**St Martins C3 – March 12, 2023**

**Grow Together – Seek God together**

**Sermon Summary:**

This is the last sermon in this series, where we have been exploring how we grow together in following Christ. We believe God is highlighting our need to be in discipling relationships with each other. Relationships where we are intentionally encouraging each other to grow in our relationship with God and our outreach to the world around us. As ministry leaders, we have been discussing what environments can we create as a church that best facilitates going deeper with God and with each other? Let’s consider the following passage in this regard:

**Read: Acts 2:42-47**

In their meeting together they helped each other grow in Christ through:

* Learning what Jesus taught.
* Reflecting on what Jesus did in His death and resurrection.
* Praying for each other.
* Worshipping together.
* Sharing their resources with each other.

We may read a passage like this and dismiss it as to impractical to meet together every day and sell everything to support others, but we need to see the important principle in the passage. As they committed themselves to discipling relationships, they created a space that facilitated God moving powerfully in them and among them. Consider the evidence of God moving in the church:

* Miracles
* Lord adds to their number
* God’s presence and power – Acts 4:29-31
* Respect from the community that God is moving in the church. – Acts 5
* God speaks to them specifically as they pray. – Acts 13:2

Let us put ourselves in a space where the Holy Spirit is. Because God moves powerfully among us in those spaces. The space of discipling relationships. Let us be intentional about regularly meeting together and in those gatherings, seeking God together.

The other obvious thing we see in the early church is that it is authentic and naturally develops. It isn’t driven by personalities or performances, but a united hunger to know God and His ways. Maybe this is what God is calling His church back to? Back to the basics. Simply supporting each other in seeking God.

*“Make a friend and continue to develop that friendship; that’s how we make disciples, by being together. Put your arm around them, love them, show them that you care for their soul.”-* Coleman

At St Martins C3 we believe the best space for those discipling relationships to happen is in a Connect Group. It is in our Connect Groups where you will be supported in growing in God and in your ministry to the world around you. So, please, join a group if you are not already in one.

Our discipling relationships will help us sustain our desire for God, however, revival begins in us. As we have been singing about today, *“Lord send revival, start with me.”*

**Suggested discussion questions:**

*What challenges you as you read Acts 2:42-47?*

*What can the church in the 21st century learn from the church in the 1st century?*

*What priorities may need to change in our lives if we were to be more intentional about engaging in discipling relationships?*

*What might God bringing more of His presence and power around your life look like for you at the moment?*

*What might God be leading you to do, to take hold of all that He has for you at the moment?*

**Monday’s Devotion – Miracles**

**Acts 2:43**

*Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.*

Are you praying for miracles? In the early church they were. They knew that God’s Kingdom had come through Jesus and now the presence of His Holy Spirit. Because of that, they expected dramatic things to happen.

This week we are exploring the results of a church seeking God together. One of the first results that we will see is God doing miracles among us.

Talking about miracles can make us feel a bit uncomfortable. We have big questions like, why God seems to move powerfully on some occasions and not others. We wonder whether there is more we have to do. Because it is not in our control, we don’t know what is going to happen. All these are understandable human reactions, but they ought not hinder us from wanting to see God do the miraculous around us.

Let us be like the early church and seek all that God has for us together. Let us seek Him to do the miraculous and may those miracles draw people into a deeper trust in God. Let us always remember we serve a truly awesome God. He is working powerfully around us. So, let us pray that we become more aware of His working, so we witness His miracles.

**Tuesday’s Devotion - Salvation**

**Acts 2:47**

*And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

I would love more people around me come to faith in Christ. I certainly do my best to take the opportunities I can to share my faith with them, however, I have to respect that it has to be their decision. Then we read an interesting verse like this, which seems to indicate that it is the Lord that brings people to salvation.

In looking at the broader context of scripture, we see know that people won’t know, unless someone tells them. So, we definitely have a part to play. We also see from the example of Jesus that He left them to make the decision as to whether they followed Him or not. This verse is an important reminder though that God is the main person involved in this process.

In appreciating how much God is working in people’s hearts in more recent years, I have learnt to listen more and cooperate more. I have learnt to trust in what God is doing in the lives of those He has called me to minister to. That doesn’t mean that I use that as an excuse to not say anything, rather, I use it as motivation to seek to say the right thing at the right time.

As we support each other in seeking God together, God will be able to trust us with those He is wanting to bring into his family. Let us put out trust in Him and put our trust in what He is doing in the lives of those around us. Then, HE will add to our number.

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Presence and Power**

**Acts 4:31**

*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*

When God is present in person, we will become more aware of His Presence and Power. May the presence and power of the Holy Spirit on our lives not be an optional bonus, but something we rely on every day of our lives. We can’t live for God without His Spirit. So, let us seek to be more aware of His presence and power in and around our lives.

The context for the verse above was the church praying together. Prayer reveals how dependant we are on God. Which is something we can easily allow to slip in our lives. We don’t see our need to depend on Him because we mostly have everything we need living in a country like NZ. However, all the hard work and money in the world won’t buy you God’s presence and power. God being present with us, requires us to be present with Him.

In all the busyness of our lives, let us take some time in our day to worship and pray. As we do so, we will develop an awareness of God’s presence. In being more aware of God’s presence in our quieter moments, we will hopefully be more aware of God’s presence and power in our many other interactions throughout our day.

**Thursday’s Devotion – Respect**

**Acts 5:12-13**

*The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.*

Isn’t this an interesting situation. It obviously became so well known that God was moving powerfully in the church that people in Jerusalem were concerned as to what might happen to them if they met with the other Christians. Remember this was after the Ananais and Sapphira incident, which would have been the talk of the town.

The cool thing that is happening here, is that the church isn’t just being respected for loving others, or helping each other out financially, they were being respected as a place that hosted the very presence and power of God. Something that Jews living in Jerusalem at the time, would have expected in the Holy of Holies in the temple, but not in Solomon’s Colonnade.

Consider the reputation of the church in New Zealand at the moment. Are we respected and what might we be respected for? Imagine if we were respected as the place the hosted the very presence and power of the living God. Some might stay as far away as possible, but others would be drawn in and dramatically changed.

**Friday’s Devotion – Clarity.**

**Acts 13:2-3**

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*

I like how this is one of those scriptures that is giving a simple historical account of what happened, but has some powerful insights into how the church operated.

As a church there is nothing we want to do more than to be clear on what God wants us to do and then do it. I am sure that is the case for the way we live our lives as well. We just want clarity. We don’t want waste our time and effort on our ideas, we want to follow God and His ways. In order to do that, we need to hear clearly from Him.

Let us be inspired by the evidence of God working in the early church. Let us not settle for less than God working powerfully in us and around us. After all, God wants to revive us and His church. So, let us worship and pray expectantly seeking His presence and power to be among us. Let us witness the awe that will generate in the community around us. Let us be aware of God drawing people to a relationship with Him and let us partner with Him in that process. Underneath all of this, may we seek God together, so that we hear clearly from Him as to what we are to do each step of the way.