

The Devoted Church

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It's wonderful to be back with you again. We have had a fantastic week in Hong Kong. To everyone that we have met and has hosted us, thank you so much. It's been wonderful to be here.

In a good Watermark tradition, let me introduce myself. If you're new here, my name is Kevin. I'm not one of the pastors. I'm a visitor from Cape Town. I've listened to lots of Chris's sermons, and he does that every week, right? And so it's good to be with you.

I wonder if you can pray with me. I know we've prayed a bit this morning, but I feel like I would love some prayer. I'd love for us just to pray. Will you join me? I'm going to pray for 30 seconds.

Heavenly Father, Christ the Son, Holy Spirit, we want to hear from you this morning.

God, we don't need to hear from any individual. We don't need to hear the opinions of man. We want to hear from you and from your Word. God, why don't you take the words of your Scripture.

Why don't you apply them to our lives? Why don't you help us to hear from you this morning?

God, challenge us where we need to be challenged. Encourage us where we need to be encouraged. God, you know where we all are at in our different stages. Some of us are joyful, and some of us are mourning.

[1 : 08] Some of us are celebrating, and some of us are grieving. God, why don't you speak to us this morning, and come and have your way. In your name we pray. Amen. Amen. Now, as a church, you know that if you've been coming for a while, you are busy working through the book of Acts, which is fantastic.

And last week and the week before, we looked at Acts chapter 2. And Acts chapter 2 is really the time when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the church in power.

And the church is baptized in the love and the power of the Holy Spirit. The church is empowered by the Holy Spirit for the ministry and the work to which God calls them.

And Chris and I have argued over the last two weeks that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not just for some people. It's not just for those that are extroverted or the young people.

It's not just for the Pentecostals or the Charismatics or those that enjoy having a good time. And, you know, the rest are the chosen frozen. Do you know that phrase?

[2 : 12] Okay. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is what it means to be a follower of Jesus, to walk with God and to know God. And more than that, we see that if we go back to the beginning of the Bible, we see that actually to walk with God and know the presence and the love and the power of God is part of what it means to be human.

And so the ministry of the Holy Spirit is so necessary and powerful and needed in the church. And without the person and the work of the Holy Spirit, the church is not the church.

We're just a gathering of people that believe the same things. But it's the life and the power of the Holy Spirit that takes the wonderful truth of the gospel, the truth of Jesus, and actually makes it real in our lives and applies it to us.

And so that was the beginning of Acts chapter 2 that we've looked at the last two weeks. Now, the scripture that Echo read to us is a wonderful scripture. And we're going to look at what happens when God the Holy Spirit is poured out in His church, when the gospel is preached, and when God is at work in His church.

And let's just recap briefly the story in the Bible where we're at. Remember that for hundreds of years, God has been speaking to His people, promising to give them His presence.

[3 : 27] Through the prophets, through Joel and Jeremiah and Isaiah and Ezekiel, God's been saying that there will come a time when I will no longer, the words of God will not just be on the pages of your Bible, but they'll be written in your hearts.

You will know what it means to walk with God and to love God and to trust God, because I will give you the Holy Spirit. So God's been promising this for centuries for His people.

And then Jesus comes, and Jesus promises to pour out the Holy Spirit. And He says it like this. He says, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

For whoever believes in Me, as the scriptures have said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. And then John adds, This He spoke about the Holy Spirit, who had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

And so then just a little bit later, in Acts chapter 1, Jesus says to the disciples, Wait here in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit, which my Father promised, and John baptized you with water, but I will baptize you in the Spirit.

[4 : 34] And then a few days later, this happens. Pentecost, Acts chapter 2. And the result of Pentecost is that the disciples are full of the Holy Spirit. They are joyful.

They are celebrating. They are bold. And the people around them think that they're drunk. And so Peter stands up and explains what's going on. And he says, They're not drunk.

They've encountered God. And the result is that Peter invariably preaches the gospel. And then look at what happens. Acts chapter 2, verse 36. Peter says, Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him, both the Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.

