

ACTS OF HEAVEN

ACTS OF HEAVEN: PATRONS VS. PARTNERS

Introduction/Recap

Aloha everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to our service. This is the final week of our series, Acts of Heaven where we've been learning about the reality of heaven in the Church.

In Week 1, we learned the word that Jesus chose for His Church – Ekklesia, and how the Ekklesia was not a safe spiritual gathering but a 24/7 world-heavenizing force! This was the scope of reach the early Church had, which is why they set out to heaven-ize their world (From Judea, Samaria, and to the remotest parts of the earth).

In Week 2, we discovered that, not only has God called us to heaven-ize the world, He has empowered us to do so! Yet so many Churches today rely on slick programs rather than the Spirit's power to reach the lost! The only way we will truly heaven-ize our world is through the power of the Holy Spirit and contending for His Presence everywhere we go. I want to challenge you to continue practicing His Presence wherever you are!

Last week, we saw that the work of heaven-izing the world is not left to the "paid professionals" but to every member of the body of Christ! This is why our focus is on big people and not big Church! No matter where we are in our faith journey we need to CONTINUE and "Stay tight with Him erytime!" So continue to pray through your next steps in Christ and stay time with Him erytime!

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: *What has the Holy Spirit been speaking to you about during this series?*

Patrons to Partners

Throughout this series we've been making some significant paradigm shifts about what it means to be the Church. In Week 1 we made the shift between seeing the Church as primarily as safe spiritual gathering to what Jesus always intended – a world-heavenizing force. In Week 2 we shifted from placing our hope in good programs to God's Presence in order to bring heaven to earth. Last week we shifted our energies from building big Church to focusing on building big people – people who will carry out the work of heaven-izing the world. You might be thinking, "Isn't that what Pastors are for? I mean, aren't you the 'paid professionals'?"

As we wrap up our series, we want to shift our focus from seeing ourselves as Patrons to Partners. What's the difference? In the corporate world,

A Patron is a person who is a customer, client, or paying guest. (They pay in exchange for a service).

A Partner is an alliance between two or more people to oversee business operations and share its profits and liabilities.

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While we might never say it out loud, there are many in the Church who see their role as patrons. They pay through tithe or time in exchange for a worship experience, fellowship, and other aspects of the spiritual life. You might have a patron mentality if the primary reasons you choose a Church are the programs they offer, the quality of their worship, or how much you are “fed” during the sermons. You might have a patron mentality if, when the Pastor talks about reaching the lost, sharing your faith, or heaven-izing the world you think, “Isn’t that what we pay you for?” I’m not saying this to bring condemnation but we may need a little correction in how we think about Church! Absolutely, if the purpose of Church is a safe spiritual gathering, you should definitely pick the one that most appeals to you! But if the purpose of the Church is to heaven-ize the world, you should ask the Lord to lead you to the one that best helps you do that. In speaking to the Church Paul writes,

*³ “I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus,” (Philippians 1:3-6).*

The Apostle Paul saw the members of his Church as partners not patrons. They were partners in the gospel. They had a shared stake in the gospel mission. They were co-laborers.

So my goal for today is to increase the way you see your role in God’s Ekklesia and naturally to decrease the way you see mine. Let’s start with the role of a Pastor. Isn’t it the Pastors job to do all works of service?

¹¹ “So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip His people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ,” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Is it the Pastors job to do all the works of service? Not primarily. It is the Pastor’s role to equip! Paul talks about the Church as a body. If the Church is the body, I’m not the head – that’s Jesus. I feel like the other end, jk.

The Role of Partners

So if that is the role of a Pastor, what is the role of the partners?

“The basic work of any Christian ministry is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of God’s Spirit, and to see people converted, changed, and grow in maturity in that gospel. This is the work of planting, watering, fertilizing and tending the vine,”

(The Trellis and The Vine, 2009).

“Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest,” (Hebrews 3:1).

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"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts," (Colossians 3:16).

"I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another," (Romans 15:14).

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching," (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Will we all preach from a pulpit? Will we all stand on a street corner and evangelize? Nevertheless, God wants all believers to be speaking to one another regularly, urging, exhorting, and encouraging one another to stay tight with Him erytime!

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Heaven-izing the World

With the time we have left I want to tie everything we've been talking about into practical applicable steps. This is a model that Jesus gives us in Luke 10.

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go," (Luke 10:1).

Jesus is sending you as His forerunner to prepare the world for His arrival.

"He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road,'" (Luke 10:3-4).

The answer is not raise up more Pastors to reach the lost. The answer is for the Ekklesia to rise up and heaven-ize the world.

1. Speak Peace

"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you," (Luke 10:5-6).

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How many of us know you can't bless someone and curse them at the same time? Some Christians have nothing but bitterness and resentment for the lost. Jesus says our message should be, "We are not of this world, but we come in peace." Preaching the gospel without love is like kissing someone with bad breath. We need to ask the Lord to fill our hearts with peace and blessing toward the lost. As you speak peace you are inviting the manifest Presence of the Lord to fill that place. This is what I was contending for in that classroom – God's peace and Presence to fill the room.

2. Two-Way Fellowship

"Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you," (Luke 10:7-8).

But Jesus, we're there to minister! We should be the ones giving, we should be the ones feeding. Sometimes, when we minister, we make the mistake of treating unchurched people like they have no value or nothing to offer unless they become Christians. By building genuine relationships we communicate unconditional love by welcoming people the way they are instead of just the way we want them to be.

3. Meet Felt Needs

"Heal the sick who are there," (Luke 10:9a).

As we build connection with people and affirm their value they will open up about areas of need. "But Pastor, their greatest need is salvation!" True, but often Jesus would meet a person's felt need before He met their ultimate need.

4. Proclaim the Gospel

"and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you,' (Luke 10:1-9b).

When we come in peace and blessing and connect with people where they are at, when we meet their felt needs it opens the door for us to lead them to the one who can ultimately save them.

Conclusion

I want to encourage you to begin practicing His Presence wherever you go. When you are at home, invite God's Presence. When you are at work, acknowledge God's Presence. While you are driving, at soccer practice, wherever you go. Speak blessing wherever you go. Speak peace over every establishment. Connect with people for the sake of building relationship. Not just to pass the time, not just to make the day go by faster, but to build trust and true connection. Open up about the things you're going through and how God is working in your life. As needs arise, offer to pray for others. "But what if nothing happens?" People don't have God's phone number, you do. People will be grateful just to know that you talked to God on their behalf. Then when the opportunity arises or people ask you about the God that you know, share with them.

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Every single one of us is called to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. As we do people are saved, they transform, they grow, and multiply. This is what it means to be the Ekklesia. This is what it means to heaven-ize the world.

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where He has sent you to heaven-ize. In what practical ways can you speak peace, build two-way fellowship, meet needs, and proclaim the good news?

OG DISCUSSION QUESTION: Notice Jesus sent them out in twos. Is there anyone in your life who can hold you accountable and encourage you as you seek to heaven-ize the world?