

**Reeks:** Ons Vra(e)...

**Titel:** ...about Church

**Prediker:** Trevor Hudson

**Datum:** 17 Julie 2011

Good morning, friends, it's really good to be with you. I got back last night at six o'clock, so I'm like I'm not too sure where I am, but this has been prepared at 30.000ft, so it's quite close, so maybe there's something here for us today.

Thanks for the messages while I've been away. There were quite a few messages on Twitter and I really appreciated that. It just gave me a sense of being connected to you while I was away. I was away for just under three weeks, not too sure if you're interested at all, but spoke in three places doing a series of lectures and teachings in Lake Michigan outside a city called Petoskey, and then down in Colorado Springs, and then finally just outside of Nashville, but it is lovely to be back and great to be with you today.

Friends, if you've got in there that I'd like to share with you now, perhaps we... I can read it while you follow me, and then I'd like to add another reading to this particular reading, but let me read from 1 John 1.

That which was from the beginning, John is writing a letter. He is writing a letter to churches and he says these words: that which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we've looked at and our hands have touched, this we proclaim concerning the word of life as appeared; we've seen it and we testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has also appeared to us.

Verse three: we proclaim to You what we've seen and heard so that You also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete, and then if you'd like, if I can ask you to put with that another reading which is not down there but which will come up on the screens.

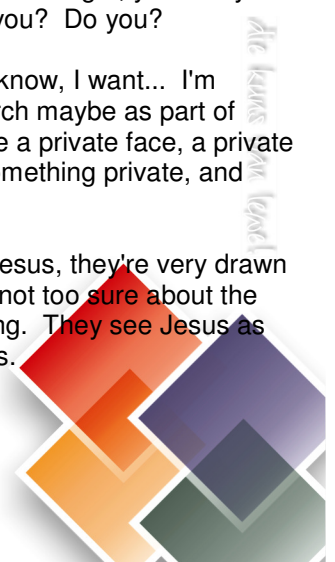
I sent this through to the worship team last night at ten to 12, and I'm... it's from Acts chapter two, and verse 42, and this is a picture of the early church community on the day of Pentecost: they devoted themselves... verse 42, they devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and they also devoted themselves to the fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wondrous, miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.

Selling their possessions and goods they gave to anyone as they had need, and 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, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people, and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved, and so we thank God so much for these words that come to us in the scriptures and we ask God to help us today to hear what God wants to say to us today through them.

What do you think and feel about church? You know, when I say the word church, what are some of your thoughts and feelings? Lots of people would today quickly say, well, it's just a bunch of hypocrites. Just before I went overseas I was in one of the malls in Benoni and I bumped into a guy who I hadn't seen at our church for some time, and I said to him I've been missing you, where have you been, and he said, ag no man, the church... well, this was the church in Benoni, the church is just full of hypocrites, and I said you're right, you're right, you really are right. I said to him I really battle sometimes to live out my faith, and then I asked him: do you? Do you?

Some people, have you heard, maybe you, maybe folk here, some people often say, you know, I want... I'm spiritual but I don't... I'm not religious. I'm spiritual but I'm not religious, and they see church maybe as part of being religious and so they prefer, and there are lots of people like this, they prefer to have a private face, a private face, a private spirituality, don't want anything to do with the church or religion but want something private, and that's really strong today.

And then I think there are lots of people, and other young people, who get very drawn to Jesus, they're very drawn to Jesus. There's something... they find something very attractive about Him, but they're not too sure about the church. They see Jesus as being a real includer but they often see the church as excluding. They see Jesus as being someone who was so radically free and yet the church is full of rules and regulations.



I saw a girl with a t-shirt on, and you may say what were you doing looking at her t-shirt, but on the front she had Jesus yes, and then on the back she had church, no, and that reflects a very strong view today, but what are your thoughts? You know, what are your honest thoughts about church, about church? And what I want to do, very simply, very simply, what I want to do is I want to try share with you from the scriptures God's purposes in human history.

Now, that sounds very larney, but if we can get an idea of what God is up to, if we can begin to catch a glimpse of what God is doing at this moment then maybe you and I can work out where the church fits in, does the church have a place or does the church not have a place, and I'm going to leave that to you today to ultimately work out, but I want us to try catch a glimpse of what God is up to, and I want to start, friends, by going to that reading that I read to you from 1 John 1, and I want to... I want us to notice right at the beginning today the very purpose of the gospel, why did Jesus come into this world, and I wonder how you would answer that question.

If I were to come to you and say why did Jesus come into this world, how would you answer? Now, look at John's answer, because John's answer is very surprising, very surprising, and he writes, and he starts his letter, and he writes what we've seen, what we've heard, we declare unto you etc, and then he comes to verse three and he writes these words, he says we proclaim to You what we've seen and heard, Jesus Christ, we proclaim to You, Jesus Christ, now watch this, and I want you to find the word that describes the purpose why Jesus came. What is the word?

