
Our Commitments for Kingdom Expansion

Acts 2:36-47

Russ Kennedy

There are those who see the expansion of God's kingdom as a geo-political thing. Christians must transform the political structures and legal systems of countries. Others see it as economic-socio thing. The society and the economy must be transformed for Christ. Others see it as a psychological and spiritual thing. We must win the world to obedience to Christ. Except, if any of this is true, the prophetic word in the Bible dooms us to failure. On the last day, nations are dismantled, economies are wiped out, the ecology is destroyed and most of humanity rises up in rebellion against the King of Kings.

So, what are we supposed to do? I contend, from the Bible that God is expanding His Kingdom through the gospel.

We can observe how the Kingdom expansion is launched in Acts 2. Like an arrow, pointed by the hand on the bow, this text guides the trajectory of gospel Kingdom expansion. I cannot do all of Acts 2 this morning. But I want to flyover it all and then land on the last bit.

There are important commitments that we have made as a church. We affirm these commitments as we participate in the expansion of God's Kingdom.

To a Gospel Centered Evangelism

(v.37-41)

Our first commitment in Kingdom Expansion is to gospel centered evangelism. This arises from the whole of Acts 2. I want to focus on verses 37-41. But a commitment to gospel centered evangelism arises from this whole chapter. Bear with me for a moment as I summarize what has happened in Acts 2.

The Presence of the Spirit

(v. 1-13)

The presence of the Spirit of God is the life of gospel centered evangelism. God had promised to pour out His Spirit on His people at the dawn of the New Covenant. The prophet Joel said that the outpouring of the Spirit would be an age long stream occurring before the day of the Lord. Jesus promised that when He went back to heaven, He would send the Spirit. And here He is.

This baptism of the Spirit happened once - on the day of Pentecost. This from heaven waterfall of the Spirit is now flowing downstream in an ever deeper and wider river till it waters all the plains of the world. Through the gospel preaching, the river of the Spirit flows into dark, depraved hearts bringing God's elect people to life. Where this river of life flows, the Kingdom is expanding.

The Preaching of the Word**(v. 14-35)**

The preaching of the Word of God is the means of gospel centered evangelism. What we see in verses 14-35 is Peter proclaiming the good news of life, death and resurrection of the Savior and Sovereign *from the Old Testament*. He is preaching, proclaiming, evangelizing from the Scriptures. True Kingdom expanding, gospel centered evangelism is the giving forth of the truths of the Word of God. It is content. It is truth. It is first the message then the methods. If the message is wrong, tilted, twisted, false, foolish, untrue then evangelism is not happening and the kingdom is not truly being expanded.

What Peter does publicly in preaching is the pattern for what we do personally in evangelism. It may not be formal preaching, but it is authoritative proclamation. It is Kingdom expanding when it contains and communicates the message of the saving sovereign. Where the gospel in truth is given the Kingdom is expanding.¹

The Professing of Faith**(v. 37-41)**

Where the Kingdom is expanded through the presence of Spirit in the preaching of the Word, people will be born from above, will believe and profess faith through baptism.

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?” 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. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

The sermon closes with the conclusion to which Peter has been driving. “The One whom God had appointed to be the Lord and Messiah, you crucified.” You are guilty before the face of God and in the sight of all men. You are doomed and damned. You set your hopes on Him for deliverance from the tyranny of Rome. Through your wicked deed of sending Him to the cross, God has brought deliverance from the tyranny of sin and satisfied the wrath of God.

Peter’s words and the sharp sword of the Word of God, penetrate lost hearts. Disciples are going to be made. The church, by the power of the Word and Spirit is *seeing the Kingdom expanded*.

The preachers point them to the gospel, to the call, conversion and comfort there. They have been told the gospel. Now, their responsibility in the light of the gospel is set forth. They must repent and upon repentance, be baptized. Peter is clear that they must make public their repentance. The New Testament knows almost nothing of a “pri-

vate” profession. Baptism does not save. God’s saving work in Christ is what saves. But a true turning to God will cause true converts to publicly profess Christ.

What they will receive is the gift of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness of sins. This is what has been promised in the New Covenant. John the Baptist had come calling Jews to repent and be saved. Jesus had sent his disciples out to preach repentance. Now, in the last days, the age of the Spirit and the inauguration of the New Covenant, the commissional church calls on sinners to repent of sin and rebellion and offers forgiveness.