It says, When they heard this, they were cut to the heart. They said to Peter and to the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And those who received his word were baptized. And there were added that day about 3,000 souls to the church. And here's the question I want to ask us. What happens?

[5 : 41] What does it look like to a community of people when the Holy Spirit is poured out, when the gospel of Jesus is preached, and when God is at work in a city? What does that look like?

What does that manifest as? Well, in some senses, a new community is born. On this day, straight after the Holy Spirit is poured out, the church is born.

In fact, this is the first church gathering that Echo read to us about. And it's a very famous and well-known passage. And I know that Watermark really cherishes community. I'm sure this is a passage you've probably preached on many times over the years.

But what this passage shows us is that when the Holy Spirit is poured out, when the gospel is preached, when God is at work, something unique happens. God births a new community is born. But it's a very unique community. It's different from just your colleagues at work or the community around your housing estate or your alumni at your university where you study.

[6 : 39] This is, when the church is working at its best, it's an exceptional community. But we need to be careful. We need to be careful that we don't just hold up Acts chapter 2 or print it out and distribute it in the bulletin and then say, there we go, Watermark, go and do likewise.

In some ways, the Bible says that every verse in the Scripture is good for learning and for teaching, for us to learn from and for training. But Acts chapter 2 is not a church planting manual.

The Holy Spirit didn't just say, let me give you a manual how to be the perfect church. There it is. Go and do it. Acts chapter 2 is not a prescription of the perfect church. It's a description of what happens when God is at work in people's lives.

Do you see the difference? It's a historical description. The Holy Spirit is writing, or Luke is writing, and saying, this is what happened when God poured out His Spirit in people and when the people of God encountered God, the gospel is preached and God is at work in the world.

This is a description of what happens when the beauty of Jesus is made known, when the cross of Jesus is preached and when the Holy Spirit is given. And what makes this community distinct?

[7 : 50] What differentiates them from, like we said, your colleagues or your housing estates or your sports friends or the guys you go running on the mountain with? What differentiates these people?

Well, the key is found in verse 42. If you've got your Bible, look at it with me. Look what verse 42 says. It says, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

What makes this community so distinct, so unique, is that this church, in Acts chapter 2, and every true church, is made up of men and women who give themselves away.

Who give themselves away. The ESV, which is the version we read, says they devoted themselves. And the word to devote, it actually comes from the same word, to consecrate yourself, to set yourself apart.

But what it means is to continuously give of yourself to a purpose, to something else. In fact, in all the translation of the Bible, it says, in this verse, it says, they gave themselves, the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to breaking of bread, and to prayer.

[8 : 55] They gave themselves. Just like in Acts chapter 6, it says, the apostles were so busy, they didn't have time to give themselves to the ministry of word and to prayer.

And so they appointed some deacons. They said, deacons, please come and help us and run the ministry so that we can give ourselves, we can devote ourselves to these things, to prayer and to preaching.

They gave themselves to that which is important. They devoted themselves. And here we see that they gave of their property. They gave of their time.

They gave of their resources. They gave of their wealth. They gave of their personal space. They invited people into their homes. Here is a group of people characterized by giving.

I'm not exactly sure on all the ins and outs of Hong Kong culture, but in most major cities of the world, and this is certainly true in the West where we come from, but I suspect it's probably not that different here in Hong Kong.

[9 : 53] Most main cities of the world, there is the idea that the good life, what James K. Smith calls the good life, the life of contentment, the life of happiness, the life of joy, is found in consuming things, right?

Consuming products, goods and services, consuming experiences, all found in the relationships around us. If we can just have more things, if we can have more space, if we can experience more wonderful things, if we can have the right relationships and the right connections, if we can know the right people, then our lives will be worthwhile.

Then we'll really be happy. And when we're not happy, we are told that all we need to do is to find more things, to get another person in the house to help us, to get some more space, to buy another gadget or MacBook or car or something of that nature.

