

What does a Spirit-filled Church look like?

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[0 : 0 0] Good to see you everyone, and I'm sure it's nice for you to be able to see each other after such a long time of being apart, and to see Dylan and I in 3D. How's that, hey?

But we just said in the Apostles' Creed, we believe in the Holy Spirit. We looked last week at just who the Holy Spirit is and what He does. But, you know, Dylan was saying earlier just about how amazing it is that we are here, that we've survived the last six months as a church, that we didn't all go, okay, well, you know, we don't really need church, or let's just do something else on a Sunday.

But we all came, we all woke up, and for the first time in six months, we changed out of our pajamas before 12 o'clock, and we came to church. Why is that? I'll tell you why it is. It's because of the Holy Spirit.

It's not because of us. It's not because we decided that it's the right thing to do. It's because the Holy Spirit is giving us the desire to come to church, and the Holy Spirit has brought us together today, and the Holy Spirit has given us a hunger for His Word.

And so let's give Him the credit that is due for bringing us back. And let's pray and ask that He would help us to hear Him now as we open His Word together.

[1 : 1 2] So let's pray together. Lord, we do thank You for bringing us back here, for giving us a faith which not only believes in Christ as our Lord and Savior, and is our salvation, but that gives us a desire to hear You, that brings us together to want to be together and want to sit under Your Word.

We thank You for those desires that You instill in us, and we pray, Lord, that You would help us now to hear Your voice. We pray that You would be present with us. We know that Your Word is living, and as we open our ears to it and open our hearts to it, You will work in us.

And so we pray, draw close to us now and be with us in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, so the question I want to ask this morning to kick off is, what does a Spirit-filled church look like?

All right? Especially in light of what we looked at last week, the Holy Spirit, and how the Holy Spirit enters into believers. God is present in believers as they put their trust in Christ.

But God wants us to make sure that we live a life that is full of the Holy Spirit in us. That's what we saw last week. And as Dylan said earlier, the amazing thing about a whole lot of people who have the Holy Spirit coming together is that it, what's the word you used?

[2 : 3 1] Creates a powerhouse of the Spirit. And so if that's the case, if believers coming together, who have the Holy Spirit in them, are filled with the Spirit, what will that look like in the church?

What will a church that is filled with the Spirit look like? And you may have gone to various churches in your time as a Christian. And you may have experienced what are called very Spirit-filled churches, or what people generally refer to as Spirit-filled churches, or Pentecostal churches.

And what you expect from a church that is Spirit-filled is certain weird and wonderful things, spiritual things, like, I don't know what it could be, people speaking in tongues, or people prophesying, or people rolling around on the floor, being slain in the Spirit.

I'm sure you've seen or been exposed to so-called Pentecostal churches that are full of the Spirit, and then maybe they come to reach South Africa, a conservative church, and they go, oh, this doesn't seem very Spirit-filled.

But is that really what a Spirit-filled church looks like? What does a Spirit-filled church look like according to the Bible? That's the question we're going to ask this morning. And we're going to answer that by going to the first truly Spirit-filled church in the Bible, which is in Acts chapter 2, the passage that Gene read for us.

[3 : 44] Turn there in your Bibles. I hope you brought your Bible to church, because we've done a few Bibles now. And turn with me to Acts chapter 2, and let's find out what a true Spirit-filled church looks like according to the Bible.

A true Pentecostal church, because the word Pentecostal comes from the word Pentecost, which is the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, where Peter preaches this famous Pentecost sermon.

Acts chapter 2, we're actually going to devote next Sunday to looking at that sermon. And what a great sermon. It's the sermon that started the church. And so we're going to look at that next week.

We're going to dive into it and see just what that sermon said. But for now, I want us to look at the result of that sermon at the end of Acts chapter 2. Because this is on the day of Pentecost.

Peter's just preached the great sermon that started the church. And so this is the first Pentecostal church. And he said at the end of his sermon there in 38, repent and be baptized, each of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[4 : 50] So all these amazing things that just happened, the apostles had just received the gift of the Holy Spirit. And Peter says, now if you believe this message and you repent and are baptized, you too will receive the Holy Spirit. And we read on from verse 41, those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them.

