

ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN

HERE AS IN HEAVEN: HEAVEN IN THE CHURCH

Introduction

Aloha everyone! I'm Mark if we haven't met and I want to welcome you to this morning's service where we are continuing our first series of 2023, Here as in Heaven.

Recap

In *Week 1* we discovered that the story of the Bible is not to one day abandon the earth and go to heaven but it's actually about how God is reuniting heaven and earth to be one. Jesus told us to pray that His Kingdom would come and His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. So we are to contend for heaven to be realized in our daily lives and in our world. But Mark, what does that even look like?

In *Week 2* Pastor Theresa gave a powerful message on how Jesus came to bring heaven to earth. The central message of Jesus' teachings was not to be saved so you could go to heaven. It was to repent because the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand! Heaven is breaking forth in our midst so stop whatever you were doing before and get on board with what God is doing now! We saw that Jesus came to be a portable hotspot of the Presence of God on the earth. In other words wherever Jesus went Heaven broke forth so people were healed, delivered, and set free. And as crazy and awesome as that is it gets even crazier because now the same Spirit that lived in Jesus lives in us and we now become portable hotspots of the Presence of God bringing the light of heaven wherever we go!

The Birth of the Church

Right before He ascended to Heaven Jesus gave His disciples instructions for how this was supposed to look,

⁸ *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

⁹ *After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight," (Acts 1:8-9).*

So rather than each of His disciples running around solo trying to figure this out, He instructed all of them to wait because they would receive the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses. Remember, mankind was made in the image of God. To be made in God's image means we represent Him to creation. After the fall we lost our ability to accurately represent God but now that Jesus has restored the Holy Spirit unto us we are able to be His witnesses once again.

This was the birth of the Church.

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Definition of Church

The Church is a community of Spirit-empowered people whose central focus is Jesus Christ and who are called to bear witness to His life and His power in our world.

How does the Church bear witness? The way that we bear witness to Christ is through our **WORDS** and our **DEEDS**.

We bear witness to Jesus through the Spirit-empowered verbal communication of His story (The Gospel)

Upon being filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter proclaimed the gospel to a crowd of listeners and 3000 were saved and added to their numbers.

The Church grows through the Spirit-empowered communication of God's Word. This is something every believer is called to. You may not be a pulpit preacher, you may not deliver the gospel in a foreign country, but every believers is called to bear witness to Jesus through the verbal communication of the gospel. This is a big part of what it means to be the Church.

So we bear witness through the Word but also in Deed. The Church also bore witness to Christ through living the Christian life together. After being filled with the Holy Spirit this community of believers adopted an entirely new lifestyle that, paired with their message, changed the world for God.

In Acts 2 we read about this radical new way of life,

⁴² "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ 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, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved," (Acts 2:42-47).

1. They were devoted to the teachings of Jesus.

To be a follower of Jesus is to be a learner. The word 'disciple' means student. The Bible makes no distinction between believers and disciples. To believe in Jesus is to be a learner and follower of Christ. Disciples are not the special forces of believers. Everyone who believes in Jesus is a disciple and a learner. We commit ourselves to the renewing of our minds through the teachings of Christ and to be transformed to His likeness.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *How does devotion to the teachings of Jesus look in your life? What has the Holy Spirit been teaching you recently?*

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2. They performed miraculous signs and wonders.

¹² *"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in Me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father," (John 14:12 NIV).*

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *Do you think the Church has been doing "even greater works than these"? If not, why do you think that is so?*

3. They were devoted to fellowship and the breaking of bread.

This was more than just hanging out with potluck and refreshments. The word for fellowship is *κοινωνία* (*koinōnia*), in the Greek and it is a commitment to share life with one another (time, resources, energy, etc.) You see that they gathered corporately in the temple courts but they also gathered in people's homes. They had Ohana Groups.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *When it comes to Church fellowship, in which ways do you think we are similar to the early Church and in which ways are we different? How are you sharing life with other believers in the Church?*

4. They met the needs of those in their community.

Part of being transformed by the teachings of Jesus was to adopt His heart and compassion for their world.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *When it comes to meeting needs, in which ways do you think we are similar to the early Church and in which ways are we different?*

5. They were devoted to prayer and worship.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *What role do prayer and worship play in your life?*