As you think about the conversations in your workspace around the water cooler or around the lunch table, is that the understanding below the surface? that the road to more happiness and contentment is found in more things and more experiences or in knowing the right people.

Is that true? Is that true in our lives? We've got a friend in Cape Town. Her name is Julie and she used to work in one of the big global advertising agencies.

[11 : 18] And she told us many years ago that one of the underlying principles in advertising, I really apologize if you're in advertising, but anyway. She told us one of the underlying principles in advertising is to rob somebody of their self-contentment and then sell it back to them in the form of a product.

Does that make sense? So in other words, an advert's message might be, you know, you're not really going to be respected or you deserve to be respected more but you're never going to get the respect you truly deserve unless you drive the right car.

Here's a BMW. Or you're never really going to be appreciated unless you look magnificent. Here's a diamond necklace. Or unless you experience the world and get to see and travel and experience different cultures, you're such a bore.

You're never going to have an exciting life. You want a trip to Japan? Right? So advertising sometimes, not everyone, robs people of their self-worth, their self-contentment and sells it back in the form of a product.

Friends, the reason why we often buy so much stuff and buy often more than we need is not because we fundamentally need these things. It's because we're looking for a version of the good life.

[12 : 31] We're looking for contentment. We're looking for satisfaction. We're looking for something to please us and to satisfy us. But friends, the narrative of the Christian life is very different.

The narrative of the Christian life because the narrative of the gospel is that joy is found not in getting but in giving. The life that God has called us to is not found in consuming. It's in giving of ourselves.

It's in devoting ourselves to the contentment and the joy of others. As we give of ourselves to others and try and secure their blessing and their joy and their happiness, in that place we find our own joy and contentment.

And that's what we see in the book of Acts and nowhere more poignantly than Acts chapter 2 as we've read today. That the very core of the first Christian community were these two fundamental truths.

One, for God so loved the world that he gave. That he gave himself. And two, the joy and contentment and happiness that so many of us are looking for are found not in consuming but in giving.

[13:34] Here were a bunch of people that devoted themselves. They gave of themselves. They spent their lives giving to the people in the community around them. Friends, at the heart of the Christian gospels that because God so loved the world, broken and marred and sinful as it is, he did something about it.

But he didn't send his driver. He didn't send an ambassador. What did he do? He sent himself. He gave himself. He gave his son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross.

To be smashed with nine inch nails through his hands. To be so bloody that you wouldn't even recognize him as a human body. He gave himself that you and I could find life. Jesus didn't just come as an obedient son.

He did that as well. But he gave of himself. Jesus didn't just come because his father asked him to and as an obedient son you obey your father. Jesus gladly and willingly gave of himself.

In Matthew 20, Jesus says, the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Galatians chapter 1, Paul writes, grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age.

[14:47] Galatians 2.20, I have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. That's a wonderful verse, isn't it? Now why is that true? Why is it that I can be crucified to myself?

Why is it that I can go into my work week tomorrow no longer looking after myself and no longer me in my life but Christ living in me? On what basis can I do that? He goes on to say, for the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Friends, at the heart of the gospel is a God who though he made everything and therefore he owns everything and everything belongs to him and everybody is accountable to him. This sovereign and majestic God to whom one day all creation will one day bow down, this God gave.

For God so loved the world that he gave. Kelly Capik wrote an amazing book from where I got that phrase, for God so loved the world, for God so loved that he gave.

And this is what he writes. He says, the God who created and perfected the world and whose world turned from him has brought restoration through giving. The Father loved the world and gave the Son.

[16:02] The Father and the Son gave the gift of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of humanity. In other words, the gospel is shaped by giving. God's generosity buys us out of bondage and brings us into the blessing of belonging to him.

But the good news is not only that God made us to be recipients of his generosity, but also participants in the movement of his divine generosity. Isn't that amazing?