3,000 people repented, were baptized, received the Holy Spirit. So this is the first Spirit-filled church. It's the most, it's the original Pentecostal church.

And so you'd expect to see what? You'd expect to see people starting to talk in tongues and prophecy and being slain in the Spirit, but no you don't. What you find is something rather ordinary and pedestrian.

Far more ordinary than we expect for a Spirit-filled church. Look at verse 42. This is the first Spirit-filled church. What did they do? They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

Well, that's a bit of an anti-climax, isn't it? It seems rather ordinary, but actually these four things that they did are the most Spirit-filled things you can do.

[6 : 00] They are deeply, truly the marks of a Spirit-filled church. And so to understand them and to assess ourselves as a local church as we start up again and we start meeting together, we're going to go into each of these marks of a Spirit-filled church in more detail.

So let's look at each of them in turn. Firstly, a Spirit-filled church is a learning church. Verse 42, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

They're a learning church. They were hungry to hear what God has to say. That's what marked them out. They were going, okay, God has something to say to us.

We want to listen. We want to stop everything. We want to listen to what God has to say. Now, it's not to say that there were no signs and wonders. Of course there were in the apostolic age here in the early church.

We read in the very next verse. Have a look. Verse 43, everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. So there were miracles happening, but they were being performed through the apostles, and that's important to notice.

[7 : 05] There weren't miracles just left, right, and center. You didn't go to your Christian friend's house and you turned the water into wine. How nice would that be if it was possible? But Christians didn't do that just all over the place.

It was the apostles who were performing the miracles, and the reason is because the apostles were the ones who brought God's word. And so the miracles authenticated the word.

When miracles happened in the Bible, it was when God had something new to say. So with Moses, with Elijah, with Jesus, with the apostles here, whenever God has something new to say, miracles happen so that we know, okay, these are the people to listen to.

In a world full of false, fake news and false information and you don't know who to believe, God makes it very clear who you can believe by giving them things that only God can do.

And that's what the apostles were. They had God's word and they had God's stamp of approval to make people listen to them. But people didn't still.

[8 : 06] Even though they did these miracles, a lot of people ignored what they have to say. And it's the same today, isn't it? The world ignores the apostolic word even though God has given us every reason to listen to what these apostles have to say.

Most people in the world still ignore it. You go to the average person in the street and you ask them, are you devoted to the apostolic teaching? They'll probably say no. Okay? Because they'll probably go, what?

What teaching? Who? Because even though God has given us every reason to believe what these apostles have to say, people still ignore them. People are far more interested in what Google has to say than what God has to say.

It reminds me, in fact, of my middle school standard seven class when the intercom came on. I don't know if you know what an intercom is. I don't know if they still have intercoms at school. But, you know, when the principal or the administrator had an announcement to make, you would hear ding dong and then the intercom would come on and then everyone would have to listen to the announcement.

Except my class for some reason. So the boys would still carry on playing cricket with science textbooks and rolled up balls of paper and the girls would still carry on sitting in the corner gossiping about the latest things and the intercom would come on ding dong and no one would change.

[9 : 20] They would carry on just talking, no one would listen and you would hear the principal's announcement kind of over the din but you could hardly make it out for those people who actually wanted to hear. Well, that's what the world is like today when it comes to God's word, isn't it?

There's all this noise and everybody's talking to each other and everybody's talking about all kinds of things on the internet and there's so much stuff going on, so much stuff people are talking about but God has something to say and no one's listening to Him except people who are filled with the Spirit.

People who are filled with the Spirit are marked out by people who go, actually God is trying to say something here. I'm going to stop everything else and I'm going to listen to Him and that's what we're doing now. We're stopping and we're listening to God and that's a mark of being filled with the Spirit and a mark that's related to that is that it's people who are devoted to doctrine.

They weren't devoted just to being together and being with the Apostles, they were devoted to the teaching of the Apostles, the doctrine of the Apostles. Now I know when I say the word doctrine, it sounds rather boring you start to yawn don't you?

