

RCC - Back to Church - Ps 121:1 -- June 28, 2020

Why Do I Need the Church? -- Acts 2:42

Aim: I need the church because it connects me to others.

Intro -- The Fellowship. It's our 3rd week back to the church and our 2nd Sunday in our new series. Last week, we started a new sermon series, "Come Back to Church--Why Do I Need the Church? The truth is, you need the church and the church needs you. From Acts 2:42, we learned the first reason why--It connects us to God's word (Truth, How God's word works, foundation, story and hope). Today, we're turning to the next reason--the fellowship.

We need the church because we need the church. We need each other. More on that, in a minute.

*Someone once said, "The church would be a great place, if there were no people in it." I admit, that's kind of a cynical point of view. Doesn't that contradict the point of the church--meaning, the church is made of people? We can either focus on the flaws and failures of the church (and there are plenty of them) or we can see the blessings that God brings to each other through Christ. **The church is not just a place of unfortunate problems, but a group of people with unlimited possibilities.**

*The Fellowship -- Jesus is building His church and regardless of her imperfections, He will build, perfect and glorify His prevailing church. (Matt 16:18). The church that He began on Pentecost (the celebration of firstfruits), by the power of the Holy Spirit, Gospel preaching and penitent hearts ready to receive a salvation message. And, they did and 3000 people repented and were baptized, creating the first fellowship of believers in Jerusalem. When I hear the word fellowship, it makes me think of two things:

1. The Fellowship of the Rings - the first movie in the Lord of the Rings Trilogy. And, this fits right in with what we're talking about today. (Give a recap of the Fellowship of the Ring) and the second thing is:

2. Fellowship=Food. Growing up in the church, I always equated "fellowship with eating", meals after church, cookies/coffee after Sun night church, etc. You know what I'm talking about. But, it's so much more. The church in Acts was devoted to the fellowship -- Koinonia "to have in common." Christ.

I. Identity -- The church is a family of believers We don't use the family term to be sentimental but because the Bible calls us a family--God, the Father, Jesus our brother. 1. You were born into a biological family. It may not have been the most put together family, but you were born into one. Had things in common and had differences. 2. You were also born again (John 3:3) into a new family--kingdom of God. There are 3 ways to get into a family--birth, marriage and adoption. We come into the church family by all 3. We have differences and things in common. (ILL - Francis Chan - befriends/wins a young man in a gang. Came to church for a few weeks, then Awol. "I thought the church was a family.")

II. Community -- The church enjoins me to share life with others. When you become a Christian, you are not a part of a family, a community and life is no longer about you--but about others, other people in the Koinonia, the fellowship. What matters to you, now matters to them. And, what matters to them, now matters to you. When someone hurts, you feel their pain. When someone is honored, you rejoice with them (I Cor 12:26). Life is very hard here and it's harder when you're alone.. But, as the church, you now begin to share life, your faith, difficulties and joys--all of it. They can help you and you can help them. A Christian can't divorce themselves from the church and still be a Christian (One Another's of the Bible--love, pray for, encourage, confess your sins, carry others' burdens, weep with others, rejoice, serve, etc.).

III. Ministry -- The church is where I get to use my gifts to serve others. The church is not a place, but a people. A group of people where you and I can belong. We can belong to a family, a community and we can belong, find a ministry, a place to serve. If you think the church is just a place to feel good, then you've got the wrong place. The fellowship is a place where I want to be; I get to be here; it's a privilege, a blessing of God's grace to me. Bob Russell says that, Christian service is not, serve us. This is not Wal-Mart. You are not a consumer. You are a fellow believer in Christ, that has been given Spiritual Gifts from on high to minister to others in the body--to encourage, edify, build people up. (Mention some Spiritual Gifts - Heather/Sherri feeding people). I know, it's been slow going, getting back to church. But, we all need to discover our gifts and find a ministry to serve in. (Mark 10:45, Acts 20:35).

Studies have shown that people may attend a worship service for a while, but if they don't get plugged in, they are minimally committed or they just leave. Proverbs tells us, "A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul..."

IV. Responsibility -- The church gives me an opportunity to help the family grow (Acts 2:47). As much as many of us would like to stay in our close-knit family and keep our community small, we can't. The fellowship is expected to grow; to bring

new believers into our community. And, we all have a responsibility to make that happen. It's good that we have fellowship on the inside, but we've got to go beyond the comforts of our church and go into the world and tell others about our family here at RCC. That means, we need to put ourselves in places where unbelieving, unchurched people are (Matt 5:13-16). We can't be salt and light if everyone we're around are already Christians. Jesus said that we would be His witnesses (Acts 1:8). That means to tell others what we've heard and seen about Jesus and His church. The church; the fellowship in Acts were steadfastly committed to each other and reaching others that would be a part of the fellowship (Acts 8:4).

*Sharing My Faith? -- I know sharing our faith is hard, uncomfortable, etc. But, much is at stake and Christ is trusting us to get the job done. I just want you to remember 4 things that may help us all be motivated to see this family grow:

1. We have not resisted to the point of shedding blood. (Heb 12:4). No one is holding a guy to your head or throwing you in prison for talking about Jesus.
2. Pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send out laborers into His harvest field. (Matt 9:38).
3. Remember those who invited you and shared Jesus with you (Heb 13:7).
4. What you feed grows. What you starve dies.

Conclusion -- "The Fellowship"

*The First Fellowship -- God, Son and Holy Spirit -- The Fellowship of all Fellowships. They gave us the pattern, desire and need for both God and others.

*Jesus Called the 12 as His Fellowship. Those He spent time with, praying for, investing in, encouraging, loving, speaking truth and sending them out. But, He wasn't satisfied with just 12. Then 120, then 3000, then 5000. Now, hundreds of millions. Who will be next?

*We're a part of the Koinoia--a specially, called, redeemed group of believers, who are heaven-bound. But, we want as many as possible to join our fellowship.