God redeems the world by giving. God puts right the wrongs of the past, not by punishing, not by teaching, but by giving. But more than that, God doesn't just give and put right the wrongs of the past.

See, the problem with our rebellion, the problem with our sin, the problem with the brokenness of the world, is that sin, it doesn't just cause problems in my life, though it does that.

It leaves me separated from God. I'm existentially divorced from my Creator. The problem with sin is that it also causes a part of my soul and my makeup to die. It leaves us spiritually dead.

[17:04] That's why Ephesians chapter 2 says, as for you, you are dead in your trespasses and sins. But it also says you are slaves to the enemy, slaves to the prince of the power of the world. And so sin does a couple of things.

It leaves us spiritually dead. It makes us slaves to sin. And it mars our hearts. It disorders our loves. And so when Jesus brings us back from the grave, when Jesus died to rescue us and to save us,

he didn't just forgive us of sins.

He did that. But he makes dead people alive again. That's Ephesians 2. As for you, you're dead in your sins, but by the grace and the kindness of God, God has made those of you who are dead alive again.

We are now alive in Christ Jesus. And so when Christ brings us back, he doesn't just go off that which is lost and make it found again.

He goes off to dead people, makes them alive again. Now, friends, the problem with the worldview that says happiness and pleasure are found in consuming more things and in getting more things and experiencing more pleasures outside of God is that it always leads to death.

[18:12] It leads to the death of our relationships. It leads to the death of our marriages. It leads to the death of our families. Something inside of us and something around us always dies when we look to other things for our pleasure and our satisfaction.

You know what it's like to be used by somebody? Someone uses you for their own career advancement or to gain some benefit? What happens to that relationship? It doesn't flourish. It dies, right?

Because a life that is based on getting, a life that is based on consuming, a life that is based on using, consuming, it promises life, but it robs us of life.

And in the end, it leaves us dead. But the countercultural, counterintuitive message of the gospel is that God gave and he brought back life. In him giving of his life, he gave us life.

And friends, that's true for community life as well. As we give of ourselves to those around us, in that place, the community comes alive. In that place, we flourish. A few years ago, Harvard Medical School published a report in the Harvard Health Publication.

[19:18] And it was called this, money can buy you happiness, but only if you give it away. This is how the report starts off. Here's a finding that may be surprising. Spending money on others makes people happier than spending it on themselves.

This was the conclusion of researchers at the University of British Columbia and Harvard Business School who conducted three studies to determine the relationship between spending habits and reported happiness.

Friends, didn't Jesus say the same thing? Acts chapter 20, the apostle Paul goes to a little village called Miletus, just below the city of Ephesus. And he calls the elders from the church in Ephesus to come down to Miletus where he is.

He's at the harbor port. And they have a discussion. And Paul says to them, I'm getting on in age. I'm probably not going to see you again. I don't think I'm going to come to Ephesus again. And they are all distraught.

This is their father in the faith, the guy that started the church. They love Paul. They're very upset. And they're all crying because he said, I'll never, you know, I'm probably not going to see you again. And then so Paul gives them these kind of final words.

[20:22] These are his last words. He says, now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance amongst those that are sanctified.

Sounds like a good benediction, right? And then after that, he says, wait, wait, there's one more thing. Remember the words of Jesus, who said himself, it is more blessed to give than to receive. One of Paul's final words, he says, friends, I want you to live a life of giving, not consuming. I want you to devote yourself, to give of yourself for the well-being of those around you.

Paul says the same thing in 1 Timothy. Timothy is a young pastor in Ephesus, and Paul writes to him. And in Timothy's church, there are a whole lot of very wealthy people. And Paul wants to help young Timothy know how to pastor and shepherd these wealthy people in his church.

And so he writes to him and he says this. He says, Timothy, for those who are wealthy, encourage them not to put their hope in the uncertainty of riches, which is so unstable, can go up and down, but their hope in the faithfulness of God, who will look after them.