When you hear doctrine, ah doctrine, that sounds like you're going to Bible college. But if you look at it, just look at chapter 2 again of Acts, look at Peter's sermon, as I say, we're going to look at this in detail next week, but if you just look from verse 14 towards the end of the chapter, look at all these Old Testament quotes from these prophets and from these writings of the Old Testament, the first Pentecostal service ever was a lecture in biblical theology.

[10 : 56] Think about that. You think Pentecostal service, you think all these amazing weird and wonderful things and yes, some weird and wonderful things did happen, the Holy Spirit and flames of fire and stuff, but the heart of this service was a lecture in biblical theology because here's the thing, the Spirit of God works on our hearts by addressing our minds first and that's important.

The Spirit works in our lives by engaging our minds with this, engaging our minds with biblical truth and doctrine and when we do the hard work of seeking to understand it, that's when the Spirit works because He wants us to know what is true in this world.

He wants us to know what is real and that happens when He teaches us doctrine into our minds. Jesus calls Him the Spirit of Truth in John 15.

It's an interesting name, the Spirit of Truth because there are lots of spirits of lies in our world. There's a lot of information flying around. Again, how do we know what is true?

The Holy Spirit helps people to know what is true. The Spirit of Truth. But truth is not attractive in our post-modern world, is it? You know, we live in a world where it's all about what's true for you or that might be different to what's true for me.

[12 : 14] That person's truth is different to that person's truth. And that is the language of today. Everybody has their own truth so they can do what they want, basically.

It gives them an excuse for living however they want. They redefine truth to match their lifestyle. But Spirit-filled believers are not, they don't fall for that. Christians don't fall for that idea of relative truth.

Christians are devoted to learning what is really true in the world no matter whether or not that sounds nice or it's popular or whether people like you or not for believing that.

Christians are people who are devoted to knowing what is true and what is not true. And that means as well, this is very important, Christians shouldn't be people who are satisfied with private interpretation.

Christians shouldn't be people who are satisfied with staying at home and reading the Bible for themselves and going, well, let's see what this passage means to me. True Spirit-filled believers shouldn't be satisfied with that.

[13 : 17] True Spirit-filled believers will go, you know what, I'm not quite sure what this passage is saying. I better go to church. I better ask my pastor. And what that means is that true Spirit-filled believers are ones who gather around the Word because they know the Word is actually, there's one truth.

There's one thing the Bible is saying and we want to make sure we know what that is. We're not satisfied with just reading it at home by ourselves. Useful as that might be but the main thing we do, the central, the first mark of a Spirit-filled church is that they gather together around God's Word because they're devoted to truth.

Alright, so that's the first thing that we see in the Spirit-filled church. What's the second thing? The second mark of a Spirit-filled church is that it is a praying church. I know it's not the second thing listed but it's the second thing I want to talk about.

So look there, verse 42, at the end, they devoted themselves to prayer. Now, if you read on Acts, you've probably read it before or some of it, some amazing, powerful things happen.

It's the growth of the church in the midst of persecution and some incredible things happen which of course has led to the church of billions today.

[14 : 33] And there was a powerful church you read this church in Acts and we're really impressed. And if we want to capture just some of the power of the early church we read about here, we will only do so if we learn to pray like they did.

Now, if you read on in Acts and you see the amazing works of the Holy Spirit, what you also see parallel to that is the believers getting together to pray over and over and over again.

I just scanned through it this week and I found at least 15 occasions where the believers were together praying which was accompanying and underlying the Holy Spirit's work because God wants to do things in this world, right?

He has a plan and He wants to do real, amazing, powerful things in this world today just as much as He did then but He has chosen that He is going to do His work in response to Christians' praying and only Christians, nobody else because nobody else is able to approach God as a sinner.

You can't approach God, the Holy God unless your sins are atoned for and only Jesus dying on the cross has done that. So only Christians are able to pray for things in this world and know that God hears them and answers them.

