



Acts 6:1-7 - Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 20 "Expansion and Organization in the Church"
By Mike Clark 02/12/2023

Acts 6:1-7 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

INTRODUCTION –

Do you believe that God can use the devil? Do you believe that God can even purpose for the devil to do some things that bring great harm, but that God designs to use to bring even greater good?

Think of the story of Joseph, or the story of Job. How about the greatest example – The death of Christ.

Well, the early church has a lot to teach us about this.

Ch. 2 - Began at Pentecost – 3,000 are saved.

Ch. 3 – Miracles

Ch. 4 – Devil attacks with Persecution (Peter & John arrested)

Ch. 5 – Devil attacks within – Corruption (Ananias & Sapphira)

Ch. 5 – Devil attacks again with – Persecution (arrested again!)

Each time the church grew!

4:4

5:14, 16

6:1

No what do you think the devil is going to do now? Do you think he'll do the exact same thing again? - No – he'll change his tactics.

The next attack on the church was the most clever of the 4.



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He failed to overcome the church by either persecution or corruption, so now what does he try? - Distraction

He knew that if he could preoccupy the apostles with social administration, he could get the church off track.

And so, this morning, we're going to see how the early church handles this.

This passage is an appointment history. It tells how a new structure for community care came to be appointed and developed.

In this passage you have a problem, then a solution, then qualifications, and finally selection.

Point 1 – Growing Pains – A growing Church means growing problems.

Acts 6:1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

Luke starts off this section by saying "In these days" which marks a transition.

And the transition is that there are two new realities in the early church.

The first is that they are increasing in number. And that is something that we have already seen several times so far in the books of Acts.

Acts 2:41, 47 - So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.....And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 4:4 - But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

Acts 5:14 - And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.

Some estimates are that the church was then numbering in the thousands and possibly tens of thousands.



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So now the church is born. They're a part of the church. They're staying in Jerusalem because there's nothing to go back to but Judaism, and they've come from Judaism to Christianity.

So, they swell the ranks of the church, and they have to be housed and fed and cared for.

We know that goes on for years because years later Paul is still raising money to care for the poor Pilgrim saints who are still in Jerusalem and never went back home.

And so God was growing the Church.

And may it be our prayer that we desire that God would grow and increase His church, Amen? Are we praying that God would advance His kingdom? That He would use our church to advance His kingdom?

May God use Highlands CC to grow the church!

And so, the disciples are increasing. Now you may ask what is a disciple?

A disciple is the same as a Christian, but a disciple looks at a Christian from the standpoint of the student mentality.

The word is "learner." It's the word *mathetes*. So, there were learners. They were learning Christ.

Paul even uses that phrase when he reminds us that we shouldn't sin because we have not so learned Christ. They were the students of Christ, the true followers of Christ, the true disciples.

Now the second reality is that because of the growth of the early church, a problem arises between the Hellenists and the Hebrews.

Satan can be very subtle and instead of persecution or corruption, he comes here with a distraction.

We are told in the text that a complaint arose, or some translations say a murmur.

The Greek word is *Gonguzo* and is an onomatopoeic word, which means that it sounds like what it is.



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It's used in the parable of the vineyard in Matthew 20:11 where the early laborers grumble about the late workers who are paid the same as they were.

It's used of the scribes and Pharisees against Christ

The apostle Paul uses it in -

1 Corinthians 10:9-10 - We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

Philippians 2:14 – Do all things without grumbling or disputing.

Now just so we understand, complaining or murmuring is a sin.

But you can bring a complaint without sinning. You can bring legitimate concerns that you have to people without it being sinful.

We all have problems in our life and we need to know how to communicate and work through those problems in a godly way.

Who were they murmuring against? - Apparently the apostles.

So, the Hellenists bring a complaint or murmur against the Hebrews.

Now who are the Hellenists? – Most likely they were Jews whose primary language was Greek and who attended Greek-speaking synagogues and more than likely lived outside the land of Israel.

Many of the Hellenists had sympathies or attractions with the lands of the Jewish dispersion around the Mediterranean shores, whereas the Hebrews were Palestinian Jews.

The Hebrews spoke Aramaic and attended synagogues where the services were conducted in Hebrew.

So, the main differences between the two is probably language and location.

Now this complaint was not over theology but was a practical issue.

As daily provisions were made to the widows from both groups, complaints arose that one group was being favored at the expense of the other.



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So, in addition to language differences, there was probably also social differences that produced cultural differences which could have created a division in the church.

The Hellenistic widows are said to be at a disadvantage in comparison with the Hebrew widows, perhaps also because the distribution was in the hands of the Hebrews.

If the issues weren't related to ethnic or cultural differences, it could have just been a case of a lack of administrative organization due to the growth of the church.

Now what was the daily distribution? Well, it probably included the necessary daily food and probably some clothing or even money and this is how they cared for widows.

And if we go back to chapters 2 and 4, we see where the church was collecting these things and distributing them.

Acts 2:45 - And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Acts 4:34-35 - There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

And so those in need would obviously be widows.

And caring for widows is something that God considers very important. Caring for widows is mentioned in both the OT and the NT.

Just before the people of Israel entered the promised land, Moses said this -

Deuteronomy 24:19-21 -¹⁹ "When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."²⁰ When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.²¹ When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.

James 1:27 - Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.



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1 Timothy 5:3-5 - ³Honor widows who are truly widows.

Notice Paul is making a distinction here. Honor widows who are truly widows, implying that there are some widows who don't qualify for the church's support.

⁴ But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. ⁵ She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.

And Jesus warned about the mistreatment of widows -

Luke 20:46-47 - ⁴⁶ "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, ⁴⁷ who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

So, widows were regarded as needing community care when no family member could care for them.

And these Scriptures suggest that a community's compassion could and should be measured by how it cares for the poor, the orphaned, and the widow.

Point 2 – Growing Up – Answering growth problems means distributing responsibilities.

Acts 6:2-4 ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

We can gather that the church was governed by order and reason so that the apostles had the highest authority and provided the people with their counsel.

Now, the apostles aren't implying that serving tables is beneath them, it just wasn't their primary calling to supervise the financial arrangements of the community.

It wasn't something they could take on and do both that and the ministry of prayer and preaching full time.

They know that what they've been called do requires a lot of work and effort.



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It's similar to what we see in -

Exodus 18:17-8, 21 - ¹⁷ Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone.

Nehemiah 6:3 - "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"

So, it's a priority choice about observing the call of God instead of a moral choice of right or wrong.

So, the apostles have to do what God has called them to do, which is to teach and witness and pray. They cannot and should not do everything in the church.

And this is exactly what we see Jesus doing.

Mark 1:38 - And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."

That was His priority. And we see another example in Matthew 15 –

Matthew 15:21-28 - ²¹ And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." ²³ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Now that obviously does not mean that Jesus' only concern was for Jews. It was just that his priority was to the house of Israel and then he would send his disciples out to both Jews and Gentiles as we'll see later in Acts.

And the ability to prioritize and not be responsible for everything is actually good leadership and stewardship.



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And listen - It's ok to say no to people. Maybe you struggle with that. It's ok to tell people no.

It's better to say no, than to say yes, but then realize you've gotten in over your head and can't actually do it which then frustrates people.

You don't have to be a YES man like the Jim Carey movie. Saying yes, all the time will get you into trouble!

Now that also doesn't mean that the apostles never helped in any other area except preaching and prayer.

But you know there are some pastors out there who think their only job is teaching and preaching and that they don't have to do anything else.

They don't like the sometimes messy job of actually investing yourself in the lives of your people, they just want to teach and preach.

People like that should probably just be a seminary professor. But a pastor is called to not only feed the sheep, but care for the sheep.

But I'm sure the apostles did help in other areas as they were able.

And most of you know all that Pastor Jody and Pastor Bill do. They not only spend time preaching and in prayer, but also in a host of other things.

For example, Pastor Jody is your main point of contact, and he pursues relationships with you all and encourages you.

He coordinates our services, especially with our youth program where he coordinates the summer camps working with Pastor Keith at New GA Baptist Church.

He spends time meeting with other pastors such as Pastor Keith for accountability, ongoing education, and planning.

He spends time meeting with Pastor Dan helping CAYA ministries. He oversees the endeavors to Ecuador.

He meets with the guys from G3 once a month and looking for ways to partner with them.



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He counsels people, he shows hospitality to us in his home, he loves on us.

And once he week he is taking time to mentor our elder candidates.

That's all in addition to his normal duties of preaching and spending time in prayer.

And Pastor Bill provides so many of our IT needs, maintaining our website, creating our calendars, bringing us our bulletins each week and helping with many of our church apps.

He spends a lot of time counseling and praying for many of you.

He leads our monthly prayer meeting and men's breakfast.

He helps in so many practical ways such as helping with moving, or house repairs, or other projects.

He works with CAYA ministries, serving on their board. He also works with the city of Dallas, coordinating outreach events.

He keeps up with all our supplies for the church as well as church maintenance.

And most important of all, he gives warm hugs to us all! 😊

That's all in addition to his teaching and preaching and spending time in prayer.

All that to say is that for the most part, a pastor is called to the ministry of preaching and prayer, but as we've just seen many pastors do so much more.

And sometimes pastors have no choice, they just have a lot to.

But let us strive as a body to use the gifts God has all given us to serve and ease the burden of our pastors so that they can focus primarily on the things God has called them to, Amen?

Acts 6:3-4 ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

The number seven may have some Jewish significance as Josephus tells us that Galilee had seven judges and seventy elders to handle significant issues.



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But this number may have been chosen just because that was the number of men that were needed to solve the issue.

And the selection comes from within the group and parallels the selection of Judas's replacement in Acts 1.

Now I think it's safe to say that it's unwise to take any person that comes to the church to serve without any kind of qualifications or without some kind of testing.

And so, the apostles use wisdom and give the brothers qualifications for choosing these seven men.

The OT talks about these kinds of qualifications as well -

Exodus 18:21 - ²¹ Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people.

Deuteronomy 1:13 - Choose for your tribes wise, understanding, and experienced men, and I will appoint them as your heads.' ¹⁴ And you answered me, 'The thing that you have spoken is good for us to do.' ¹⁵ So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men.

And so, the apostles tell the brothers that they are to choose men who are of good repute or reputation, full of the Spirit, and full of wisdom.

So first, they should have a good reputation, meaning their character is to be well accepted by others.

Paul, speaking on the qualification of elders says -

1 Timothy 3:7 - ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

They are also to be full of the Spirit, they are to be spiritual men. This description was given to Joseph, the son of Jacob.

Genesis 41:38-39 - ⁸ And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" ³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are.

The Messiah was predicted to have this -



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Isaiah 11:2 - And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

And believers are called to this -

Ephesians 5:18 - And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

And so, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

Well to be filled with the Spirit means that your lives are directed by God's Spirit so that you are spiritually sensitive and able to make good judgments which is a sign of spiritual maturity.

When a person is filled with the Spirit like that, they are full of the Spirit's power and enablement.

And thirdly, they are to be full of wisdom. They are marked by wisdom, spiritual insight, practical wisdom, sound, good, righteous judgment.

And so, after giving the brothers this counsel, they again reiterate that their primary calling is to preaching and to pray, and that they will devote themselves primarily to that.

And that is what we have already seen in the book of Acts -

Acts 1:14 - All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Acts 2:42 - And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And prayer is something we see the apostle Paul doing so often in his letters –

Romans 1:9 - For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers.

Ephesians 1:16-17 - ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.



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Philippians 1:9-11 - ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

And listen prayer isn't something that only pastors should be devoting themselves to. Every believer in Christ is to devote themselves to prayer.

In addition to his devotion to prayer, the apostle Paul was devoted to preaching and exhorted his child in the faith, Timothy to the same -

1 Timothy 4:13 - ¹³ Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

2 Timothy 4:2 – Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

Point 3 – Growing Out – Taking a responsibility means more growth which fulfills the Great Commission.

Acts 6:5-7 ⁵ And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶ These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

And so, the brothers are pleased with the advice given by the apostles, and they choose seven men.

All appear to be born Jewish with the exception of Nicolaus, who was a proselyte, meaning a Gentile convert.

All the names are Greek which highlight the likely Hellenist roots of the group. Since the problem involves the Hellenists, the Hellenists are given the responsibility to solve it.

And that's a great application for us today. If you see a problem, don't just complain about it, but try to figure out a solution to the problem.



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Now the first two of the seven mentioned is Stephen and Philip who we'll see more of in chapters 7 and 8.

For some of the others, tradition has Prochorus serving as an attendant to the apostle John.

Nicolaus is associated with the Nicolaitans of Revelation 2:6 according to Irenaeus.

Jesus said there that he hated the work of the Nicolaitans.

Now we can't be certain that this is the same person, but if it was, perhaps he started but did not finish well and fell into error.

Or there is also the possibility that people were following what they thought were his beliefs but in actuality were not his beliefs.

Interestingly Nicolaus is from Antioch, and as we'll later see, will be an important location as it's going to be the center for Paul's evangelistic activity.

So, this passage builds a bridge to not only Acts 8-9, but also to Acts 11 and following.

We are then told that the apostles prayed and laid their hands on these seven brothers.

The laying on of hands indicates a recognition of God's call for the task.

The laying on of hands is mentioned in a variety of contexts in the OT.

Sometimes it was for a blessing as we see in Genesis 48 when Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph.

Sometimes it was done when a sacrificer laid his hands on the head of a sacrificial animal.

And sometimes it was done for commissioning a successor as in the case of Joshua taking Moses' place.

And in the NT, we see that the laying on of hands was something that happened to Timothy, Paul's child in the faith, for ordination to ministry.



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1 Timothy 4:14 - Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

And not only was this something that happened to Timothy, but Paul also gave him a warning about being too quick to lay hands on just anyone.

1 Timothy 5:22 - Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, nor take part in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

If we're quick to lay hands on someone without first being examined or tested, and then they fall into sin, we actually bear responsibility for that and in a way are taking part in the sins of others.

So, Paul says keep yourself pure by not laying hands on others too quickly.

And so the brothers selected men and then the apostles install them.

The apostles perform this rite on behalf of the community to highlight God's choice of these men for this task.

Now just a side note - This is probably not the origin of the office of deacon because the title is never used of a group, nor is there evidence that these men did all the things that deacons do.

However, the principle of designating a set of laborers for this kind of task is probably what led to the creation of this office at a later time.

And so we've seen how this passage shows the community using its own people to solve its own problems.

The community hears the complaint, owns up to solve its own problem, allows those closest to it to solve it, delegates the authority to get it done, and then goes to work.

Now at this point in the narrative, as we come to verse 7, Luke interrupts his story with a brief report of progress.

And this verse summarizes the new community's growth in Jerusalem.

Throughout the book of Acts, you have 6 such reports at different times. A few include -

Acts 12:24 - But the word of God increased and multiplied.



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Acts 19:20 - So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

The Word was growing, means that God was sending forth the word through the apostolic preaching, with the word like seed growing into fruit or a harvest.

Second, disciples were being multiplied.

The passive verb probably points to divine work, meaning God is causing the growth.

1 Cor 3:6 - I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.

In addition to being told that the word of God was increasing, we are also told that many priests became obedient to the faith.

Psalms 132:16 - Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy.

John 12:42 - Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue

The size of the priesthood for this period has been estimated to be as many as eighteen thousand.

They labored in a trade most of the year, except for two weeks when they officiated at the temple.

Now what does it mean to be obedient to the faith?

Well, it means that a person is obedient to all that is entailed with the Christian faith and the gospel.

They are obedient to God's Word and believe in His gospel and trust in His salvation.

Obedience to faith is another way to describe a believer in Acts.

This characterization highlights faith's living, responsive, and submissive nature.

There is a faithful remnant in Israel.

Obedience to the faith is something Paul mentions in both the beginning and end of his letter to the Romans.



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***Romans 1:5** - Through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,*

***Romans 16:25-26** - ²⁵ Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith.*

And God gives a warning to those who are not obedient to the faith.

***2 Thessalonians 1:7-8** - When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

CONCLUSION -

And so, we've seen how a growing Church means growing problems.

And answering growth problems means distributing responsibilities and taking responsibility means more growth which fulfills the Great Commission.

When you have godly, gifted teachers and preachers who sustain the life of the church and impact the church by being the source of the spreading of the Word, people are saved.

Then coming behind that, you have faithful people, gifted people, dedicated people who have passionate concerns for various kinds of ministries.

You empower, enable, support those people for those ministries, and the church moves powerfully.

When all of those things are taking place, the testimony of the church is great, and the Lord adds to His church.

I'm reminded of the words of Jesus -

***Matthew 20:28** - *The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**



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He never complained or murmured. And if anyone had a reason to complain it was Jesus.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return, when he suffered, he did not threaten but continued entrusting himself to Him who judges justly.

We are told in Luke 2 that Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men.

He was filled with the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God.

He was devoted to prayer and to preaching the gospel.

He knew His calling, to preach the good news, to seek and save that which was lost, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

And you know what? Many become obedient to the faith. Many turned to the Lord Jesus for salvation.

And that is the story of many of us as well Amen? May we praise the Lord for such a great salvation and rejoice and give thanks to Him and serve Him gladly with the gifts He's given us.

And maybe some of you here or maybe watching online are asking yourself, do I have this salvation? Have I been obedient to the faith?

And my question to you this morning would then be have you turned to the Lord Jesus Christ and believed on Him? Have you put your trust in what He did on the cross for sinners?

If not, turn to Him today and repent of your sins and believe the good news of the gospel by trusting in His finished work on the cross alone.

And He will grant you everlasting life. And if you still have questions or need prayer, please talk with me after the service or talk with Pastor Jody or Pastor Bill, or any of the elder candidates and we would love to help you and pray with you.

Prayer –



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By Mike Clark 02/12/2023

Lord, we thank you for your Word and what we've heard this morning. We thank you for all that you've done in our church. Thank you for blessing our church in such incredible ways. Thank you for empowering us through the faithful prayers of many. Thank you for causing the Word to spread. Thank you for increasing the results, adding to your church.

Lord, thank you for raising up godly teachers like Pastor Jody and Pastor Bill. Thank you for raising up faithful men who can handle the business side of things, who have spiritual integrity and maturity and wisdom. Thank you for blessing our church. And we've tried to be the kind of church that your Word lays out. Lord, may we stay so faithful that you will continue to bless it. This we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.