[21:30] And encourage them to be generous and to share, to be ready to share, and here's why. Why should they share? He says, because, encourage them to do so, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

You hear that? Paul here says, I want you to experience life. I want you to flourish. I want you to maximize your joy and your satisfaction in life. So give it away. Okay. Here is a church.

In Acts chapter 2, that we're committed not to consuming, but to blessing. Not to taking, but to giving. To give themselves to the well-being of those around them. And friends, that's true of money, but it's true of every area of life. It's true with our time. It's true with our relationships. It's true with our resources. It's true with our networks and our connections. This lifestyle of a generosity is what has characterized the early church. And I think of just Henrico sharing around university ministry. And I loved what Henrico said around, we can think of this ministry strategically.

[22 : 38] Who are the up-and-coming leaders? Who are the people that are going to influence Hong Kong? Who are the people that are, you know, maybe we should really try to influence the business, the finance guys. The guys are going to do well and that will pay dividends back into church in years to come.

And we can strategically think about this thing. But even you can do ministry from a consumer aspect. You can even think about church, about how do we maximize our church? How do we grow and grow trajectories?

You can even think about ministry in that way. And I loved what Henrico said and said, hey, maybe this won't pay dividends. But here are people made in God's image that Jesus died for. And we're going to serve them.

And we're going to love them. And we're going to give up our time for them. Now, let's look at Acts chapter 2 again. And let's see what is it that they devoted themselves to. Acts chapter 2. Verse 42, it says this.

Firstly, they devoted themselves to the things of God. So they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Notice four things that they gave themselves to.

[23 : 39] They gave themselves to the apostles' teaching, which means that they gave themselves to knowing and understanding God's ways and God's word. Psalm 19 is one of the most beautiful psalms.

And Psalm 19 says this. The law of the Lord is perfect. It revives the soul. Anyone feel tired and exhausted? The word of God revives our souls.

Then the psalm says, your word is more desired than gold, even the most precious gold. It's sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by your word is your servant warned.

In keeping them, there is great reward. Friends, the little I know about Hong Kong is that time is precious, right? Time is one of your most precious commodities.

And time is finite. It comes to an end each day. You can't prolong it or buy any more of it. It is what it is. And I know that in Hong Kong, many of you work very long hours.

[24 : 36] Many of you have demanding jobs. Some of you have demanding bosses. Some of you may even be demanding bosses. But time is precious, right? And when there's a lot of pressure, something's got to go.

You can't do everything that you always want to do in the amount of time that you have. Time is precious. Friends, can I ask you not to give up on God's word? This is one of those things that it's so easy to let slip when time is little, when you're under pressure.

Friends, can I ask you not to give up on giving yourself to God's word? Your relationship with God and the state of your soul is too precious to let that slip by the side. I want to encourage you, don't cut back.

Wake up early. Get into God's word. Devote yourself to the teachings of the saints and to God's word. Secondly, they gave themselves to godly fellowship and community.

They gathered together for community lunches. CG wasn't just a program in the life of the church. This was a community that gave themselves to each other and they spent their time and their energy investing in one another.

[25 : 41] Opened up their homes and invited each other in. And the truth is that sometimes investing in community is costly. It does cost you. But it's so beautiful. It's so wonderful when community comes together.

And in Jerusalem, notice that Jerusalem was a major city. It was a city where people were coming and going. People would come for trade. People would go back to the outlying villages. And it was probably a very transient city, right, in the context of the ancient world.

Sounds familiar to Hong Kong, right? And I guess these people might have thought to themselves from time to time, I don't know if I'm really going to build friendships with that person. They're just going to be here for 18 months and then their company's going to transfer them back to, I don't know, some other town, Ephesus, right?

JP Morgan's going to move them to Ephesus. I'm not going to build a friendship with them. Or should I really invest in this friendship? Who knows how long they're going to be here? Here's a community that opened up their homes and they gave themselves.

They devoted themselves to one another. And then notice also the diversity of cultures. In Jerusalem, there was people, we told them earlier in Acts chapter 2, people from every region in the known world came together.

