

“CHURCH ALIVE”

- The Resurrectionally-Powered Church Devoted To The Breaking Of Bread –
(The Book of Acts)

Intro ... “Church Alive!” – That’s the title of this little series of messages that’s now but three weeks old. It’s been a natural and almost necessary follow-up to our Pre-Easter Series we called “Power for Living”. Our goal in that series was to arrive at Easter Sunday “more alive in Christ than we had ever been before”. The focus of that series was the “resurrection power” that God unleashed in the world that first Resurrection Day – the divine power that ‘raised Jesus from physical death’ and granted to him a gloriously transformed life.

That resurrection power - that transformational power - is still in the world today – it’s the very power that is employed every time God raises someone from spiritual death and implants within him/her spiritual life.

That “resurrection power” is what enables those spiritually born-again people to live in this fallen, sin-filled world as true Sons and Daughters of God. It gloriously affects every part of their lives as it ‘*bubbles up*’ within and ‘*bubbles out*’ from each of them. Those messages will soon be available in booklet form for any of you who would like one.

This “**Church Alive!**” series of messages has been developed in response to the following **Key Question ...**

What would an (entire) Church of
“Resurrectionally-Powered” members look like?

You see ... The church is to the individual believer what the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is to an outstanding solo performer ... the solo performer can definitely impress and inspire. But the solo performer can also cause you to sense your own limitations and inadequacies. The great solo performer can certainly seem like “*the only one of his kind*”. The solo performer might cause one to think that “music” is (by its very nature) a solitary enterprise.

The 300 or 400 member MormOn Tabernacle Choir on the other hand demonstrates that music is not at all a ‘*solitary thing*’ and that it doesn’t require exceptional individual talent to be expressed well. That world-renowned choir demonstrates that a group of musically minded people can together create an absolutely awesome impact – the force of their music can literally “*blow people away*”.

So it is with the Church of Jesus Christ ... Jesus is building a choir – not developing solo performers.

So what does Jesus intend his “**Church Choir**” to look like – How would he desire their individual talents to be blended together?

In answer to that **Series Key Question** we have adopted the following **Key Process** ...

Examine the New Testament Churches to discover their unique
Methods and Ministry for they are ones of whom it was said ...

‘They turned the world upside-down’.
(Acts 17:6 KJV)

Now in the examination of their unique methods and ministries, we have come across a key verse – a verse that summarizes exactly what those methods and ministries were. It’s Acts 2:42 ...

*“They devoted themselves to the Apostles’ Doctrine (**CONTENT**) and to the Fellowship (**COMMUNITY**) and to the Breaking of Bread (**COMMUNION**) and to Prayer (**CONNECTION**).”*

So far we have “examined” – taken a look at – the first two of those four ... They devoted themselves to the Apostles’ Doctrine (the content of the faith) and to the Fellowship (the Community of Saints).

This morning let’s ‘take a look’ at the third ...

THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD ...

Key Word: COMMUNION

The initial thing that I want us to see here is that Luke is referring to a “**Corporate**” Activity” ... This ‘*breaking of bread*’ was something that ‘they’ – a group of them – would share in together and the something that they were sharing was a ‘*reminder*’ perhaps even a “*re-enactment*’ of the meal Jesus shared with his disciples the night he was betrayed.

Jesus had said to them that night ...

“Do this in remembrance of me”.

Can you imagine sharing in a meal with Peter or James or John at the head of the table and saying to you ...

*“I remember the night we shared that final meal with Jesus –
He broke the bread and gave it to us and said,
‘This is my body which is given for you’ ...*

*And then he took the cup and said,
‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood.’”*

Can you imagine what it would have been like to hear any of those Apostles admit that they didn't really know what Jesus was meaning when he spoke those words and how the meaning has come to them even as it has come to all those around the table with them?

Hear Peter (or any of them) say...

“Jesus laid down his life on Calvary as a sacrifice for sin in keeping with the Father’s Plan to save man from condemnation. Jesus’ shed blood opened the door to a new covenant relationship with the Father Himself. Through faith in the work of Christ we have become true Sons and Daughters of God and full heirs to all the Glories of the Kingdom.”

Can't you just imagine the invitations the apostles received to come and sit at the head of every household table and lead them in such a meal?

Luke says that they were “**devoted**” to the breaking of bread ... They were passionate about meeting together to ‘relive’ the critical truths of their faith – especially with Jesus’ original dinner guests right there with them!

This too is a passion that Christ would have His Church today experience. This too is a big part of them becoming a “*transformational fellowship*”. Communion packs a punch – it generates a powerful pull on the heart when properly experienced. It surely did for the early church.

Consider with me this morning ...

THREE OUTCOMES OF THEIR CORPORATE COMMUNION ...

