

ULC Sermon Study Resource

Basic // What is the Church?

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Prayer: Pause for a few moments to go to the Lord in prayer. Ask that He would draw near to you in this time, and open your heart and mind to hear His Word.

Icebreaker: What's your favorite autumn activity?

Reading: Acts 2: 42-47

Outline:

- I. A Meeting Place (v. 42-43)
 - A. Although Acts offers a beautiful image of what the church can be, we are oftentimes still dysfunctional. Despite our failings, Jesus still meets us wherever we and other Jesus followers gather.
 - B. At all levels, the church can only do what it does through the promise of God's grace found in Jesus. Jesus gathers us together to meet us there, and he transforms our communities into sanctuaries.

Q: When have you seen the church fail you or others around you, and how did you respond?
- II. A Sanctuary (v. 44-45)
 - A. The church should ideally be a place for people to find refuge, rest, and to share with others. As people of the church, we should use *all that we have* to help those around us, recognizing that the things we own are nothing compared to Christ.
 - B. Although the church should be a place of refuge, we should not take refuge in *other people*, because they are imperfect and could never offer us the same sanctuary God offers us. Instead, the church is the place to encounter God and take refuge in him, because his promises last forever.

Q: Do you ever find yourself taking refuge in others when you should instead go to God?
- III. A Base Camp (v. 46-47)
 - A. God sends us out to build up both those inside and outside of the church, so the church is the place to strengthen each other to do so. However, it is important for the church not to turn into an echo chamber.
 - B. Jesus reminds of what is real, and his promises take priority over anyone's past or identity. Just as Jesus can transform people, he can also transform a broken church into something that shares his power and light to the rest of the world.

Q: What are some specific ways the church has prepared you to "go out" and build others up?

Reflection/Application Questions:

- 1) What can we do when our churches are dysfunctional?
- 2) How should we help and comfort those whom the church has failed before?
- 3) How do we find refuge in the church specifically as opposed to other organizations?
- 4) How can we build up others in the church?

Suggestions for further study:

- Hebrews 10:25 Q: How does this verse provide an example of the church being a base camp?
- 2 Corinthians 8:9 Q: How does this verse challenge us to use what we have to serve others?

Closing Prayer:

God, thank you for establishing your church here on earth to do your work and for the promises we have in Jesus that transform the church. Please help us to cultivate the church around us, and please equip us to know how to deal with dysfunction and hurt within the church. Continue to strengthen us to go out and use your church to serve others. Amen.