



Sermon Growth Guide

February 27, 2022

Missing Pieces - On Mission for Jesus



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Acts 2:32-41

Key Verse: Acts 2:32 “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.”

Big Idea: The world needs Jesus and we are His witnesses.

Foundations

We are in the last week of *Missing Pieces*. In Christ, what is missing is found. What is lacking is filled up. The Missing Pieces of our lives become sites of Resurrection.

Of all the gaps and missing pieces, people are missing purpose. We are made to be on mission, to have meaning, and we grasp at all sorts of things when that piece is missing.

We are part of a cosmic story: we live in a broken world in deep need of Jesus, and in God healing us, He invites us to participate in His redemptive work. We are witnesses of Resurrection power.

Our last sermon in the series is back where we started in Acts 2: “They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

The early church gathered, and the Spirit worked in and through them. The Spirit is still at work in us today, and we are witnesses of this.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Acts 2:32–41. This week we reflect again on the Spirit’s work in the early church. Observe how God is the main character in this story.

Verse 37 describes people’s response to hearing about Jesus. Discuss their response of “being cut to the heart.”

Applying God’s Word

Host a discussion on where you have seen God at work.

What are some commonalities in the various responses?

Witnessing God’s Word

Tim mentioned the quote from Fyodor Dostoyevsky: “The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for.”

How do you see the need for meaning affect various people in Scripture? How do you see the meaning Christ offers affect various people in your life?

We are back to Acts as we close out this series. Now it feels like I can finally say, it's time to move past COVID! Doesn't it feel like things are getting back up to speed? People are going to parties, games, concerts, school, everything else, but we are still not back to church. Some still can't come, and we understand. But there are many, many people who are, as I said last week, just plain skipping. It's more than that; they are trying on life without church. What's life like without church on my weekly schedule? Can my faith be sustained by personal prayer, periodic Christian fellowship and a podcast? Those are the people I'm worried about. There are gifts from God in the community of faith, in the local congregation, that you will miss if you walk away from church. **Missing Pieces.** We've talked about them. Human touch. Shared faith. The strength of saying not just "I believe," but "we believe." Hearing the Word of God together in the context of worship. The people of God have done that forever. Is it really time to put that aside? Participating in the Body of Christ as members, and knowing that if one member is missing—dismembered—the body doesn't work. You are needed. Finally, the sacraments. The mysteries of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. We are a sacramental church. We don't experience these mysteries alone.

When you walk away from these things, they become **Missing Pieces**, gaps we are tempted to fill with all kinds of trash just because the emptiness is painful and we need to try to fill it. But these gaps were meant to be filled by walking with other believers in the community of faith. Our theme verse for the series is Acts 2:42. Let's say it one more time together: "They devoted themselves to the **apostles' teaching** and to **fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer**" (Acts 2:42). Do we really want to walk away from

these things? Right now, after COVID, people are in pain. They need the gifts God has for them. They need the church. They need the gospel. Can we be a body devoted to the work of Christ? Can we devote ourselves to a purpose bigger than any one of us? Can we be devoted to the mission of Jesus?

Of all the gaps and missing pieces, to sum this series up today there is a thread running through: people are missing purpose. You were meant to have purpose and meaning in your life. Fyodor Dostoyevsky once said, "The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to live for." People can't live without purpose. Studies have indicated that having a purpose in your life helps you to survive longer, outliving your peers. A University of Rochester study in 2014 said people with purpose actually live longer. You can survive without a lot of things, but trying to get up each day to no purpose, no meaning, no larger story to be a part of ... that's a horror. You need purpose. In Christ, you have it. It is articulated in this verse right here: "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it" (Acts 2:32). Your purpose is to be part of the people of God, **On Mission for Jesus**, to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. You have a part to play in that.

We are a part, you can be a part, of the great story of redemption God is writing. The grand narrative of all things. How does that story go? "**God** has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it" (Acts 2:32). God. There is a God who made you and made this world. He made it out of love and for love. He made it beautiful and glorious and full of wonders. There is a God who loves you—God is madly in love with you. "God has **raised this Jesus** to life, and we are all witnesses of it" (Acts 2:32). Who is this Jesus? The

world God made and the people God made ran away from God, broke relationship with God. As the pinnacle of creation, when the people God made broke that relationship, that broke everything. Relationship with one another became difficult. Relationship with creation became strained. Relationship with God became impossible. God sent His Son, Jesus. Jesus died for the sins of the world. Jesus took on the curse. Jesus drained the dregs of the worlds' poisons, and He died. He died on a cross. He was buried. God raised Him up. When God raised this Jesus, that declared that the sacrifice Jesus made to fix what was wrong was accepted and effective and victorious. "God has raised this Jesus to **life**, and we are all witnesses of it" (Acts 2:32). To life. All who follow in His name now have life; forgiveness instead of condemnation, reconciliation instead of broken relationship, life instead of death.