1. THEIR CORPORATE COMMUNION DREW THEM TO ONE ANOTHER

(Acts 2:46)

“*Broke bread in their homes*” ... Every meal had a **sacred** significance!

“*Ate with glad and sincere hearts*” ... Every meal both **satisfied** and **unified!**

Just think about those phrases for a moment ... “*Every meal had a sacred significance*” and “*Every meal both satisfied and unified*”. It puts an entirely different perspective on family meal times, doesn't it?

In those early days, the believers' thoughts turned to Christ every time they picked up a piece of bread or drank a cup of wine.

They were continually conscious of all that he had done for them and they found joy and satisfaction in everything that reminded them of it (and him).

I can imagine the father of such a family gathering asking those around his table questions like these ...

“What did our Heavenly Father reveal to you about Himself today?”

What occasion today caused you to focus upon Christ’s incredible sacrifice?

What today made you glad that you have been made part of Christ’s Church?

When today were you most sensitive to the stirrings of the new life within you?

I can imagine at some point of every meal, the father of the home taking a piece of bread and reminding them all that Jesus said ...

“This bread is my body which is (has been) given for you” ...

I can imagine him as well saying ...

“As we eat this bread tonight, we remember (and honor) him.”

I can imagine him also pointing out to them that the “wine” sitting on the table in front of them is a reminder of the precious blood of Christ shed on Calvary in payment for their sins and that because of his perfect sacrifice they now enjoy a brand new relationship with their Holy God.

And as they reviewed such things and rejoiced in such things, they were drawn to one another in a bond both physical and spiritual. Is it any wonder that they were “**devoted**” to such behavior?

Well it’s easy to see how such an experience at meal time would lead directly to the **Second** of these **Three Outcomes** for their corporate experience of communion not only drew them to one another in an ever-closer bond ...

2. THEIR CORPORATE COMMUNION DREW THEM TO CHRIST

(John 6:56; 1 Corinthians 10:16)

This is an inevitable result of a properly experienced communion ...
Jesus himself said ...

“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, remains in me.”

The Apostle Paul would ask the Corinthian believers ...

“Is not the cup of thanksgiving ... a participation in the blood of Christ?”

“Is not the bread we break a participation of the body of Christ?”

The very Spirit of Christ – the very Presence of Christ – is found in the elements and the experience of communion.

There is a sense that (somehow) Jesus Himself is here in our midst when we “*eat the bread*” and “*drink of the cup*” in a proper and thoughtful manner.

It’s almost like when Jesus came and stood in the midst of his troubled and perplexed disciples that first Easter Evening and said to them ...

“Peace be with you.”

Who wouldn’t want to feel that again and again?

Communion, in a very unique way, re-creates that moment. For the apostles themselves it must have been a moment that re-charged them every time.

And more than that ... Jesus said that this communion experience would have a “*residual effect*” ...

“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will remain in me.”

In other words,

“He (the communion participant) will find himself uniquely linked to me and his life will reflect my grace and power within him.”

Is it any wonder the early believers were “**devoted**” to communion?

And now for the **Third** and final **Outcome** of Their Corporate Communion - an outcome that would have been incredibly important to these mostly Jewish church members ...

3. THEIR CORPORATE COMMUNION DREW THEM TO THE FATHER

(Acts 2:47; Acts 3:13)

“Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”

“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ... has glorified His Son Jesus.”

Here are the fuller passages ...

“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, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”

(Acts 2:46-47)

*“Men of Israel, why does this (the healing of the crippled beggar) surprise you?
Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this lame man walk.
The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our Fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus (and)
it is by faith in the name of Jesus, that this man ... was made strong.
Repent, then and **turn to God** so that your sins may be wiped out.”
(Acts 3:12-13; 16, 19)*

It's always been about the Father ...

Mankind has always been intended to “*worship the Father*” ...

These Jewish believers had spent their whole lives seeking to “*fully worship*” the Father ...

And now a way had been provided for them to do what they had yearned since childhood to do ... Worship the Father in spirit and in truth!

Their ‘*new birth*’ had provided for them what had up until that time been missing ... a way to personally connect with the Father.

No need for any priest to represent them; no need for more sacrifices to qualify them. They were the next generation – the new model – the spiritually alive version - of the Children of Abraham.

Their common experience of **Communion** – with its focus on their fellowship and its focus upon their Savior’s sacrifice – drew them like the tractor beam of the starship Enterprise into the very Throne Room of the Father Himself.

The very thing for which the hearts of the best of them had ached for so long was now theirs to enjoy ... Fellowship – true kinship – with the Almighty God – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What could be better – what could be more praiseworthy?

And so they praised Him and **devoted** themselves to his special thing that drew them ever closer to Him!

Final Thot ...

A properly conducted **COMMUNION** service generates a **POWERFUL PULL!**
Allow yourself to be **DRAWN** along.