy Spirit and the Lord to lead us and guide us in our evangelism. We

must look to Him and trust Him in the work; that He alone can open the heart and add to the church.

In Psalm 127:1, the psalmist says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it." We want to do evangelism, but we want to do it in humble dependence upon the Holy Spirit to guide us, lead us and to work.

The second thing I want you to know from the statement at the end of verse 47 is that the Lord did two things together. The first thing He did was He "added to the church," and the second thing was that He added "those who were being saved." It's very important to note that He did not add them to the church without saving them. Nor did He save them without adding them to the church.

There is a real danger today that we try to get people into the church just because we're concerned about numbers, but they are not true converts, they're not really born again. We don't want people just to come to church; we want them to come to Christ. Have you been born again? Do you know Jesus Christ personally?

So the result in the early church was that there were no fake Christians or nominal Christians, and there were no independent Christians. The people who were in the church were saved, and the people who were saved were in the church. When you get saved, you should be identified with and be a part of a local fellowship.

Sometimes I meet people who say, "Well, I'm a Christian, but I'm not into church. I'm a Christian, but I don't like Christians." Really? How does that work? If you're saved, you want to be with other believers who are saved. If you are saved, then you are part of the church, and you should be identified with a local church.

The problem in so many local churches today is that we have tares among the wheat. We have false believers in the church; they are not genuine or authentic. In Matthew 7:22, Jesus said, "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'" Then Jesus will say, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

It's not important that you go to church or become a member of a church, but that you get saved. How many people are sitting in church but going to hell? That's possible. It's because they haven't been born again, they haven't been truly saved. Don't let that happen to you. If you haven't come to Christ, that's your great need. Your greatest need is to be born again, to know that your sins are forgiven, that when you die, you'll go to heaven and that you have eternal life.

So the Lord was doing the adding, the Lord added them to the church and number three, the Lord added them daily, verse 47. In the Greek, it would say, "kept adding them daily." So the Lord was adding them who were saved on a daily basis. Their evangelism was not an occasional or sporadic activity; it was part of their everyday life.

What a wonderful time this was to see the Lord working by His Spirit, and every day the church was growing. People were coming to Christ.

We should have the same passion as the early church. Too many churches have the same mentality of “Us four; no more; shut the door.” We’re comfortable. We have our little church and potlucks and we know each other.

Someone said, “If you’re not evangelizing, you’ll be fossilizing.” I like that. We need to go out and preach Christ. I don’t care how old you are, how young you are, how middle aged you are or how busy you are—“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel.”

Can you imagine if this fire started in just our church what would happen in our community? If all of us took the good news of Jesus Christ to this area? People would be coming to Christ, coming to church, being taught the Word of God and nurtured and disciplined in the Word of God. We’re to be an evangelistic church.

So their evangelism was a daily activity—on the job, in the grocery store.

I believe we should get up every morning and say, “Lord, open the door for me to share You with someone.” Anytime I pray that prayer, God opens the doors. It amazes me. And I need to get more and more into the habit of getting up every day and saying, “Lord, open the door. Wherever I go and whatever I do, open the door today for me to talk to someone.” Then, boom; the door swings wide open.

Sometimes we get a little nervous. “Ooh; it’s broad daylight. We’re in a public place!” So what? Some of the best opportunities I’ve had have been at Home Depot. They have been opportunities to preach the Gospel or share the good news. How wonderful that is!

So it should be a daily commitment. “Lord, open the door. Let me talk to my neighbors. Let me talk to my family. Let me reach out to others who need to know about You.”

Let me make some comments about evangelism. The world needs us to evangelize because they are lost without Jesus. There is a great and dire need for evangelism today to reach a lost world. We, as Christians, have the answer: it’s Jesus Christ.

In Romans 10:15, it says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace.” I always thought it would be cool to have a barefoot Sunday. We all come barefoot and remember that we have beautiful feet, that our feet are to take the Gospel to those who are in need. To reach out with your feet, to go to others, to open your mouth and tell others about Jesus Christ.

Secondly, I want you to note that the good news itself, in 1 Corinthians 15, is that, number one, Christ died for our sins; number two, He was buried; and number three, He rose from the dead on the third day.

Jesus died for you, because we're sinners and we're going to hell. But "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him..."—trusts in Him and puts their faith in Him—"...will not perish but have everlasting life." Just memorize John 3:16.

I remember one time I was in In-N-Out—one of my favorite places to hang out. I was out on the patio eating and hangin' out. Several businessmen were sitting right next to me having a lunch break. One of them holds up his cup and looked at the Scripture, John 3:16, written on the cup. He looked at it and said, "I wonder what that says."

I couldn't resist. I said, "I can tell you what it says." They were surprised. I quoted the entire verse and then shared with them that God loved them and sent His Son to die for them. They could be born again. I talked to them for about 10 minutes and then let them get back to work. But what a door that swung wide open! How awesome it was.

Whenever I fly on an airplane, the people who sit next to me ask, "Well, what do you do for a living?"

They freak out when I tell them. They think, Oh, no; stuck by a preacher for five hours!

The doors that God can open for you! You may not be an evangelist, but we are all called to evangelize in our place of influence, to share the Gospel. So we need to be in a church that reaches out. And the Gospel is simple: Jesus died, Jesus was buried, Jesus arose.

What is the goal of evangelism? Verse 47 says "those who were being saved." The whole passage ends with the word "saved." That's a good Biblical word; I like it. "Saved" from sin's penalty—Jesus paid the price; "saved" from sin's power—you don't need to be enslaved to sin any longer; and eventually "saved" from the presence of sin altogether—when we go to heaven and we're with the Lord. So lost sinners need to be "saved."

In Acts 16, when Paul and Silas were arrested and thrown into the jail, God sent an earthquake, the jail opened up and the jailer was going to take his own life with his sword, but Paul cried out, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!"

Then the jailer, trembling, said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" That's the most important question you could ever ask.

Paul said to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." That's how simple it is. Turn from your sin, trust in Jesus as your Savior and you will be saved. He paid the penalty for your sin. He can free you from the power of sin, and one day He'll free you from the very presence of sin altogether.

Now the church needs to be a learning church; we need to study and feed on the Word of God. The church needs to be a loving church; we need to love one another in fellowship, which is the mark of the believer. We need to have joyful worship, lifting our hearts in praise to God, and all our lives needs to be an act of worship. And lastly, we need to have an outgoing, ongoing

evangelism.

As I was going through the sermon, I thought of my request for you for me. What you can do for me is to pray that I never lose my passion, my commitment and my zeal in my heart to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray that as long as God gives me strength, gives me breath, health and ability, that I would continue to preach the good news of Jesus Christ.

And I'll be praying for you. I'll be praying that as you come and are built up in God's Word, as you worship God and as you love one another, that you will go back into the world with the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen.