

Commitment

A. Isn't it good to hear of God at work among us, and through us, and around us? Those stories are happening all over the world and they can keep being told as we live out these three great commitments of Acts 2:42-47:

- A great commitment to God, his Word, his ways
- A great commitment to God's people, the church, each other
- A great commitment to the world – our neighbors

B. If you have not chosen a verse or a theme for 2010 how about joining me in making Psalm 67 our New Year's Scripture. It is a reminder that what we learn in Acts has always been part of God's plan:

- That people love and praise him and are devoted to him.
- That we live in the community and love one another
- That the whole world learns of the love of God.

C. Read Psalm 67 with me will you?

1. May God be merciful and bless us.
May his face shine with favor upon us.
- 2 May your ways be known throughout the earth,
your saving power among people everywhere.
- 3 May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.
- 4 How glad the nations will be, singing for joy,
because you govern them with justice
and direct the actions of the whole world.
- 5 May the nations praise you, O God.
Yes, may all the nations praise you.
- 6 Then the earth will yield its harvests,
and God, our God, will richly bless us.
- 7 Yes, God will bless us,
and people all over the world will fear him.

D. MBMSI has produced a DVD of this Psalm. Watch it with me and join me in a recommitment to the great commitments of Acts 2:42-47. Make this your New Year's resolution –

- Be devoted to God
- Be in love with God's people
- Be passionate about seeing others come to Christ.

“Renewed Commitments for a New Year” 1/03/10 RMBC
Acts 2:42-47 Pastor Dennis

Introduction

A. There is an old saying, “If the first thing you do when you wake up in the morning is eat a live frog, then nothing worse can happen to you for the rest of the day.” The principle behind that saying is that doing the most important thing first is a great habit for success. In fact, studies show that doing the most important tasks first often creates an atmosphere in which the rest of your tasks become relatively easy. I was thinking about that as I contemplated the New Year and my own commitments. What does it take to live out our commitments to God, to each other, and to the world that needs a Savior? What comes first?

B. I have a lot of “favorite” Bible passages (Psalm 27, Isaiah 40, Romans 12 among them). I have a life verse, a ministry verse and a salvation verse, but no passage has given me more direction for leadership and for vision in the church than Acts 2:42-47. I fell in love with this paragraph during seminary when a guest from Dallas Seminary spoke about the “Three Vital Relationships” of the early church. Suddenly I had a mental picture of what we believers are to “be up to” as we live with our hearts and heads pointing to the eternal life God is preparing for us. Here are the things that need to come first. (Read Text)

C. Sometimes the church reminds me of that most amazing animal God created – the duck-billed platypus. Even the name sounds strange, “platypus”. That doesn't sound like anything else in the whole world and of course the platypus isn't like anything else – or we could say it's a little like a lot of things:

The platypus breaks so many rules of biology: it has a bill like a duck but no wings. It has webbed feet but no feathers. It has a beaver-like tail but no teeth. It has a furry body like a dog but can't run. It's at home in the water but nurses its young like a mammal. So what is it? We could ask that of the church too.

D. The church isn't quite like anything else. Part of what I love about this Acts 2 description of the church is that it contains no forms, only functions. Like the platypus each body part has a unique function but doesn't necessarily fit the typical form of anything. When the church was formed God didn't say there had to be a choir, Sunday School, committees, a band, a budget, a youth department, children's department, or even a pastor. Those forms are all good, but behind them are three great functions – I like to call them relationships or commitments.

A Great Commitment to God and His Word –vs 42-43

A. Look at the word “devoted” in vs. 41. Originally this was a compound word made up of the prefix “toward” and the adjective “strong”. If you are “strong toward” something you are devoted to it. You are committed to it. If it is a person you have a deep relationship with the person.

B. As the early church bubbled up like a hot spring from the steam created by the coming of the Holy Spirit the believers had this growing commitment to experience God in as many ways as possible – prayer, worship, communion, the apostles’ teaching and displays of God’s power. It was an amazing season of new birth.

C. Friends, let me remind you that it is an awesome thing when God shows up. To be devoted to God, his Word and live by the truths of his Word is a powerful motivation for living. If you were here Christmas Sunday you experienced the great feeling of a packed church with out-of-sight music and an “electric” atmosphere. But remember this: A half filled church with the presence of God is always better than a full church without the presence of God. When God shows up it’s always better – always better, way better.

