

Empowered for the Mission: Mercy Charlotte

Acts 1-2

Main Idea: The Holy Spirit changes lives and multiplies the mission of the gospel

Intro:

What an awesome privilege it is to be able to be here with you all today! I want you to know what an encouragement it is to see *THIS* here today and to watch all that God is doing here at Mercy Church!

I am here today with my lovely wife Ashley and the newest addition to our family Adalyn Grace who just turned 8 weeks old! And we are excited to begin the very same journey that you guys are already on, as we head to Atlanta to plant a church!

Right now we are in the process of building our launch team as we get ready to move to Atlanta in May and Lord willing Launch September 10th!

I am grateful for the chance to share in your journey today and for you guys to partner with us as we begin ours. I have had the chance to know Pastor Spence for 5 years now, and I hope you know how blessed you are to have such an incredibly gifted leader that I had the chance to sit under him for several years as we severed on staff at the Summit Church together! I have learned a lot from him!

You know Spence and I have actually been through a lot together, huge wins, tough losses, walk off games winners, devastating upsets, series championships and losing streaks. You say “man you guys have been through a lot!”

- And you’re right, lunch time whiffle ball games at Summit are on a whole different level! You would be surprised how good your pastor can swing that plastic bat!

Well, let me pray for us as we begin our time together:

Have you ever been somewhere like a party or an event with a lot of people and you don’t know anyone there?? And you feel super awkward because you really don’t know what to do, who to talk to, or what to say if you did talk to someone? I know you have been there, we all have...

And so you pull out your phone every 30 seconds and check Facebook or Instagram and you start looking for people to text as you count down the minutes that are creeping by...

But then, all of the sudden you see someone walk in that you know really well and there is this major sigh of relief and your super excited to see them, and it gets even better, it turns out that they know everyone and they are introducing you to people and all of the sudden you’re having a blast!

But then your friend all the sudden has to leave and you still have another 2 hours left... and as soon as they leave everything goes right back to how it was and no one wants to talk to you and you feel even more awkward, and you don’t know what to do at this point.... And you’re like no way my friend had to leave why couldn’t they just stay until the end?? It would be way better that way!!

Well that’s a lot like how the disciples felt when Jesus left earth and went back to heaven... He was here, gained a lot of attention there was a buzz around him and disciples... and then he says he has to leave... and the disciples are left in a small locked upper room... But WHY, WHY did he leave???

- Why would The Savior of the world leave the world???. Why wouldn’t he stay just here, wouldn’t the world be a better place then???

Now, I know that there are some of you here today who are just exploring this whole Jesus thing. You’re not a Christian and all of this is new to you and that’s ok, I am just glad that you’re here this morning. My hope is that you get a glimpse into why we Christians do what we do!

And my hope specifically for you is that instead of telling you how you can invite Jesus into *your world*, I can tell you how Jesus leaving *this world* has massive implications for your life!

If you have your Bibles go ahead and turn to the book of Acts 1:

Acts is one of my favorite books because it's like looking at the scrapbook of the church as we know it today- it gives us a glimpse back into how the church actually came into existence unveiling for us why Jesus had to leave!

- What I want to do this morning is walk through first 2 chapters of the book of Acts, and look at 3 key observations, and in light of those observations give 3 practical applications for our lives.

In order to see the big picture in these first 2 chapters, I am gonna to be jumping around just a little bit so follow along with me, as we read!

Ok, Chapter 1 verse 1:

In the first book, O Theophilus (name for your next kid?), I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He [Jesus] presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

[What's going on here at the beginning? Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke, is also the author of Acts, and what he is doing here at the beginning is reiterating what he had previously written earlier in chapter 24 in the book of Luke, with the goal of circling back to the end of Jesus life here on earth to emphasize some important things that happen.] Let's keep reading...

⁴ And while staying with them he [Jesus] ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me."

Verse 8:

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Here is the first observation:

A. The Ascension sets up the mission

- Before I go any further, let me define the mission:
 - **Write this down** because you will hear this word a lot today: **the mission is to take the good news of Jesus to the nations.** (mission= gospel to the nations)
- So, Jesus is about to go back to heaven, and he tells his disciples to wait for the promise of the father.
 - **John 14** tells us that the promise of the father is the Holy Spirit, and Jesus clarifies this for them in verse 8 when he tells them "The power of the Holy Spirit will come upon them" as the fruition of the Fathers promise.
- Jesus says to wait until that happens and then he leaves!

But notice the order of **HOW** Jesus says things will happen, wait on the Spirit... the Spirit will come and **then** you will be witnesses- sent out on mission to the world (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth).

It's important that us to connect the dots here:

- Jesus said earlier in John 16:7 that He has to leave in order for the Holy Spirit to come!

