

ACTS 2:42-47
(Psalm 67:1-7)

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- Kicking off ministry year with 3-week series on the things that matter most to our church.
- First week: Considered what it means to **Live Deeply**...
- Last week: Considered our **Mission Statement**...
- This week: Take one more step and consider **The Result**. [Pray]

INTRODUCTION

- Last few weeks, we've thought about what brought us to Knoxville and to this church.
 - All sorts of things:
 - **To Knoxville:** Some grew up here, some moved for college, some came for work or love.
 - **To this church:** Some grew up here, some invited by a friend, some googled us, some even got here randomly by pulling off at our exit in the middle of the night.
 - But the bottom line is God.
 - You are here bc God brought you here.
 - And he brought you here to Live Deeply – with him in his love.
- Here's one more story that connects these themes to what we'll talk about this week:
 - **One member** [George Dilworth] was moving to a new home in West Knoxville on a Saturday morning in 1963.
 - At that time, the interstate hadn't been completed so he was driving the truck down Kingston Pike → 2-lane highway surrounded by green fields.
 - There was a rumbling, and then a stutter, and then the moving truck broke down — right in front of the chapel (which was our sanctuary at the time).
 - Seeing a couple cars parked outside, he came in to see if he could use a phone.
 - (Remember those days before cell phones!)
 - Pastor at the time, Lane Adams, welcomed him in.
 - Helped him with the truck situation...
 - And invited him and his family to church the next morning.
 - Feeling obligated, he did in fact come, sat in third pew on left-hand side → Heard the gospel for the first time.
 - Previously, thought God graded on a curve and he was better than average.
 - Now he heard eternal life was something he could not accomplish → Was nothing he could do to remove the sin that had encompassed his life.
 - But he also heard about Jesus → How he had accomplished everything that was needed to save him from this sin.
 - That very morning, he trusted Christ.

60 years later, he is still in our church. He is 90 years old.
(And his children and grandchildren worship with us too.)

Transition: His conversion, his salvation, the fact that God added him to the number of those who have been saved, takes us into the heart of what I want to consider today.

STATE: Last week we looked at **Acts 2** and saw that it gives us a picture of the early church.

- How did they respond to God’s love? How did they follow Jesus?

Loved God in Worship | Loved One Another in Fellowship | Served the World on Mission

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- As we see this description of the early church, did you notice that **V47** tells us the result?
 - What happened when they lived this way?
 - When loved God in worship/one another in fellowship/served world in mission?
The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.
- Trucks break down → Pastors welcome people in → Before you know it salvation comes.

ILLUSTRATE

- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** was German pastor executed for his opposition to Hitler.
 - Before he was hung, wrote series of remarkable letters from his prison cell.
 - In one of them he calls Jesus “the man for others.”
 - Then says this: “The church is the church only when it exists for others.”¹
 - **We Live Deeply | On Mission | For Others**
 - Series in Sentence: *Week 1: We Live Deeply, #2: On Mission, #3: For Others*
- The church exists for those who are yet to be saved.
 - Spent time in weeks 1 and 2 reflecting on what pastors call “spiritual formation.”
 - How Jesus calls us to **come** to him and then calls us to **follow** him...
 - How being a Xn changes *us*.
 - But haven’t understood purpose of our lives – or nature of church – until we see/believe/embody the fact that we exist for others.
- **[Isla’s Phone]:** I took a look at my daughter’s phone this week.
 - Parents: I think it’s wise to check in with your younger teens...
 - On Home Screen she has this quote: *The saying “don’t cross oceans for people who wouldn’t cross a puddle for you...” Nah, do it. Cross oceans, love people as Christ does. It’s about what you give, not gain.*
 - Don’t know who said that. (Probably some teenage influencer OR maybe someone will email me and tell me it was some heretic.)
 - But on this point, at least, they’re right.
 - Cross oceans for people who wouldn’t cross a puddle for you → Like Christ crossed the great divide for you.
 - Love people as Christ does → Love them like he loves you.
Live your life for others.

Transition: Can I tell you how God has been working in my heart this week?

APPLY

I was thinking about how Bonhoeffer described Jesus as, “The Man for Others.”

- And then I wondered how Bonhoeffer would describe me: *The Man for... what???*
- How would he complete that sentence? How would he fill in the blank?
 - ***What am I FOR?***
 - The man for his own comfort? Man for his own family? Man for his own tribe?
 - The man for his own reputation? Man for his success? Man for his own power?
 - The man for money? Man for pleasure? Man for fun?
 - **All of these are just different versions of being: The man for myself.**
- What about you? How would you complete your sentence? How would you fill in blank?
 - ***What are you FOR?***

The call of Jesus is to Live Deeply | On Mission | For Others.