D. As you enter 2010, what is your “devotion-quotient” to God? If we had a meter to measure our devotion to God would yours be pegged? Last September we made a commitment to God – now let’s update that commitment, renew it, and live devoted lives.

A Great Commitment to One Another – vs. 44-45

A. In this next section I’m again so thankful that we have function but not form – we are not told to live in a commune, but we are taught to care for each other. In the stresses of the present economic downturn we have more opportunities to care for each other and apply the principle pictured in the 1st century church when the world said, “Look how they love one another.”

B. “All the believers were together and had everything in common . . . they gave to anyone as he had need.” Call that an experiment, a temporary condition, or something else, but the point is that these people were, as we say, “in the same boat” and needed each other.

C. Those of you in my generation will remember a classic TV sitcom called “Gilligan’s Island.” Many of us can still sing the theme song that told of this small yacht on a “three hour tour” when a storm dumped the tourists and two-man crew on a remote island.

Part of the appeal of this goofy show was that we could all identify with one of the characters: the blow-hard skipper, the brainy professor, the millionaire and his wife, the movie star, the plain Mary Ann, or the bumbling first mate, Gilligan. But the story is what made the show as in each episode they came close to getting off the island but never did.

I had not thought of this before, but this show was a picture of the church. Like us, the characters didn’t always get along, none of them were alike, but they had something in common – if they were going to get off that island they needed each other. They had to work together to build the best life possible because they were “all in the same boat.”

D. We live on this “island” called earth. And God has us here to represent him, and it is so important to remember how much we need each other – we’re all in the same boat. We are all ship wrecked by sin, in need of a Savior, and prone to mess up our lives. Let’s raise our commitment to each others, drop our defenses, take off our masks, and love each other like crazy as Jesus would have us love each other.

A Great Commitment to the World – vs. 46-47

A. I value all three of these commitments – in fact they are like a three-legged stool – you need each one as much as the other. If one leg of a stool is shorter than the others you have a wobble. If your devotion to one of these commitments is less than the others you are out of balance. But I am so drawn to this third commitment and the fact that this “tightly knit” community didn’t draw their circle so tight that others couldn’t get in. Instead they kept expanding and growing and adding (read vs. 46-47)

B. Do you recall that last fall I challenged you to begin praying for some of your friends and family outside of the circle – those you long to see come to faith in Jesus?

Here are those names and when I asked you to think of a number that we could pray and love and witness into the Kingdom this year the average was 170. Now it’s January and time for us to increase our commitment to the world.

C. J.T. Thiesen has a ministry to athletes and God has been using this venue and using J.T. to affect lives in some amazing ways. God has taken him and Shannae on some pretty cool adventures, namely to Fiji and India, and he has seen student athletes come to Christ at FPU. I’ve asked him to share some of that with us this morning:

J.T. shares stories of life-change.

Introduction

What does it take to live out our _____?
The Church is like a _____
It is not quite like any other _____
It has unique _____
Each part has an important _____

A Great Commitment to _____ and His _____ vs. 42-43

Devoted: to be _____
The early Christians had a strong desire to _____ God
in as many ways as possible: _____, _____, _____,

If we had a meter to measure devotion to God, where would yours be? (circle one) low – medium – high

A Great Commitment _____ vs. 44-45

We are not told to live in a _____ but we are taught to _____ for each other
The world said of the early Christians, “See how they _____ each other
All the believers had everything in _____
Like the characters on Gilligan’s Island, in the church we:
Don’t always get _____
Have something in _____: We _____ each other
We are “in the same _____”

Will you _____ your commitment to others?

A Great Commitment to the _____ vs. 46-47

These three commitments are like a _____-legged stool:
Each leg is equally _____
Each commitment is equally _____
The tight knit community of the early church didn’t _____
their _____ too tightly – others could still _____

How can we elevate our passion to see _____ people _____?

Challenge: Make Psalm 67 your Scripture for 2010

Be devoted to God
Be in love with God’s people
Be passionate about seeing others come to Christ.