

## **Acts 2:42-47 – Gathered and Scattered**

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, *attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes*, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” – Acts 2:42-47

The church is the church so far as it practices the rhythms of gathering and scattering. The church becomes the church by gathering in a place. The church fulfills its role as the church as it scatters into the world to proclaim the good news of the Gospel. Both happen. A church cannot be a church without a gathering. A church cannot fulfill its role without the scattering.

### **Gathered – “... attending the temple together...”**

We gather to hear the Word of God, to be shaped by the truths of Scripture, and to see Jesus for who He is and what He has done afresh and anew. The gathering of the local church is the unique expression of the universal church who gathers to both proclaim the Lordship of Christ and exalt Him as so. Think of it like an outpost for the kingdom of God. By gathering, we are saying that we are God's people, and He is our God. We know, too, that “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them” (Matthew 18:20). This verse is God calling us to gather together *as a church*, and He meets us there to form and shape us as a people for his own possession.

Jonathan Leeman explains it this way: “We gather in order to represent heaven’s rule and judgments, establish a visible outpost of Christ’s kingdom, testify to the King, identify citizens of the kingdom, form a people, mobilize a people, and exalt the King.”<sup>[1]</sup>

From the beginning, God has been forming and shaping a people for Himself. God dwelt with Adam and Eve in the garden, but their sin brought an end to that perfect fellowship. From Abraham onward, God would continue the work of calling a people to Himself. In Genesis 12:2-3, God tells Abram (Abraham), “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The gathering of Citizens Church is a manifestation of that promised great nation that God would gather through Abraham. (Think “Father Abraham had many sons, and many sons had Father Abraham...”). Not only that, our gathering is a practice for what is to come. We see in Revelation 7 that a great multitude from every tongue, tribe, and nation will gather before the throne to praise God (Revelation 7:9-13). Our gathering as Citizens Church is a local, unique expression of that promised reality to come. Gathering as the church body is not optional, rather it is proclaiming that God is our God and we are His people.

## **Scattered – “... and breaking bread in their homes.”**

From the gathering, the church scatters into the world. God's shaping and forming that happens on a Sunday should affect the Monday-Saturday. We bear the marks of this worship and discipleship from a Sunday gathering, and we strive to subject our entire lives to the Word of God. As we do this, it is natural and right for us to seek to engage the rest of the world with the Good News of Christ our King.

The gathering on Sundays should lead to collective scattering throughout the week. This looks like hospitality - hosting people (both believers and nonbelievers) in your home throughout the week; discipleship - life-on-life relationships where the rubber of 'hearing the Gospel' meets the road of 'doing the Gospel'; and evangelism - sharing the Good News that Christ is Lord and Savior.

Quite possibly the most enticing thing about the church in our modern, individualistic culture is that the church does not exist for itself. God calls His people to serve Him, not themselves. Understanding this truth is crucial if we are going to fulfill our roles as God's disciples. The Great Commission calls us as ambassadors to reflect the goodness of our God as we share the Gospel, serve our neighbors, and shape disciples. The Gospel was never meant to stop with you; rather, it was meant to go through you into the world. This is the role of the church in the world, and this is how we adhere to the Great Commission.

Jack Miller explains it this way: “Christ has no other agency for accomplishing this work. That is why the church is called... ‘a commissioned church.’ It is commissioned to act as Christ's sole representative for carrying the Gospel to the nations. Thus the Great Commission assigns the church as task, a missionary purpose, as the means for accomplishing Christ's broader purpose, the ingathering of the whole people of God.”<sup>[2]</sup>

To top it all off, Jesus empowers us for this calling. He tells us, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Not only does Jesus call us to be salt in a decaying world and light in a dark world (Matthew 5:13-16), but he enables us to do it – He gives us the Holy Spirit. It is our divine privilege to scatter, to apply the forming and shaping of the gathering on Sundays to all of life Monday - Saturday through our faithful hospitality, discipleship, and evangelism

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<sup>[1]</sup> Leeman, Jonathan. “The Church Gathered.” *The Gospel Coalition*, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-church-gathered/>.

<sup>[2]</sup> Miller, C. John. *Outgrowing the Ingrown Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999, 55.