- This why our church long been passionate about mission, here in our community/across the world → We want to live for others.
- This why we just hired Tobey Nichols as Director of Community Outreach → We want to live for others here.
 - We want our church to grow → Want the Lord to add to our number day by day those who are being saved.
 - But we're focused on and passionate about a very particular kind of growth:
 - Not trying to steal Xns from other churches...
 - Instead, want to reach new believers:
 - **Neighbors** who live around our church, **colleague** who sits across your desk, **friend** who invites you out for drinks, **family** members with whom you share life.
 - People who are living full spectrum of life – beauty, horror, everything in between – but navigating it all without knowing him.
 - As Xns, we want to live for them → We want to live for others.

What does that look like? (To Live Deeply | On Mission | For Others)

- Honestly, I think it starts with a mindset before it's an activity.
 - When you have eyes to see – when you live your life for others...
 - You see needs and opportunities everywhere.

Might live for **underserved kids** in our community by coaching sports here at church.

Might live for those with **special needs** by serving at Buddy Blast.

Might live for **refugees** by teaching at ELL.

Might live for **foster kids** by bringing their foster family a meal.

Might live for a **lonely colleague** by building a friendship at work.

Might live for your **neighbor** by inviting them to church.

Might live for the **stranger** at Kroger with a smile and encouraging word.

Might live for your **roommate/family** by serving them well.

- You've got 1,000 options.
 - If we have this mindset → This understanding of our purpose here on earth...
 - It's not hard to find ways to live for others.

And can I promise you, as your pastor, living this way will bring you joy and gain.

- Blessing others always blesses us.
 - That's probably the one thing I disagree with from quote on daughter's phone.

- *It's about what you give, not gain.*
 - Sort of → But in Jesus, they're one and the same.
 - The most hedonistic thing you can do is live for others.
- This week we buried **Hailey Schollaert** → A member of our church who was only 14.
 - Suffered from EB:
 - Been called the worst disease you've never heard of.
 - Prominent symptom is extremely fragile skin that blisters/tears at the slightest friction.
 - I have to tell you: Her family loved/served her like you wouldn't believe...
 - **Mum** slept in the hospital for months at a time.
 - **Dad** gave her 2-hour baths to keep her safe and clean.
 - **Siblings** spent time with her, played with her, rubbed her back, and shared games – they were there for her, and they never complained.

They lived their lives for another.

And let me say to them: Your God is so proud.

He placed this precious soul in your family, and you loved her back into his arms.

- But church: You know that through it all God also did an amazing work in *them*.
 - They are now remarkable people:
 - **Mother** whose fierce tenderness is definition of a biblical woman.
 - **Father** whose patient sacrifice shows us what it is to be a man.
 - Group of **siblings** who have a depth of love/maturity which most adults never attain.
 - They have given much, but God used it for their gain.
 - Through their service to another, he made them remarkable people.
 - I want to be like them.

Jesus said you find your life by losing it.

- Trust that → Even if you don't see how.
- Live for others and you will gain much more in return.
 - Living for yourself will not make you happy.
 - But living for others will give you the life for which you long.

THE CLOSE

- You might have heard this acronym: Jesus. Others. Yourself.
 - JOY comes from living with those priorities.**
- Don't you want that kind of life?
 - Invite you to write that on a Post-it Note and stick it to your bathroom mirror.
 - Remind yourself that life is found only when we live for others.
- Then move out and look for opportunities/needs.
 - You'll be amazed by what you see.
 - And make it your goal to do something for others every day.
- You never know what might happen:
 - One moment you might be welcoming a stranger with a broken truck...
 - The next moment you might be praising God for his saving work.

What do you want to be for? The man/woman for what?

- As “the man for others,” Jesus was the man for you.
- As you **come** to him and **follow** him, he’ll make you like him too.

Live Deeply | On Mission | For Others

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a littler deeper.

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*.
- John Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew*.
- Michael Easter, *The Comfort Crisis: Embrace Discomfort to Reclaim Your Wild, Happy, Healthy Self*.
- William Hendriksen, *Matthew*.
- Irwyn Ince, *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best*.
- Harrison Scott Key, *How to Stay Married: The Most Insane Love Story Ever Told*.
- Logos Bible Software.
- Dane Ortland, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*.
- Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Desire: Discovering the Neuroscience of Longing, Beauty, and Community*.

Endnotes

¹ Both these quotes come from [this](#) article. Accessed 8/25/23.