[15 : 57] What a privilege and wonder response ability because we can access God through Jesus dying on the cross and we are the only people able to do that and so we are the ones that God has chosen to be praying for things and as we pray for them God will do them and we are also the only people on earth who are helped by God's Holy Spirit in us to know what to pray for because God's not going to just give us anything we pray for God's going to give us what we pray for when we pray in line with His will how do we know what His will is well we read the Bible and the Holy Spirit in us helps us to know what God wants us to pray for so we are the only people who are able to access God and we are the only people who have God's Holy Spirit who helps us to pray and so when Christians who are filled with the Spirit pray their prayers are jailbreaking and earth shaking and I can prove it to you turn with me to Acts 12 I just want you to see how when Spirit filled believers get together to pray things happen

Acts 12 this is just one of the many things that happened but I want you to see why it happened from verse 6 I'm going to read this I'm reading from the CSB I know you're reading from different translations so I'm sure you'll be able to follow Acts 12 from verse 6 when Herod was about to bring him out for trial that's Peter that very night Peter bound with two chains was sleeping between two soldiers while the centurions in front of the door guarded the prison suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell striking Peter on the side he woke up and said quick get up and the chains fell off his wrists get dressed the angel told him and put on your sandals and he did wrap your cloak around you he told him and follow me so he went out and followed and he did not know what the angel did was really happening but he thought he was seeing a vision after they passed the first and second guards they came to the iron gate that led into the city which opened to them by itself they went outside and passed one street and suddenly the angel left him when Peter came to himself he said now I know for certain that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's grasp and from all the Jewish all that the Jewish people expected okay so here we have something that belongs in a Hollywood movie right we've got amazing things happening this jailbreak and the doors opening by themselves all these kinds of things and Peter didn't even believe it was happening he's seen some crazy things in his life he walked with Jesus he saw his miracles and yet he still didn't at first believe this was happening but read on let's see why it was happening verse 12 as soon as he realized this he went to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark where many had assembled and were praying wow okay so all of this amazing things happens to Peter and then he rocks up the home of the disciples and what are they doing surprise surprise they're busy praying the implication is that it was their prayer which was empowering all this stuff to happen to Peter look at another example turn a few pages over to act 16 again another jail break it seems the Holy Spirit likes breaking people out of prison

Acts 16 verse 26 suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the jail were shaken and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains came loose and then so it goes on this is the establishment of the Philippian church the jailer he's about to kill himself and then they preach the gospel to him and he believes and then his whole household comes to faith and all these incredible things happen it all starts with an earthquake but does it no actually it all starts in verse 25 about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the prisoners were listening to them what kicked it all off what kicked off all these amazing things prayer when spirit filled believers come together in prayer their prayers have real effects in the physical world and we've got to believe that and that is a mark of being filled with the spirit real prayers that really work also you see these believers praying together most of the time they're praying gathered together and that's because prayer is best done together prayer is best done together

God wants his people to be united in prayer in Matthew 18 Jesus gives a promise where two or three are gathered and they agree on the same thing and they pray for it there I am with them God is present in a very special way with his people when they decide to gather together to pray the apostles here the first believers they were praying some translations actually say the prayers what prayers well most likely they were praying the prayers of the Old Testament temple the liturgical prayers in the temple because even in the Old Testament God desires for his people to gather together and to be praying together God wants that and he set it up so that we can and should do that and practically when we pray together we generally tend to pray better don't we I don't know about you but definitely for me when I'm praying with other believers I start to pray for things that I wouldn't have prayed for by myself I'm reminded of things outside of my own life that need prayer generally when we pray by ourselves and God of course is more than willing to hear us and answer our prayers as we as believers come to him through Christ in our own capacity or no not in our own in Christ's capacity by ourselves but he especially wants us to gather together he especially blesses us when we gather together to pray and we pray better we pray for things beyond just our own little lives and that's why

