

Title: **Devoted: Becoming the Church Christ Has Redeemed Us to Be (Pt 1)**
Text: **Acts 2:42-47**
Date: **August 13, 2023**

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Big Idea

The church is that blessed assembly that exists in the *presence of God, as the people of God, for the purpose of God.* It's what we were created to be from the beginning in Adam. And it's what we're now being redeemed to be once more in Christ.

As we consider our core value of Faith and this upward momentum back towards the presence of God in Jesus, I want to look with you at the three different ways we see this playing out in the early church as recorded for us in Acts 2 . . .

1. The Apostles' Teaching

Though we may be prone to pin the Spirit of God against the Word of God, the two always form a dovetail with each other. The Spirit of God leads to the Word of God. The Word of God leads to the Spirit of God. There's a synergy, a vital partnership between the two. And if you have one without the other, it's likely you don't truly have either.

This devotion to the apostles' teaching we see kickstarted by the Spirit here in Acts 2 will remain the major emphasis of the Christian community from this time forth. It's what we see as they minister in and around Jerusalem (cf. Acts 5:28; 6:4). And it's what we see as they move outside of Jerusalem and begin to reach into the Gentile world (11:26; 18:11; 19:9-10; 20:31-32). There was a devotion to the apostles' teaching from beginning to end, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

2. The Breaking of Bread

"When [Jesus] wanted fully to explain what his forthcoming death was all about, he didn't give a theory. He didn't even give them a set of scriptural texts. He gave them a meal" (N.T. Wright). But why? Because sometimes it's not enough just to hear that God loves you. You

need to see it. The Lord's Supper is gospel show and tell. It's a sermon for our senses. It's forgiveness you can feel. It's the love of God coming at us in a way we can see, touch, taste, and experience.

3. The Prayers

For the Christian, prayer should be both formal and informal. It should be both scheduled at certain points and spontaneous at others. It should be both structured and free flow. We should set apart certain times to give ourselves to prayer in a more focused fashion, but then we should also be praying continually all throughout the day. Why? Because we believe God hears us. Because we believe nothing's going to happen without him. Because we believe that in Jesus the line of communication between God and man has been opened back up. We're not orphans going about our lives in our own strength. We're God's children. We "have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Rom. 8:15). The Spirit is given to us. And he doesn't just open our ears to hear the Word of God (i.e. the apostles' teaching); he also opens our mouths so that we cry out like kids in prayer to God. We can have relationship with him. We can talk with God!

* * *

We get the grace, because Jesus took the judgement. We get to hear the Word of God, because he got God's silence as he hung there on that cross. We get fellowship with the Father around the table, because his body was broken like bread and his blood was poured out like wine. We can pray with confidence that God hears us, because Jesus prayed in Gethsemane and God turned his back. We can be restored to God's presence, because Jesus was booted out from it: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).



Reflection Questions

- Are you a "person of the book"? Are you devoted to the apostles' teaching? Are you in the Scriptures and, through them, growing in your relationship with God in Christ? Why or why not? What, if anything, needs to change?
- Which of the three activities of the early church identified in this sermon seems most relevant to you right now and why?

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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate relationship with him. This value presses our church *upwards* in love for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. This value presses our church *inwards* in love for the

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our church *outwards* in love for the

Neighbor | We are the Family of God and brought into covenantal relationship with him. This value presses our one another.

Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.

Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Mercy Hill Youth Hangout - Today!

All Mercy Hill Youth (6th thru 12th grade) are invited for a hangout after service today at 12:30pm! We'll have time for fellowship, prayer, and getting in God's Word. And we even plan to provide some pizza! Our plan, weather permitting, is to meet at the picnic tables in the pavilion around the back of Allen at Steinbeck Elementary. See ya there!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at youth@mercyhillchurch.org.

SVA Forum: Did Jesus Really Exist?

Many people, both religious and non-religious, believe Jesus was a real person, but is this a safe assumption? What reasons do we have to doubt or believe that he really existed (or really exists)?

On Saturday, August 26th beginning at 3:30pm, Nick will be dialoguing with the former president of Atheists of Silicon Valley at an event put on by the Silicon Valley Areopagus Forum. You won't want to miss it!

Please see the QR code below to find more info and a place to RSVP!

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

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