

Redemption Lived Out

Thesis: In King Jesus we are as the New Covenant community (the Church), who is commissioned and empowered by the Spirit for a life of worship exemplified in our unified mission and devotion.

Big Question: What is the unified mission and devotion of the New Covenant community (the Church)? Who commissions and empowers us to live as a New Covenant community (the Church)?

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:4-5, 8

Introduction

Growing up I played a lot of team sports.

- Mainly, I played baseball and soccer.
 - On most of the teams I played, there was a fair amount of camaraderie and unity.
 - I'm sure if you've ever played team sports, you have felt that as well.

The cause of that camaraderie and unity comes from a singular mission and devotion.

- You are all in it together.
 - You are all devoted to becoming the best athlete you can be.
 - You are all working towards the same goal — to win the championship.
 - And all that brings the team together.
 - I've experienced that, and I'm sure you have experienced that as well.

But for all the camaraderie and unity I have experienced as a part of a team, nothing brings us together like Jesus.

- When we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior,
 - *We are restored to our original vocation.*
 - We are now capable of living as kingly priests.
 - *We also become the people of God.*
 - He is our Father and we are His children, which makes us all brothers and sisters in the Lord.
 - It makes us all a family.

If you think about it, that is amazing in and of itself because the people of God, the recreated New Covenant community, or what we might refer to as the church, is comprised of people from every nation, tribe, and tongue.

- We are a diverse yet unified group.

I don't know about you, but I feel that unity when I meet another Christian.

- It doesn't matter where I'm at.
 - I could be half-way across the world or down at the local Starbucks.
 - When I meet a fellow believer, there is an instant connection and bond that's formed.
 - I immediately feel comfortable and connected with them.

Why is that?

- It is because we are unified in our mission and devotion.
 - It is our mission that draws us together.
 - Which is why it is important we understand what our mission is and what we should be devoted to as a church.

Transition: So:

What is the unified mission and devotion of the New Covenant community (the Church)? Who commissions and empowers us to live as a New Covenant community (the Church)?

I am specifically using the term "New Covenant Community" because it is the promises of the New Covenant that changes us and brings us together.

- As we have seen throughout this entire series, we are desperately wicked.
 - We need a new heart — we need our will, wants, and desires changed so that they are inline with God's.
 - The Law couldn't do that.
 - We can't do that in of ourselves.
 - So a New Covenant was promised that would change man in that way.
 - Jesus ushered in the New Covenant through His life, death, and resurrection.
 - That's why we are a New Covenant Community.

If it weren't for Jesus, and His fulfillment of the New Covenant, we wouldn't exist.

- That is why we worship Jesus.
 - That is why we follow Jesus.
 - That is why we can call ourselves a church.

So that is why I specifically using the term "New Covenant Community."

Transition: Let's begin with the first question:

I. What is the Unified Devotion of the New Covenant Community (the Church)? (vs. Acts 2:42-47)

In Acts 2, after Peter's Spirit empowered preaching at Pentecost, a multitude of people began following Jesus as His disciples.

We are told in verse 41 that:

“...there were added that day about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41b)

We know from earlier in the chapter that those who heard Peter’s sermon were *“from every nation under heaven”* — verse 8.

- A number of the people who began to follow Jesus that day were from foreign countries.
 - I assume many of them carried the good news of Jesus back to their hometowns and began making disciples.
 - But many stayed in Jerusalem and joined the other disciples.
 - We are told starting in verse 42 what their day to day activity looked like.

The text says,

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Ac 2:42)

These were the practices they were devoted to.

- This is what they were unified around.

Transition: The first practice we discover is that:

Each day the apostles taught them more about God, Jesus, and how they were to live.

- They were focused on learning God’s Word, on knowing the God who saved them.

Transition: The same should characterize us.

(1) We should be focused on learning more about God, Jesus, and how we are to live ourselves.

APPLICATION: Being a member of a church shouldn’t be like being a member of a Country Club.