We proclaim to You what we've seen and heard so that You also may have fellowship with us and our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ. What is the word that describes the purpose of the gospel? You give it to me, one word. Fellowship. Now, I don't know about you, but I was a little bit disappointed by that. I thought, really, because fellowship has become a little bit of a weak word, a pap word; it's got no more strength today.

If you go to work tomorrow and you were to say to a colleague can we have fellowship together after work he'll look at you a bit skeef. What do you mean fellowship? You know, people think fellowship, they think church teas, church halls. Did Jesus come into this world, did Jesus come to live and die and rise so that we could have church tea in church halls? No, so we need to recover the word fellowship.

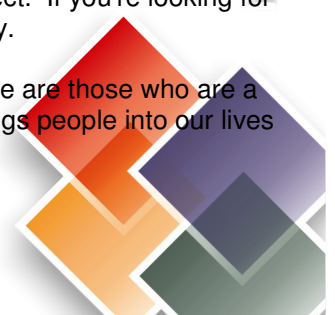
It's a strong word, it's a deep word, it's a robust word in its original meaning. Koinonia, that's the Greek, let's just try to be larney for a few moments, Koinonia. Now, that's a wonderful word. It means a sharing of life, a common life, so wherever you come across the word fellowship, if you really want to give it its meaning, it's got something to do with the sharing of life, and that's why Jesus came. Jesus comes so that we can begin to share life, to share life, to have a common life together.

Now, I want you to notice, we're going to go back to this reading, I want you to notice, secondly that there are two dimensions to this sharing of life. Can you spot them? Look carefully at this verse, underline it in your own bibles, we proclaim to you what we've seen and heard so that... now look at these two dimensions, so that You also may have fellowship with us, that's the horizontal dimension, so that we can have fellowship together, but now watch, there's another dimension, so that You also may have fellowship with us, horizontal dimension, and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ, vertical dimension.

Can you get the picture? Jesus comes so that we can have a sharing of life together with each other, horizontal, and also with the Father and with the Son, vertical. That makes a cross. What going has joined together, don't pull apart, so can I give you a picture, and I'd love you to keep this picture in your hearts, I give it often to people, when Christ comes into our life, when we accept Christ or receive Christ or make a commitment to follow Christ, when He enters our life, can you picture this, He's got His arms around His family and He brings His family with him into our lives, and I can't say to Him, Jesus, I love You but stick Your family, especially Mrs So and So who should go join the Methodists in Benoni.

We can't do that. We can't do that because Jesus is part of His family and He brings His family with him, and let me say a few things about the family, they are messy. They are messy. They're not perfect. If you're looking for the perfect church and you find it please don't join it because you'll spoil it, okay, hey, okay.

I have a friend, he always says, Trevor, there are two groups of people in this world. There are those who are a mess and there are those who don't know that they are a mess, hey, and when Christ brings people into our lives



they are as messy as we are. They're not perfect. They're recovering sinners. We are recovering sinners, and so the church is a very fragile, flawed body of people. It hasn't got everything together because we're a mess, but God works with mess. Thank God for that.

God works with mess. Our mess does not stop God working with us and through us, and when Christ brings this family, not only are they a mess, but they are different from us. They really are different. Just look around; young, old, black, white, rich, poor, you know, we're different, different. The family of Christ is very different. I've noticed that again just overseas. I went to different communities and I interacted with people from different backgrounds. I was with the Episcopalians, the Anglicans, you know, robes, shells and bells, and Christ was present. Christ was present, present with the Anglicans. Can you believe it, hey? Wonderful.

I was with Pentecostals. You know what the Pentes are like, hey. We sang for 50 minutes nonstop, that's why they fall over there so often, they're so tired, but Christ was present, Christ was present, present. I hung out with Quakers. You know what Quakers do. They do nothing, they just sit in the silence waiting for God to be present, and Christ was present. I went to some Methodists. I wasn't too sure but I think he was there as well. I'm sure, I'm sure, I'm sure, hey, hey.

When Christ enters our life He brings his family. He brings His family and they're a mess, and they are different, and this is what God is up to, because God is trying to form a community in human history that will be in fellowship, in a sharing of life, in a common life with each other and with the Father and with the Son, but there's one more thing I want to say. This community, did you notice this in that other reading that I read from, Acts chapter 2, this community does things together, huh?

Church is not a noun. Can I give you a quick grammar lesson? Church is an unhelpful noun when you use it as a noun: I'm going to church. It's an unhelpful noun. You can use it as a noun. Church is a much better verb. Church needs to become a verb. We do church. We experience church, and when we do church well Christ is present.