So, Bottom line: The mission cannot exist apart from the Spirit, and the Spirit cannot come unless Jesus leaves!

Let's keep Reading:

Chapter 2:

2 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language.

Verse 13:

13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day (9am). (Clearly Peter has never been to a Panthers tailgate before a noon kickoff game...)

And Peter goes on to say Verse 21:

21 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

- Did you hear that everyone who calls on the Lord, that means anyone within the sounds of my voice has the opportunity to be saved, there is no condition for this statement!

Verse 36:

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

37 Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

- "You realize this is every preachers dream, right? You preach a 5 minute sermon, and people are lining up asking how to become followers of Christ. Incredible! So I'm gonna attempt

the same thing, and just like Peter, I'll be down front here after this service and you can come ask me the same thing."

B. The Holy Spirit brings clarity to the mission

- As soon as the Spirit comes down everything all of the sudden makes sense now! Peter who, bless his heart never could quiet get it, preaches one of the best sermons in the NT, fully articulating the mission of Jesus!

Not only is there clarity of the gospel (the good news of Jesus) there is clarity to who this message is for.

- All nations were present and experiencing this together, making clear that the message of Jesus is for all people!

The **mission** was to take this **message** to the ends of the earth!

- It says the Spirit came on them like a rushing wind- literally like a hurricane force wind.
- **Ever been in a beach windstorm... running after a beach ball?**

In the same way hurricane winds propel things everywhere, they are to be propelled out to the ends of the earth to share the gospel!

- And they now have the ability to do that because of the power of the Holy Spirit!

Lets look at how Peter continues his sermon:

Verse 38:

38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

Verse 41

41 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. 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.

Verse 47

⁴⁷[And they were] praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

C. The Holy Spirit multiplies the mission

- The evidence of clarity, and power of the mission by way of the Holy Spirit, is seen in the response of the people.

3 thousand people trusted in Jesus and it continues here at the end of chapter 2 as the Lord adds to that number daily!

Its not the people that multiply the mission, it is the power of the Holy Spirit in the people that allows the mission to multiply.

- The holy Spirit does the work through the people, but the people are responding by leveraging their lives!

Now, in light of these observations I want to walk through 3 specific applications for us here today...

1. **Repent and believe (Acts 2:38)**

When all of this happened the people asked Peter: "What should we do?" and Peter says repent and trust in Jesus for forgiveness of your sins.

- "Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is in fact a change of mind." - Spurgeon
 - it's the recognition of and the turning from your sin, and trusting in Jesus!

There are some of you here that don't need to hear anything else other than this! You need to repent and believe in Jesus! Right now the truth is, you're walking through life all alone, you have no helper, you have no wisdom and you have no power from God.

You wonder why you just cannot find enough hope and fulfillment in your life:

- ***Directly apply this ...*** you look to: school, family, work, relationship etc... none of it works!

Many of you, just like the people here in the book of Acts need to hear the bad news in order to understand the beauty of the good news. The bad news is: you are separated from the living God. And you need to hear today, that the only way out is by trusting in Jesus, and when you do that, listen, when you do that all of the fullness and power of God become infused in you through the Holy Spirit! The same power that raised Jesus from the dead can be the same power that's in you, if you will trust in the finished work of Jesus.

Robert Smith Jr. says: "It wasn't two but three thieves who died on Calvary. The One in the middle also took something that didn't belong to Him: my sin."

And when you trust that he took your sin, you gain full acceptance, full assurance, full approval, total hope and limitless power through the Spirit of God- so you can stop looking for it everywhere else!

Listen, you came in here and you had questions, you're unclear, you feel like God is this distant being not really concerned about your life.

Jesus, he offers you a relationship with God, not a far off ambiguous relationship, but a close and personal one through the Holy Spirit! But Peters challenge still stand true, REPENT and BELIEVE!

2. **The Holy Spirit brings a changed life and a changed community**

When you trust in Jesus, and the Holy Spirit become infused to who you are, it means that you are a completely new and different person.

Example: For a lot of you, the Holy Spirit is like the Serpentine belt in a car, you don't know the purpose, just know you need it...

Billy Graham says: “The Holy Spirit illuminates the minds of people, makes us yearn for God, and takes spiritual truth and makes it understandable to us.”

The Spirit gives you an awareness of who God is and what he has done for you, and the ability to say yes to God and no to sin. It gives you a whole new framework, or lens to view life through.

- Hear this though, don't think you give your life to Jesus, you get the Spirit and then you become a perfect person

The Holy Spirit doesn't create robots, it creates repentant sinners.

Some of you here today need to ask yourself, is the Holy Spirit really inside of me?? Have I really surrendered to Jesus and received the Spirit??

- **A good way to gauge this is to ask yourself: “Are you a man or woman at war with your sin?”**

Has the Spirit of God changed you, changed what's driving you, or do you look at your life and see no change?