- We shouldn’t join for status, connections, or for what we can get out of it.
 - Instead, we join and come to church to help one another become better disciples of Jesus.
 - That should be our focus as a church — to learn how we can better follow Jesus and help others to do the same.
- **We take that series here at Eastridge, which is why part of our vision is for you to be disciple-making disciples.**
 - We don’t want you to get fat on the Word of God alone.
 - We want you to share what you are learning with others so they too can become a disciple and grow in their understanding of and obedience to God’s Word.

- To say it another way, we want you to know how to live out your restored vocation as priestly kings — serving and exercising dominion in God’s good creation in order to bring Him glory.
 - We want you to help others live as priestly kings to God’s glory too.
- That’s what we should be unified around.

Transition: As well as the early church teaches us that:

(2) We should fellowship with one another.

In others, **we should be “in community” with one another.**

- This means that we should be close with one another.
 - We should know what is going in each others lives.
 - How we can encourage and pray for one another.

APPLICATION: I’m sure this type of knowing occurs on some level but there’s always room for improvement.

- Instead of just telling you to improve, let me give you a **concrete way** in which you can work on your relationships with one another.
- *Now what I am about to ask you to do might be a bit difficult at the moment, since we are hindered by COVID.*
 - But what I want you to do is pick someone out in the congregation, it could be anyone — someone you know well or someone you don’t know well.
 - Pick someone out and invite them to do something with you.
 - Maybe that involves grabbing coffee, lunch, or doing some sort of outside activity where you can social distance but still hang out.
 - Whatever it may be, I want you to pick someone or a family and get together with them in the best and most appropriate way possible given the social distancing that is happening.
 - **Apart from gathering together, here is the concrete thing I want you to do:**
 - ***I want you to make it a point to ask them how you can pray for them and how you can encourage them in the faith.***

Now, I know that sounds a little uncomfortable, but if we truly want to experience the level of fellowship Luke is writing about in the book of Acts, that’s a practice we need to incorporate into our natural rhythms with one another.

- The easiest way to start is to just do it.
 - And I want you to feel free to use my challenge as a reason you are asking someone how you can pray for or encourage them.
 - I don’t care.

- I just want you to start doing it and continue doing it on a regular basis.
- So take some time this week, pray, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to fellowship with others in our congregation, and then invite someone to hang out.
- After all, in Christ, we have been restored to the same family.
 - We are all citizens of the same kingdom.
 - So we should act like family and fellow citizens by gathering with one another “in community”.

Transition: Along with learning that we should be “disciple-making” disciples and live “in community” with one another, the early church also teaches us that:

(3) We should break bread together.

The early church participated in the Lord’s Supper with one another regularly.

- The reason they did that, and the reason we should do that, is to constantly remind ourselves of Jesus’ work on our behalf.
 - When we keep Jesus’ sacrifice in front of us, it’s hard to keep sinning against one another and God.
- **The Lord’s Supper should drive gratitude for what God has done for us by sending His Son to die on our behalf.**
 - We should want to work on His behalf as little “k” kings and priests.
 - We should want to please Him.
 - Not to earn or keep our salvation, but simple as a way to worship and glorify Him.
 - **By regularly observing the Lord’s Supper we should be driven to obedience and unity with one another as we remember Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf.**

Transition: Lastly, the early church teaches us that:

(4) We should pray for one another

Certainly, we should pray for one another’s physical ailments, but we should also be praying for one another on a spiritual level.

- That means we have to be willing to ask others **how they are doing spiritually**, as well as we have to be willing to tell others **how we are doing spiritually**.

Telling others how you are doing spiritually doesn’t mean you are always sharing your struggles.

- It also means you share with them how God is working in your life for good.
 - By sharing how you are doing spiritually, you:
 - **a. Benefit from their prayers.**

- ***b. You also glorify God.***

- As others hear about the work God is doing in your life, they should be driven to praise and worship God.
- When we praise and worship God, we bring glory to God.
 - When you don't share with others, you are actually doing yourself and them a disservice.

Transition: So:

These were the practices the New Testament Church was devoted to.