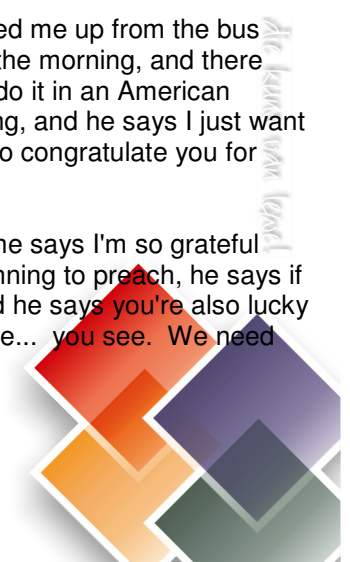
Did you notice in the early church, did you notice the things that they did? There were things that they did, and last night I was just going through that reading again, and I was picking up the things that they did. They celebrated together. You read, go back to Acts Chapter 2, they praised God together, and when we come into this auditorium this is just a building. This isn't the church, but when we come in and we celebrate and we praise God together, then church happens. It's a verb. That's why... how do I put this? That is why being a religious consumer is so dangerous.

You know, sometimes we park a car in our... in the parking lot and we come in and we think I wonder what it's going to be like today, I wonder what Trevor is going to be like, I wonder what the worship are going... then we are consuming, but if we come into this building and we participate, we sing, we listen together, we reflect together on Scripture, then church happens. I can't sing. I can't sing, but I sing because I want to participate, hey.

Church connects. When we connect church happens. Did you notice in that Acts reading they met in two places? They met formally in the temple courts, but they also met in homes. There was a connection with each other, and when we connect church becomes a verb, not a noun. When we play together and pray together, when we laugh together and weep together, when we grow together and grieve together, that's when church happens. That's when church happens.

I was in a shuttle in Nashville because I had to get to the airport early, and a shuttle picked me up from the bus stop, or kind of, and then shuttled me across to the terminal, and this was five o'clock in the morning, and there were three other people on the shuttle, and there was this big guy drive... I wish I could do it in an American accent, but I'm not going to try, but he was driving, and this was five o'clock in the morning, and he says I just want to congratulate you guys, he says. We're all sitting at the back, he's talking. I just want to congratulate you for being up at five o'clock.

I want you to know I was up at three o'clock, he says, getting this bus ready for you, but he says I'm so grateful you're on this bus because if you were not on this bus, he says, it's like he's almost beginning to preach, he says if you were not on this bus, he says, I would not have a job, I'm just so grateful for you, and he says you're also lucky because if I was not on this bus you would have to walk, but it's connection, and that's the... you see. We need each other. We need each other.



When someone says to me, Trevor, just me and God, I don't need people; I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure about that. We need each other deeply, and the church becomes a verb when we connect, when we celebrate, when we connect. Can I say one more thing? Just when we care together, did you look in Acts chapter 2, there was no one in that early community who were in need. There was a profound sense of mutual caring, and that's when church happens, that's when Jesus is present.

I got a phone call, this was about three months ago, I got a phone call from another town in South Africa which I'm not going to mention, far away, and this person phoned me and said I have a sister in Weltevreden Park, she's a single mother, she's new to Johannesburg, she has a child, she has a responsible job, she's going into hospital and she's desperate because she doesn't know who's going to pick up her child, take the child to... she just worried. Can you do anything?

Now, I'm in Benoni, this person is in Weltevreden Park, so what do I do, huh? What do you do in a moment like that? Do I phone one of the large corporates around here and say can you help me out, hey? No, I can't do that. They're going to say, ag, we're not into that, no, so I made contact with us here at Mosaic and a group of young mothers from this church, from this community linked up with this mother, picked up her child, dropped the child off, made meals for two or three days, Christ happened. Christ happened; church happened, it happened, it's a verb. Can you imagine if that was happening all the time, huh, because church is a verb?

Let me end. What is God doing? What is God doing? Can I tell you what God is doing? Ever since the time of Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, God has been trying to form a people, a community, where God is really at the centre, where Christ is at the centre, and through this community God is wanting to just bless and heal and save and redeem this world. That is what God is doing, and I want to say something about this community, and I love what happened earlier in our worship today. Every human institution will pass away, every human institution.

Anglo American, one day will be no more, Sanlam one day, I'm sorry, will be no more, Old Mutual one day, no more, FNB, one day, no more, Standard Bank, one day, no more, and I can go on and on and on and on and on, but let me say, the community that God is forming is indestructible, it's indestructible, indestructible. God is forming a people who, together with Christ, will reign forever and forever and forever, and I want to ask you today, as I ask myself, are you part of that community. Are you part of that community? Are you in on what God is doing or are you on the outside? Can I invite you to be part of God's activity in this world right now? Amen. Amen.

Can we do something together? Okay. Trust me; I'm not going to do anything risky. Can you reach out for this piece of paper, because there is a verse of Scripture right at... from Corinthians on it, and it's a lovely way of ending our... of ending our time together. It's what we call the Benediction, and I thought we could stand, huh, is that okay, and say it together strongly and boldly and powerfully.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, and may the joy of Christ be with you too. Have a lovely morning, friends. Take care. God bless, huh.