- Major difference in knowing about God vs. a transforming relationship with God through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Not only does it change who you are internally but it also changes who you are around externally. The people here in the book of Acts experienced an internal transformation that directly affected their external way of living.

- *In the Christian life, what's happening internally, always manifests itself externally in our actions and our relationships*

These people here in Acts 2:42-47 were not necessarily all tight and hanging out together before they were saved (**JOKE?**), their community changed because their heart changed!

- As this happened they functionally became the first local church- a community of people doing life together in response to the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit.

See, for them church wasn't an event that they attended once a week, it was a group of people that they belonged to, that they were dedicated to. Listen, God didn't save us so we could **attend** church; he saved us so we could **act as** the church.

Let me ask you this: is *this* true for you? Are you *acting as* the church?

See there are a lot of you here that may claim to have the Holy Spirit inside of you, but is it reflected in the way that you are engaging in the local church- the community Jesus has established.

- **Practically Apply:** Small groups, local outreach, serving on Sundays...

Isolation is never part of a new creation!

The people here in the book of Acts were bought in and dedicated to the local church, if you're here and you're not invested in this local church, why not? What's holding you back??

If you're a non-Christian here today, it's great news to know that God doesn't save you into isolation, he saves you to a local community, his church! You immediately become part of something!

So regardless of where you are now, no matter how bad you have been, the Holy Spirit offers you a changed life, the chance to be freed from the bondage of your sin! To have a new lens to view life and a new community to walk with.

Which leads me to the third application:

3. Spirit-filled Community multiplies the mission

Look at what happened when these Spirit filled believers came together as a new local church...

- [They were] 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.

God used the Spirit-filled community (or the local church) in the book of Acts as the means to multiplying the mission of reaching people with the good news of the gospel!

Listen, it wasn't the good music or great preaching that added to those being saved. (Not that there is anything wrong with those)

It was the Holy Spirit was moving in people who were responding and surrendering to the mission of God, and that's what made the church multiply!

So, let me ask you: ***Are you responding to the Holy Spirit in your life??*** Where is that the Spirit is leading you to be part of the mission of reaching people with the gospel here at Mercy Church?

Here is the thing that we have to understand, the local church is a movement, and movements move with the goal of reach your neighbors and the world with the message of Jesus!

- Remember Acts 1:8: **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."**

That's Local, national and international! That was a charge then, and it's still the same charge for us today!

You have some incredible opportunities to be part of the multiplying the mission of God through the vehicle of Mercy Church!

Make appeal for each:

- Local Outreach opportunities...
- Short Term mission trips...
- Church Planting- Come with us to Atlanta! The reason why we do this is that we believe that the church is God's plan for multiplying the mission of reaching the world with the gospel!

One of the things we like to say is do what you do well for the Glory of God and do it somewhere strategic for the mission of God!! It's not ***is*** he leading, its ***where*** is he leading??

Let me tell you the sad part about all this from the book of Acts. After all that had happened, and after this big missional charge... at the end of Acts chapter 7... ***They're still are in Jerusalem! They haven't moved!***

Listen, for some of you that's where you are today, you have been coming but you're not engaged in the mission...

- **Example:** Ricky-Bobby... you think your paralyzed!
- You're not paralyzed!!

Some of you today need to make a decision to plug into the mission of this church!

- ***Don't just be a spectator of the church, engage in the mission of the church?***

Let me encourage you with this, I know some of these things may sounds extreme and out of your league, but let me remind you that you are more than capable because of the Spirit inside of you!

- Pastor JD Greear put it best when he said *"The Spirit inside of you is greater than Jesus beside you"*

That was Gods plan all along! Jesus left so that you could have access to the same power that resided within him through the Holy Spirit that's in you! God offers you this power for the purpose of taking the message of Jesus to the world!

Conclusion:

You know one of the biggest questions I get is, what's Gods will for my life?... Why would you not plug into the vehicle that God uses to move and enact his power... the church... that's a great place to start.

Maybe you're here and your trying to figure out your story, you came here looking for something, your trying to fit God in your life somehow... God is offering you the opportunity to be part of **His Story**... but you have to surrender to him... do that today! Become part of something that will last forever!

Christopher J Write (OT Scholar in London)

"Most of us have asked the question, how does the mission of God work into the story of my life, but the real question is how does the story of my life fit into the mission of God?"

Listen, what would it look like if every one of you were asking the question, how can the story of my life fit into the mission of God?

What if every one of you today decided to be part of multiplying the mission of God?? Imagine what could God do in this city, and what he could God do in Atlanta??

Where is it that you need to surrender to the direction of the Holy Spirit??

God has given us all that we need for his message to multiply, the question is are we being faithful to follow through with it?