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Church of the Lord

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하나님의 사랑교회

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오늘의 말씀

“The Importance of Community and the Church”

[Act 2:42~47]

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. (43) Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. (44) Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, (45) and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. (46) So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

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We have spent the past 8 weeks together exploring the issues of modern society and their corresponding biblical answers. We have discussed: 1) Natural Disasters and God's Sovereignty, 2) The Spread of New Diseases and Faith, 3) Peace in the Midst of War and Conflict, 4) The Advancement of Artificial Intelligence and the Balance of Faith, 5) Generational Conflicts and the Flow of Grace, 6) Social Isolation and God's Love, 7) Stress and God's Comfort. Today, we have finally reached the last session of this series. Today, we will share 'The Importance of Community and the Church's Role in Fulfilling This Crucial Responsibility' to fight through this challenging and difficult world together."

First, let us discuss the importance of community in modern society.

We have discussed various issues that modern people face. These issues are too difficult for individuals to endure alone. Therefore, in order to overcome such challenges, the existence of a community is essential for modern people.

Above all, we can all agree that the most frightening illness modern people face is "social isolation." In the past, there were many opportunities for conversations within families. Every morning, the whole family would gather around the table for a meal. This was a time to share the authority of the father sitting at the head of the table, the constant care of the mother responsible for the family's health, and the warm family affection felt by the children growing up in a stable environment. In the evenings, the family would share their daily experiences, feeling the warmth of a loving community. During long winter nights, people from the village would gather in different homes, enjoying time together based on age groups. The existence of such various communities warmed people's hearts. When one person faced a difficult situation, everyone in the community would wholeheartedly help them overcome it.

However, in modern society, technological advancements have

brought a more entertaining and expansive world into people's hands. Now, navigating the vast world of the virtual reality (VR) world has become more enjoyable than having conversations with others. As a result, it is rare to find opportunities for conversation like before. Even within families, conversations are diminishing. There are fewer chances to notice when a family member is struggling with hurt or pain. Even when the whole family occasionally goes out to a restaurant, it is not uncommon to see everyone absorbed in their own world, each with a phone in hand. Consequently, meaningful conversations between parents and children are significantly reduced. The conversations that do occur are often just nagging from the parents' perspective, asking questions like, "Did you study? Did you do well on your test? Back in my day..." which further alienates the conversation. This leads to both sides accumulating emotional wounds.

Thus, social isolation is becoming a more terrifying illness for modern people than ever before.

The lack of support from a warm community inevitably exacerbates mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression.

The most frightening problem that arises from reduced contact with various communities is the decline in mutual trust among people. No matter where you go, people smile and say, "Oh, I see," but internally they think, "What is he/she talking about? That's ridiculous. Who would believe that?"

Consequently, individualism grows, and the ability to empathize with others diminishes. This leads to an increase in social conflicts, and modern people end up feeling lonely amid a crowd.

This loneliness amid a crowd brings about mental desolation, resulting in tragic events where individuals ultimately abandon the world.

In this era where the existence of community is more important than ever, what should be the role of the church? In fact, all kinds of communities in the world do provide strength to live life, but they do not possess eternal vitality. Even communities with great solidarity can quickly split when cracks appear in their common goals and ideologies. They merely share what is necessary to live in this world. However, the church community is different; it is a group that shares God's love, which holds eternal value beyond all these things. Because the church is a community that shares such grace together, once someone steps into it, they should be able to enjoy a grace-filled community that journeys towards eternity together. All members of the church community must unite to preserve this church community and help it grow into one that provides eternal grace and strength to weary souls in the world, effectively fulfilling its role.

First of all, we can point to the early church, which was born through the Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, as the most ideal model of a church community. The description of this early church is found in today's scripture passage.

We should first take note of the circumstances under which this early church community was born. The church community was not established with a focus on people. The church is a community that was born entirely for the purpose designed by God, at God's time, and by God's method. Communities born from human purposes center everything around people. In such cases, people set the church's rules, define the community's goals, create vision statements, establish laws to build a church that aligns with those, and pursue a church based on these foundations.