I encourage you to come on Wednesday at half past six here to our prayer meeting not because I want it but because God wants it and he desires it and he's delighted to see his people gather together to pray to him and he will use those prayers to do things so that's the second mark of a spirit filled church we're halfway there the first mark was they were a learning church they devoted themselves to doctrine the second mark that there was a praying church the third mark this is a surprising one they were an eating church when I read this have a look back now at Acts 2 and you read about how Luke who's the writer of Acts describes the life of the early church he makes quite a point of saying how they socialized and ate together so in verse 42 they devoted themselves the apostles teaching to fellowship to the breaking of bread it's just a shorthand for having meals together and then later on verse 46 every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple and broke bread from house to house they ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts why does he make a point of telling us that these early Christians ate together well because eating is quite important okay

[23 : 32] I'm sure you know that to stay alive but eating is also a theological thing it's a mark of a spirit filled community when people eat together in the way that they were and they were eating together where everybody was involved and that was that was what marked them out because we've got to understand culturally in that day hospitality was very important in that culture and in that day and it was a way that you advanced yourself socially we touched on this didn't we in the parable of the banquet remember a couple of weeks ago but to understand the importance of eating together and the church eating together we first got to understand how hospitality worked in that day and what you did is that you invited people to your house who were going to elevate you socially in some way or could reciprocate to do something for you in return and so you would tend to hang out with people who would benefit you and we go well that's very selfish but actually don't we do it today as well don't we choose who to socialize with based on who will make us laugh or who will benefit us in some way or who will be able to bring us into better social circles that's how the world works that's how socially the world works people will invite people around to their house who can benefit them in some way you know honey should we should we invite

Tim and Susan because they are the heart of the party they're so funny they just they just bring life to the party and it'll be a great party if we invite them or honey I'm going to invite Fred to our dinner because he's got this business proposal that I really want to hear and I think I think can really benefit don't we don't people today still socialize with people who are going to benefit us in some way well that's how the world works and that's how the world worked back then but then Jesus came along in Luke and we see a lot of eating and drinking in Luke it was quite a big theme but Jesus didn't eat and drink with people who would benefit him on the contrary people were surprised at who Jesus hung out with and he did that deliberately because he came to overturn to turn on on their head the social norms of the day and introduce a completely new society that works by different rules that's what Jesus came to earth to do to start a new society that works by different rules to the society of the world mainly because they work by grace and not by merit that's the new society

Jesus came to form where people are living transformed social lives where they accept people who haven't earned it into their circles into their lives that is what the people of Jesus look like that is what spirit-filled believers look like and that is what marked out the first spirit-filled church their social lives were transformed because now they brought people they allowed people into their space and into their lives who weren't going to necessarily benefit them in any way but because they were united in Christ the early church's hospitality exhibited God's hospitality because gracious hospitality that's what grace means and that's what gracious hospitality means when I mean let's make it real for boys and girls who are with us who do you hang out with at school who do you accept into your social circles people who you like people who make you laugh well God's people accepted all kinds of people into their social circles people who didn't necessarily make them laugh or that they like but because they were united in one big family and that that kind of social life reflects the heart of God and I think it's especially around eating because back then that's when you socialized around eating but there's something special about eating with other people isn't there

Jesus did it all the time but I think what's special about it is that it looks forward to the new creation it looks forward to the new society that God has planned for this world where everybody will enjoy him and each other without limit and what do we do when we eat together with other people we do those two things we're enjoying God and each other it's one of the unique occasions in life where we enjoy God and other people at the same time he's designed it like that and it looks forward to the heavenly banquet Jesus in the last supper in Luke 22 he said to his disciples I'm not going to eat and drink like this again until I eat and drink with you again in my father's kingdom giving his disciples something to look forward to the heavenly banquet remember we looked at the parable of the banquet and we're reminded that the new creation is going to kick off with an amazing big party with amazing food the heavenly banquet well even now gracious