[26 : 52] And they didn't just give themselves to those that were like them. They didn't just give themselves to those that were the same socioeconomic class, those that had studied overseas or those that spoke the same language. Here was a diverse group of people that gave themselves to each other.

Thirdly, they gave themselves the breaking of bread. And this is communion. And Chris led us so wonderfully in this this morning. And in the ancient world, when you had communion together, you didn't just have a tiny piece of bread.

You had a whole meal together. It was a feast. And you'd bring your food together and have a long table. And everyone would take an hour or two around the table feasting together, celebrating relationships, celebrating the many becoming one, like Chris led us in this morning, but also celebrating what God had done in their midst.

And they would sit down and celebrate, but right at the heart of the community was the gospel, the truth that Jesus had died on the cross for their sins. And then notice they gave themselves to prayer.

They devoted themselves to prayer. Friends, I want to say that you don't become the person that God's called you to. You don't become the man or the woman that God's called you to without prayer. And Romans chapter 15 talks about laboring in prayer.

[28 : 04] Any ladies here have been through labor? Any men watched your wives going through labor? I've watched my wife go through it twice. And I remember Claire saying at the end, that was the most difficult thing she's ever gone through.

And yet, what is the result of labor? It's life. It's new life. And Paul here talks about laboring in prayer. Friends, sometimes prayer can feel like that.

It's hard work. It's a discipline that we give ourselves to. And yet, by laboring in prayer, we see the power of God at work. And notice what they prayed for. The church in the book of Acts believed two things.

One, they believed in the power of prayer. They saw the power of prayer. They prayed for Peter to be released in jail, and he was released. They prayed for people to encounter God and the power of the Holy Spirit, and they did. They prayed for miracles, and they saw them.

They prayed for boldness, and they experienced it. They prayed for deliverance from attack and oppression, and God delivered them. These people really believed in the power of prayer, and so they gave themselves to prayer.

[29 : 03] But then also, they believed that prayer doesn't just change God's heart. It changes our hearts. And so in Acts chapter 6, it says the apostles gave themselves to prayer because they knew that the power of God was in that. And they knew that they needed a change.

God didn't need a change. And so they gave themselves to prayer. And then two last things we see. Remember, notice how they gave themselves to one another, and we spoke about that. They gave themselves to each home.

They sold their possessions. They sold their resources. They gave to those who had need. They gave to anyone in the community. And in many ways, they knew that being part of church meant being part of a family, being part of a community.

It's one of the most beautiful things that we've experienced about Watermark. Watermark is such a community church. And it's easy to put a label on the side, right? Watermark Community Church. It's easy to put up a banner and say, we believe in community.

It's another thing to live it. And I think Watermark lives it so beautifully. And then finally, they gave themselves to mission. And it's not immediately clear from this chapter, but in the preceding chapter, we see how the Holy Spirit is poured out.

[30 : 04] And what does Peter do? He stands up and he tells everyone about Jesus. We spoke about this last week, right? He tells them about the wonder of Jesus. He tells them about the sin and the cross and how God died for us. And he makes much of the wonder of Jesus.

And then Acts chapter 2, it says, this new body of people found in Jesus come together. They devote themselves to prayer and the sacraments and God's word and community. And then it says, the Lord added to their number, day by day, those who were being saved.

And in the next chapter, chapter 3, Peter and John are on the way to the temple. People, and they see a man begging for money. And they don't say to him, sorry, I don't have any money on me today.

What do they do? They tell them about the wonder of Jesus. And they pray for him. And that man comes to faith. And other people see this man, life change, and they come to faith. And friends, here was a community that hadn't just accepted Jesus.

They hadn't just converted from one religion to another. They hadn't just become church people. They devoted themselves. They spent themselves. They gave themselves to the Lord, to the church, and to the city, to help the city find and follow Jesus.