- These are the practices we should be devoted to.
- When we devote ourselves to these practices, we living out our priestly vocation.
 - We are serving one another and keeping one another in Christ.
- When we are devoted to these practices, we **accomplish our vision as a church** to *“live in community and on mission with one another making disciple-making disciples of all peoples”*.

Transition: So those are the practices we should devote ourselves to.

- **But if you notice, most all those practices are internal to the community that already exists.**
 - As a church, it is easy for us to turn our attention internally.
 - To just focus on what happens within the four walls of this church.

But we haven't been called to just devote ourselves to ***Inreach***.

- We have also been called to ***Outreach***
 - Part of living for God is expanding His kingdom as we seek to bring others into it.
 - As New Covenant people, as the church, we have a mission.
 - A mission that should unify and focus us.

II. What is the Unified Mission of the New Covenant people (the Church)? (vs. Matt 28:18-20)

As we have walked through the storyline of Scripture, we have seen that Jesus is the true Priestly King.

- He perfectly images God, rendering complete and absolute obedience to the Father.
 - As a result, He is given absolute dominion over this world.

Matthew 28:18 says,

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Mt 28:18)

Based on Jesus' Kingly and Priestly authority, He gives us our mission beginning in verse 19. He says,

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," (Mt 28:19a)

Because Jesus is the ultimate Priest and King, He can commission us in this way.

- We can be confident that when we go out in Jesus' name we will accomplish the mission He has given.
- He has authority over this entire world.
 - What He wants to happen will happen.

Transition: The mission He gives us is *"to make disciples"*.

A. WHAT'S A DISCIPLE?

A simple definition of a **disciple** is someone who follows a specific teacher or leader.

- When Jesus tells us that we are to *"make disciples"*, what He means is that we are to cause others to follow Him.
- The way we make disciples is by telling them the good news about Jesus so that they would want to follow Him too.
 - We aren't in the business of forcing anyone to follow Jesus if they don't want to.
 - Instead we are to convince others that following Jesus is what's best.

Transition: Why is that?

B. WHY IS FOLLOWING JESUS WHAT'S BEST FOR US?

- Last week we learned that **Jesus is our substitutionary sacrifice**.
 - He died in our place.
 - He took the punishment we deserve.
 - Those who believe Jesus took our punishment experience a restored relationship with God.
 - We don't have to do anything.
 - No works, no trip, no money paid.
 - We just have to believe.
 - Jesus' sacrifice and His righteousness is credited to our account.

We also learned that Jesus changes us.

- Our hearts are desperately wicked.
 - We don't want God.

- We want to be king.
 - We want to direct our own lives.
 - Unless Jesus changes our heart — not the physical organ inside of us, but our will, wants and desires.
 - Unless Jesus changes our heart, we will continue to rebel against God.
 - We will continue to seek to be big “K” kings, instead of little “k” kings.

Following Jesus reorients our lives.

- We should recognize who God is and who we are.
 - We should assume our rightful place in this world as little “k” kings who live according to God’s wisdom and work for God’s glory.

Following Jesus is what is best for us.

- (1) We not only experience a **restored relationship with the Father instead of eternal punishment in Hell.**
 - (2) **But we also are changed so that we will live according to our God given purpose.**
 - We will live as priestly kings.

- **When we live according to God’s wisdom, life generally goes well for us.**

ILLUSTRATION: Almost every night during dinner, I read one or two **Proverbs** and discuss them with the boys.

- As we have done that for the last 6 weeks or so, we have consistently seen that life goes well for those who live according to God’s wisdom.
- Now, it is Proverbs.
 - You have to balance the book’s message with a book like **Ecclesiastes**, which tells us that some times the wicked succeed and the righteous don’t.
 - But generally, when we live according to God’s wisdom, when we press into our God given purpose, we are moving with the design and fabric of this world instead of swimming against it.
 - Swimming down stream is much easier and more enjoyable than trying to swim upstream.

As disciples as followers of Jesus, we can experience the good life as we swim along with God’s design and wisdom.

- Not a “**live your best life now**” type of good life.
 - But we can experience the good life.
 - **We can experience true joy and satisfaction even though this world is broken because we experience restoration.**

Having experienced the benefits of the gospel, we should want to tell others the good news so that they too will want to follow Jesus and experience purpose and meaning in life, as they live out God's original design.