Christian hospitality around food is a very practical thing but it's something that looks forward to the new creation where everybody who is in the kingdom will be accepted and be able to enjoy God's gift without limit and enjoy each other and it reflects God's heart he is the ultimate gracious host because he has invited each one of us to his home to eat with him we don't deserve and so our hospitality should reflect his hospitality and that's what happened in this first spiritual church you see how eating is a deeply theological thing one other point before we move on to the final point just about eating is that when we read here that the early church broke bread together it can also allude to the Lord's supper that's what they would have done on a regular basis when they came together to eat they would have had communion which we're going to have this morning and communion is amongst other things it's a celebration that reminds us of what we all have in common and that is a very special thing it's a reminder that we all no matter who we are no matter how different we are we all have at least one thing in common if we are

[29 : 48] Christians which is by the way just a great help in social situations you know how when you go to a party or you're meeting someone new for the first time it's sometimes really awkward because you don't know what you have in common with them and you try to find something in common and sometimes it's really difficult you know what I'm talking about have you been in that situation so pleased to meet you how was the rugby on the weekend sorry I don't watch rugby what sport are you interested I don't play sport okay how's the weather hey see you've been in that situation you know what I mean where it's so difficult to find what you have in common with the person and only when you do can you actually have a decent conversation Christians should never be in that situation with each other because we always have one thing in common and that is God and the Lord Jesus Christ and what he's doing in our life and what we are enjoying about God we can always talk about God to each other we can always share with each other and start a conversation about church and what you heard in the sermon what you're reading in the Bible what is God doing in your life

Christians should never be in the situation where they're struggling to find something to talk about and that is what communion reminds us of we're gathering together and remembering the one thing that brings us together look at this early church again that's exactly what brought them together when they hung out in their houses and when they ate food together what did they talk about well it tells us verse 47 they ate verse 46 they ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts what were they doing praising God that's what they did when they were together they praised God they spoke about God they sang to God Christians always have something in common and that is what should be the basis of our conversations with each other and our social lives with each other so now if you've been challenged to invite people you don't normally invite to your house to eat you might be thinking oh what are we going to talk about here's the answer talk about Jesus talk about God look with me turn to

Ephesians 5 look what happens when people are filled with the spirit we read this passage last week Ephesians 5 from verse 18 don't get drunk with wine that's a good tip for Christian social gatherings by the way verse 18 don't get drunk with wine which leads to reckless living but be filled with the spirit what's going to happen then speaking to one another in psalms hymns and spiritual songs singing and making music with your heart to the Lord giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that's the basis of Christian society and Christian conversation spirit filled believers speak a new language to each other a conversation that is infused with God and with God's attributes and what God is doing in this world and what we're learning about them in the Bible that's the basis of good Christian conversation and it was for this early church the spiritfull church they were an eating church and then finally the last mark of the spiritfull church they were a generous church look back at Acts 2 from verse 44 now now all the believers were together and held all things in common they sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all as any had need they were amazingly generous towards each other when those in their community had needs that those needs didn't last long they were looked after people sacrificially gave so that the people in need weren't in need anymore they were a generous church but they weren't just generous because it's nice to be generous they were generous because generosity is a profound mark of a new creation community because poverty being in need is because of the fall and it always will be people are in need in our world because of what happened in

Genesis chapter 3 because of us as human beings turning away from God sinning against him sin entering into our hearts sinful desires and God's response by cursing the ground this earth is broken and that's why people are in need and in poverty because of sin because they've been exploited by someone else or because of the earth not producing its bounty like it should have so poverty being in need anyone in need even if it's you know you're not in abject poverty but you're struggling to make ends meet at the end of the month and I know many of you have been in that situation and maybe now that is a result of the fall that is not meant to be it's a result of sin and it's in fact one of the things that the prophets condemned the nation of Israel for for not looking after those in need you read the prophets in the old testament over and over again they're condemning the leaders of Israel for not looking after the poor why because they're this is a community this is

God's community it should point towards the new creation it shouldn't it shouldn't be characterized by old creation things and old creation things were poverty and people in need who weren't being looked after and it's not fitting for God's people to have that in their community and that's why when Jesus came in Luke chapter 4 how did he describe the gospel of the kingdom he said it's good news to the poor because the kingdom of God will do away with all need once and for all when the kingdom is consummated but even now in the meantime the new community Jesus is forming to point towards the coming new creation should not have people in poverty if it's going to reflect new creation living if it's going to reflect new creation society and we look at Acts we look at the first spiritual church and we discover that's exactly what they made sure that they didn't have they didn't have people in need they made sure that their community was pointing towards the new creation by looking after their poor verse 45 they sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all as any had need now this wasn't an early form of communism by the way it was voluntary and we see later that many