[31 : 14] William Temple was the Archbishop of Canterbury many years ago, and he famously said this, the church is the only organization which exists not for itself, but for those who live outside of it.

Now, that's maybe not the only reason why the church exists, but it is true. The reason the church exists is to join God in the renewal of all things. The reason the church exists is to join God in the rescuing and redeeming of this planet and restore all that's gone wrong.

To join God in making everything horrible and painful in the world untrue. And by bringing the hope of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of God to our city and our world. Friends, I don't know all the ins and outs of Hong Kong.

I don't know all the cultural dynamics that's going on. But what I do know is this. In every city of the world, in every corner of the globe, the wealthy and the not so wealthy, the educated and the not so educated, male and female, every one of us are longing for the maker that made us.

Every one of us are longing for a sense of transcendence. Every one of us are longing for the balm that our souls need. We long to feast in the living waters of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

[32 : 22] And this city is full of people that don't know God. And here was a church that devoted themselves. They gave themselves to Christ, to each other, and to the city in which they lived.

Inviting those that had never encountered the life of God to experience Him for the first time.

Friends, we have the hope of the world. We have the healing balm that every heart longs for. We have the golden treasure that every heart seeks.

And His name is Jesus. Can we be a church that gives ourselves, that devotes ourselves to Christ, to His Word, to each other, and to the cities in which we live?

Let's pray together. We're going to pray in a minute, but just as I was preparing for today, a couple of groups of people I thought about.

Maybe those of us who have been giving. You've been giving and giving and giving. You've been serving, serving, and you're exhausted. I feel like God just wants to empower you and refresh you.

[33 : 28] Maybe you so understood this, that being a follower of Jesus is not about consuming. It's about giving. It's about being a blessing. And maybe you're exhausted from all the serving.

God wants to refresh you. He wants you to sit at His feet, like Mary, not like Martha. He wants you to sit at His feet. Martha said, Jesus, tell my sister to come work with me.

And Jesus said, she has chosen the better thing. One thing is required. And I feel like God says, for those of us that are exhausted, come and sit at my feet, and come and encounter me.

For those who feel like they want to give, but the cost is just too high. God wants to give us His grace. And to help us see that it's the greatest blessing to be those that follow Jesus and don't take but give.

Maybe for those whose relationships have been marked by getting and taking, your relationships are struggling, maybe your marriage is hurting, maybe some other relationship is strained. God, we pray for those people.

[34 : 36] We pray to come and bring healing and wholeness, Lord. We pray, Lord Jesus, won't you come and bring freedom in those relationships, God. God, we pray for those of us here that are hurting.

We pray, Lord God, for those that are tired and exhausted. Holy Spirit, won't you come and refresh us. We pray, God, for those of us that we feel like we want to be this community that gives, but God just feels like the cost is so high.

God, won't you help us to see that you gave us you. You're all we need, Lord Jesus. And then finally, for those of us that don't even know Jesus.

Maybe you know Christianity, you know religion, you know the Bible, but you don't know Jesus. Friends, without Jesus, there's nothing. Without the power of the Holy Spirit opening our eyes to see Jesus, we have nothing.

If you don't know Jesus, why don't you right now, just say, Jesus, I want to know you. This God that so loved me that He gave Himself for me. This God that so loved me, He died on the cross for me. [35 : 44] I want to know Him. If that's you, what do you tell God that? Say, Jesus, I want to know you. Say, Jesus, I'm sorry for my sin. Sorry that I've lived my life for my own pleasure and my own glory.

God, I want to live for you. I want my life transformed by you. Christ, I pray, won't you make us that kind of church, Lord?

Thank you for the tens and the hundreds of men and women that are already living this kind of life, the selfless, community-giving life. Thank you, God. God, won't Watermark be a light on a hill?

Won't we be salt in our city? Won't we be counterintuitive and countercultural? A people that give and not take. A people that live for the benefit of others and not ourselves. Holy Spirit, come to work in our hearts, we pray.

In your name. Amen.