- That's our mission, that's what we are to do — we are to make disciple-making disciples of Jesus.

Transition: How do we do that?

C. HOW DO WE MAKE DISCIPLE-MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS?

- We make disciples by **going, baptizing, and teaching.**

Transition: The first of those is:

(1) Going

Again in the beginning of verse 19 Jesus says,

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations," (Mt 28:19a)

Going tells us that we aren't to sit stagnant.

- We aren't to just let folks come to us.
 - Instead we are to go and find folks to tell the good news.
- And when Jesus tells us to go, He doesn't just mean for us to go on a mission trip, or go and be a missionary in another country.
 - Or wait until the church puts together an outreach event.
 - Those things are necessary and we should do them, but that's not all that Jesus means when He tells us to go.
 - Instead He has in mind that we are making disciples **as we are going about our day.**
 - So whether we are living in Africa, China, or Red Oak, we are to make disciples as we are going.
 - This is what it looks like for us to live "on mission" for Jesus.

APPLICATION: Just so you know, that is part of the vision of our church for a reason.

- You should live "on mission" each and every single day.
 - You should be thinking of and practicing ways in which you can reach your community for Christ.
- Now, notice I didn't say the church should be providing you with outreach events every day or every week for you to participate in.
 - Certainly, we will host outreach events as a church.

- But we can't plan and organize an outreach event every single day. Or even every week.
 - But you know who can reach out to others every day?
 - You can, as you are living "on mission" for Jesus.
- **I want you to think of outreach as being less about an event and more about a relationship.**
 - You should be seeking to develop and cultivate relationships with non-Christians on a regular basis.
 - You shouldn't be waiting for me to provide you with an outreach event that is going to last an hour or two once a quarter.
 - We aren't going to be a church known for making disciples if that is our main mode of outreach.
 - But if we each see ourselves as missionaries specifically placed in this community to reach people for Christ, we will have a great impact on Red Oak and the surrounding areas.
 - We will be a church that is "*on mission for Jesus making disciple-making disciples of all peoples.*"
 - It is a **paradigm shift**, but let me encourage you to embrace it and begin pressing into that way of thinking this week.
 - **Ask yourself:**
 - How can I live as a missionary in my community?
 - How can I reach those around me with the gospel?
 - How can I build relationships with non-believers?
 - **Don't think you have to do this alone.**
 - Often times we think evangelism is a solo personal activity.
 - It can be.
 - But it doesn't have to be.
 - Invite some of your Christian friends to get to know some of your non-Christian friends and let them begin to form relationships and have conversations with one another.
 - Invite folks in your neighborhood over for dinner.
 - When the time is right invite them over to a Bible study with your Christian friends.
 - You don't have to go at this alone; we are a church for a reason.

So begin seeing yourself as a missionary in your own community.

Transition: Along with going — living as a missionary in your own community — we also make disciple-making disciples by:

(2) *Baptizing those who believe the gospel*

That's what Jesus tells us in the remainder of verse 19 when He says,

“baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” (Mt 28:19a)

Now, you have to know that Jesus doesn't tell us to baptize others because baptism saves them.

- Instead, He tells us to baptize because Baptism shows a person's commitment to follow Him
 - In other words, it shows that they are aligning themselves with Jesus as His follower.
 - So we don't baptize in order to save or to complete the salvation process.
- **Instead, we baptize not only to make a person's commitment to follow Jesus something that they will remember, but it also serves as a witness to others and the world that they are committing themselves to follow Jesus.**
 - That's why baptism is done publicly instead of privately.

Transition: Along with going and baptizing, we make disciple-making disciples by:

(3) Teaching those who believe the gospel to obey all God has commanded in His Word

Look at the beginning of verse 20. There Jesus says that we are to:

“[teach] them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Mt 28:20a)

This command isn't just for Pastors.

- It's for everyone.
 - We are all commanded to teach others how to follow Jesus.

That tells us, then, that making disciples isn't just about winning someone to Christ so that they make a profession of faith.