[36 : 43] Christians still had private property so it wasn't it's not saying that private property is bad communism is a government system where everyone is forced to share when they don't want to and it leads to a whole lot of abuses and evils as history has shown us just the history of the 20th century Russia under Stalin or China under Mao Zedong we've just seen the evils of communism this is not promoting communism but you know what one of the biggest evils of communism is the that's what communism is based on the idea that we can make for ourselves a society where everybody gets along where nobody is in need and the truth is history shows us and the Bible tells us we cannot do that that's impossible this side of Jesus coming back but we look at the church here the early church this is the closest thing to that utopian ideal that you will find this church this early church this spirit full believers this is an example of what our society should be imagine our society at large voluntarily did what this early church did we would have no problems but they're not going to do that because they're not filled with the spirit but we are so we should do that we should reflect what the society should be but never will be until

Jesus comes back we should be a beacon of light towards the new creation society and we should show them in our little societies as churches we should show the world what God's new creation society is going to look like where there is no need the church should be the most attractive society on earth if we're filled with the spirit it should be what all the outsiders look at and want to be part of look again at Acts 2 verse 47 what was happening when these believers got together and were filled with the spirit and did all these things praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people not even the Christians all the people were looking at that community and saying wow there's something special going on there I want to be part of that do people look at St Marks and say that let's hope they will if we're filled with the spirit but in summary that's what a spirit full church actually looks like not rolling around on the floor and laughing and speaking in tongues and being slain in the spirit but a church that is devoted to the apostles teaching to the fellowship to the breaking of bread and to prayer in a word if you had to summarize what a spirit full church looks like in a word in this passage it's the word devoted verse 42 devoted that word literally in the original means strong towards

I like that they were strong towards God they were strong towards praying they didn't just do it because it was on Wednesday at 6 and they had to go they didn't just eat together because they felt obliged to they didn't just go and listen to the apostles teaching because it's what they did every Sunday they were strong towards it they were devoted to it let me ask you what are you strong towards in your life what what do you expend your strength on what gets your blood flowing your sport your hobby your family maybe well spiritual believers are strong towards two things primarily they are strong towards God and they are strong towards each other they are strong towards God in learning and listening to him and praying to him and they are strong towards each other in opening their lives being hospitable to each other and being generous to each other this community here that we read of in Acts chapter 2 this first spirit filled community that seems so ordinary at first glance is actually

God's ultimate invention it's the most loved part of his creation and it's what he sent his son to die on the cross to make possible this unexpectedly ordinary looking group of people but who were filled with the spirit and therefore devoted to God and each other and it's something that the world had never seen before and the result we see it at the end there praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people the world took notice and every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved God saved people through the spirit filled community their witness had real effects and so St.

Mark's as we begin to gather again let's pray that this ordinary looking bunch of people at St. Mark's God and strong towards each other so that God will add to our number daily those who are being saved let's pray Lord we thank you for being able to gather again like this and we thank you for this picture of what a spirit filled church actually looks like and we pray Lord that as you have given us your spirit in each of us who believe we pray that you would cause us to be a spirit filled community that are devoted to you in learning in prayer and devoted to each other in generosity and in hospitality we pray Lord that this will have real effect in our world as we come to towards the end of 2020 and as people are kind of coming out sociable help us to be a community that stands out that people notice that people want to be part of and would you give us the great privilege of being a community to which you will add daily those who are being saved and

[42 : 58] Lord we thank you for this and we pray for those who are watching the service recorded those who couldn't be with us today we pray for them at home that they would also feel part of us here that they would even though they're remote would still realize that through the spirit they are united we are united together as your people and help us Lord to go forward strongly and to go from strength to strength in the coming weeks in Jesus name Amen