However, the early church was not created this way. Let's first read what Jesus told His disciples about the beginning of the church before it was born.

[Acts 1:4-5] On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: "Do not leave

Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. (5) For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Jesus' plan for the birth of the church community was to ensure that human plans and ideologies would not be mixed into it at all. Until they received the power of the Holy Spirit from above, they were not to take any action. "Do not leave Jerusalem" means "Do not do anything on your own." They were to wait for the presence of the Holy Spirit and act according to the thoughts given by the Holy Spirit.

I hope you do not misunderstand this: the fact that the church community's birth was not initiated by human ideologies and thoughts but by God's purpose and intent does not mean that the church community excludes plans to care for people or benefit them. As we read in Acts 2:42-47, the early church was a church that healed the pains of the society of that time. They provided for those in material need with a heart of mercy and shared Agape meals whenever they gathered. They operated welfare pro-grams to care for widows in distress through special relief programs. However, that was not the church's purpose. The Holy Spirit filled the church with grace so that it could meet the needs of the people of that time. We, too, should not strive to drag the church in a particular direction based on our goals but should naturally set sail in the direction the Holy Spirit blows. That should be the vision of the church. Therefore, in the early church, no one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they generously shared with the church so that it could help those in need.

The churches established by the scattered believers in various regions and those found-ed through Apostle Paul's missionary journeys were all extensions of the early church. These churches were not built by gathering people, setting goals and visions that reso-nated with them, and then establishing the church

according to those. Instead, they preached the gospel of Christ's life, shared doctrinal teachings, and carried out ministries that naturally emerged under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with a heart of obedience.

The passage that best demonstrates the beautiful fruits of the church community is likely 1 Corinthians 13, commonly known as the "Love Chapter," which Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. The existence of the church community is meaningful in loving and caring for one another. Many of us can almost recite the contents of 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

We should note that this definition of love follows directly after the discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. When the Holy Spirit is poured out upon us, and we are filled with various gifts and manifestations, these attributes of love naturally overflow. This is the fruit of the church.

In this regard, James also defines the true meaning of piety for the church and the saints as follows.

[Jam 1:25~27] But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (26) If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. (27) Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

The church, as a community of believers, has always begun all its ministries with the doctrinal teachings of the apostles. During our study of the series on modern societal issues and biblical

solutions, we have shared the words of the prophet Micah several times.

[Mic 6:8] He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

The true purpose of the church community is solely to learn and obey the Lord's word, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. This fulfills the church's good purpose.

Paul boldly requested offerings from the Corinthian church because he knew that the believers in Jerusalem were not only struggling due to a famine, but also that there had been a time when many believers in Jerusalem had given their properties at the apostles' feet as a kind of trend when the early church began. As a result, many did not have possessions, creating a special need. Therefore, Paul urged the Corinthian church to help.

[II Cor 8:7~9] But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all dili-gence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also. (8) I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. (9) For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Moreover, the Apostle Paul said that the church community should strive to repay the grace they have received.

[Rom 15:27] It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.

This means that the Gentile churches are indebted to the Jewish community in Jerusa-lem for the grace they received. The Jerusalem church became a church overflowing with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and as a fruit of that revival, evangelical churches

were established in Gentile lands. Through this spiritual grace, Gentile believers received sal-vation and the grace of the church. However, the Jewish Christians, who had been a source of spiritual blessing to them, were now facing significant material difficulties. Therefore, Paul teaches, "Since we Gentile churches have received great spiritual grace from the Jewish church in Jerusalem, it is only right for us to meet their physical needs now." We must not be cowardly in using our resources.

Finally, sustaining the church community involves doing things we would never have to do if we did not believe in Jesus. Therefore, this is something believers must never give up on. Dear beloved believers, let us not avoid this. Let us strive to build this community with all our efforts. The writer of Hebrews encourages us.

[Heb 10:24~25] And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, (25) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.