"God has raised this Jesus to life, and **we are all witnesses** of it" (Acts 2:32). The great story of redemption is that God is fixing a broken world, healing a sick creation, redeeming a rebellious and lost people, and you are invited to play your part in the fix. God makes you a witness. A witness believes what they see and shares what they experience. Jesus empowers you for this by His own Holy Spirit. "Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33). For the mission continues. God's restoration of all things will continue and will come about. As it says, the enemies will be conquered, will become a footstool. The story is all about Jesus. The victories all belong to Jesus. But Jesus, if you believe and follow Him, Jesus wants to make you a part of His story, the story of the salvation of the world. "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God

has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36). It's all about Jesus. This is our purpose. This is the purpose of life—to know God in Jesus Christ and to bear witness to His work. In that way you participate, you play a role, in God's story of the salvation of the world. That's worth getting out of bed in the morning. And we do this together. Not "you go be a witness" but "we are all witnesses." Together. We find our purpose together. You find your purpose in community. Not alone.

Well, this is the mission of First Pres. We reflect the love of Jesus to be Light and Life for the City. That's our mission, our purpose—to share Christ with Colorado Springs. To be His witnesses. We are entering a new phase of that mission this week. If you read my *Weekly* email this week, you heard about a new chapter opening up in the life of our church. We are beginning, under the guidance of our elders, in unity of spirit and full hearts as a staff, to enter into a restructuring of our staff and a renewal of our staff culture. You may or may not know this, but for many it has been a challenging season to be on the staff of our church. Our folks have been strained. Yes COVID has made it harder, but there are other factors at play here too. I'll tell you one of them. We are sometimes too consumer-oriented as a church body. We have country-club expectations that if we pay our dues we get our services, and those services are provided by paid staff. We can get stuck in a cruise ship mentality, beloved. First Pres is not a cruise ship! We are more of a battleship. We can't be here to be served. We need to be here to serve, to take up duty and serve on the mission. We all like to be served. But as one elder, Dorothy Alvarez, said at session this week, "But Tim, if they feel needed, that's better than feeling served." Well, you are needed.

We are all needed to make this thing work. The more we all find our purpose and mission to serve Jesus here at First Pres, the better things will be for all of us including our staff.

But also it has been hard to be on staff here because we have not always ordered our work together as a staff as best we could. So, we are going to do a new thing and get better, get healthier, get more aligned. Organizationally we will be moving into a next iteration of staff structure to find greater focus and alignment. There are shifts you will begin to notice about our leadership over the next few months. We are committed, with the help and partnership of our elders, to find a new chapter of health, motivation and joy both for those who continue to serve, and those who jump in to join our staff in the many openings we are currently seeking to fill. It is not fitting to say much more here, but I do want to ask you to pray for your church and staff. There is a lot to explore and we are facing some uncertainties as we follow the Lord into this commitment, but there is also great hope for the next season of what it means to serve on the staff of First Pres and we are confident we are hearing from the Lord as we step forward and we are unified under His call to find a better way.

We have a mission. We are **On Mission for Jesus**. “God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it” (Acts 2:32). People are living without meaning, without purpose, without a mission to get up for in the morning, without a cause to sacrifice for, without anything worthy of their efforts. Do you see the meaninglessness out there? Do you pick up on it? Regular 10-hour binges on Netflix ... that’s not healthy! Bumping through your days with no sense of purpose or meaning ... that’s not good! Spending what money you have on digital portraits of

basketball shoes—tens of thousands of dollars—I don’t know, man. I’m not a financial analyst, but I am a doctor of souls, and that just seems dumb. It seems like a symptom that many are living life without an organized purpose or mission.

We have a mission at First Pres. We are **On Mission for Jesus**. We have been for 150 years! It’s time for us to have a party for that! On March 12th, we will host the First Pres 150th Gala at The Antlers. Jim Edwards is coming to speak and we have a great time planned. Grab a ticket before they’re gone. This mission is reason to celebrate. This mission is reason to get up in the morning. We have purpose together. We are sharing the gifts of God with our city. We have a mission to bring people to Jesus. And they need it. It’s missing in their lives.

At the end of this series we come back to where we started, the early church gathered. They were devoted. They were on mission to bear witness to Jesus in a darkened and hostile world. People long for purpose and meaning in their lives. We want to be part of something bigger than ourselves; something that makes a positive difference in the world. There is great power in joining with others on the mission of Jesus. You have a purpose. You have a mission to give all your greatest energies toward. The world needs Jesus and you are His witnesses. When we are faithful to the mission of Jesus together, it helps things. In our passage, the church grew by 3,000 that day. “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41). We are 3,000. Are there 3,000 we have yet to reach? Join in on mission for Jesus.