- Making disciples involves much more.
 - It involves us teaching others what it means and how to follow Jesus.

Before you start rethinking my earlier comment that this isn't just a command for pastors, know that you can teach in many different ways.

- You may teach in a **formal setting** like I'm doing right now.
- Or you might teach your **family** through **conversation** at the **dinner table** or a **regular family devotion**.
 - You might also **teach others** at **church** by joining into the **discussion** during Sunday School or Bible study.
 - Or you might **get together** with **another church member** for **lunch** or **coffee** and **talk** about what **God is doing in your life**.

- There are a number of different ways you can teach others, which means it's possible for us all to be teachers.
- In some sense that's encouraging, but in another sense that's scary because it means that we are all either teaching others how to be or how not to be disciples of Jesus.

So that's our unified mission and how we can accomplish it.

Transition: But you know, we don't accomplish that mission, nor do we live devoted to one another in community in our own power.

- Instead we receive a power outside ourselves that helps us fulfill our kingly and priestly roles.
 - That helps us to make disciples.

III. Who empowers us to live as a New Covenant community (the Church)? (vs. Acts 1:4-5,8)

After Jesus' resurrection and before His ascension, He stayed with the disciples for 40 days comforting and teaching them more about the kingdom of God.

- Starting in verse 4 of Acts chapter 1 we read,

"And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" (Ac 1:4-5)

And a little bit later in verse 8, Jesus tells them the benefit of the Holy Spirit when He says,

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Ac 1:8)

What empowers us for mission is not only a changed heart that Jesus fashions for us in the New Covenant, but the Spirit He sends.

- We are empowered for our mission by the Holy Spirit.
- He is the reason we are able to make disciples.
 - He's the reason we are able to **boldly proclaim** the **gospel** to others, **answer their objections**, and **convince them** that **following Jesus** is what's best.
 - He's the reason we are able to **write books**, **preach sermons**, and **teach Bible studies**.
 - He's the reason we are able to **learn foreign languages**, **culture**, and **practices**, and leave a **comfortable life** to live as **missionaries in an uncomfortable or dangerous environment**.
 - He's the reason we are able to do what we **have done** and **will do** for the kingdom.

- Making disciples doesn't come natural to us, nor is it something we do in our own strength, rather it's something we are empowered to do by God Himself.
- He calls us to the task, and He empowers us to complete the task.

Transition: And

If that's true.

- If the Holy Spirit is the One who empowers us for the task of making disciples, then we **need to make sure** that we are **depending on** Him and **seeking His power to accomplish our mission**.
- The way we do that is by praying for Him to empower us on a daily basis.
 - Prayer is powerful.
 - It accomplishes a number of things, including us being empowered for the task of making disciples.

Transition: So:

These are the things we should be devoted to as church.

- These should be the things we are unified around.

Honestly, when we are unified around these things, fights and disagreements will be at a minimum.

- When they do occur, we will seek **reconciliation** quickly so that we can get back on mission.

When we are unified around these things, we will always be on the look out for one another's spiritual health.

- When we see others slipping, we will pray for and encourage them.
 - We will **speak the truth in love**, even if it means having a difficult conversation and putting our relationship on line.
- When we see others doing well, we will **encourage** them to keep pressing on in the faith.
- When we are unified with one another, we will be better **witnesses** to the world.
 - People will actually want to be a part of our family.

Conclusion

But again, we don't do these things in our own strength, nor do we accomplish our mission in our own strength.

- It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to accomplish the mission Jesus has given us "to make disciple-making disciples of all peoples".

That's what we are to do until Jesus returns.

- **We will look at Jesus' return, His restoration of all things, next week, as we finish our series.**

But for now, I encourage you to be faithful to your Spirit empowered mission — *to Make Disciples and to be devoted to the teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer, as we seek to live in community and on mission for Jesus making disciple-making disciples of all peoples.*

If you don't yet know Jesus, but you realize that you are a rebel who is seeking His throne, now is an opportunity to turn to Him, to believe that He is your Lord and Savior.

Let's go to the Lord in Prayer.