The call to the gospel is to all who are near, the Jews, and to those who are afar, the Gentiles. Even as this free offer is made, Peter publicly affirms that the promise is for those whom God will call. At all points, the commissional church preaches a God-centered, God-initiated, God-focused gospel. It is all of, from and for the glory of God in His mercy and grace.

The converts make public their profession of faith through baptism. The commissional church does what it is. The preaching of the gospel culminates in the baptizing of those who profess. But their responsibility does not end there.

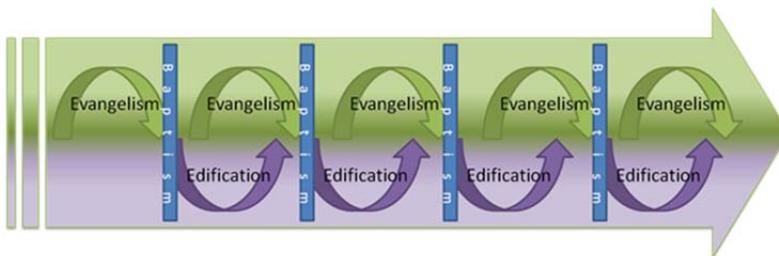
To a Gospel Living Community

(v.42-47)

This then brings us to the second overarching commitment for Kingdom Expansion. The Spirit and the Word transmit the gifts of life, faith and repentance so that those who receive the Word are baptized and begin to worship, walk, work and witness as God’s people. The church makes disciples by baptizing evangelized and converted people and by teaching them to live out the Word of God.

⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and 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. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 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.

Kingdom expansion reaches its full expression where gospel believing, gospel living churches are gathered and going. What we see here is the process and product of the great commission. Remember, it looks like this.



We will be committed to the gathering of the church for its life-sustaining ministry.

Notice the two couplets: to teaching and fellowship, to eating (Communion) and praying. These are the essential ministries that sustain the commissional community. We must teach the Scriptures and engage one-another. We must share the table including Communion and pray together. All ministries of the church are to be wise strategies for implementing these four expressions of community life. And it calls for each member to be so committed to all of them that it looks like "devotion". And so will we.

We will have a growing sense of the supremacy of God with awe filling our souls.

They observed and we read about the miracles wrought by the apostles. We do not have apostles today, but God continues His mighty works through His providences, provisions and power for His people. God's mighty moving will humble us and fill our souls with amazement and awe. We will worship.

We will be sacrificial in our giving and meet the physical needs of our members.

A great number of these initial converts would have been pilgrims to Jerusalem expecting to stay a week and return to their homes. Now, they needed to stay to be taught before going home. Therefore, those who were able gave generously so that they could be taken care of.² And so will we.

We will live humbly, worshipfully and joyfully with each other while being recognized by all.

The passion for the supremacy of God reflected in awe of Him is expressed in various ways. They are humbly willing to be helped. They are joyful in their general demeanor. They are a singing and praising people. These characteristics grow as they worship, walk, work and witness together. And so will we.

We will then experience the increase provided by God as He multiplies people in the context of increasing the Word.

The last sentence, "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" is one of the surges of the outward bound expansion of God's kingdom.

Here the commissional church is being increased by God's powerful working. The disciples had been obedient to the command of God to evangelize and to edify. Upon their personal and corporate growth in character and conduct, God adds to their number.

O, that God will be pleased to continue to do that for us, here in our neighborhood and in the nations.

Reflect and Respond

What do we observe God doing in expanding His kingdom?

- It is begun, shaped and sustained by the Word and Spirit. The kingdom expands through a people on mission by Word and Spirit. There can be no separating them. There can be no pitting them against one another. There can be no dependency on one without dependency on the other. By the Word and Spirit the kingdom is expanding.
- The kingdom and the church are not waiting for the outpouring of the Spirit; it is experiencing and expressing the outpouring that has already taken place. We will rise in enabled power to participate in Kingdom Expansion as we believe what the Bible says in an obeying way.
- Preaching to expand God's kingdom means focusing on the work of Christ: His life, death, resurrection, ascension and session in heaven and His return. It preaches, teaches and calls for repentance, for believing and bowing, from the whole Bible.
- The Kingdom is made up of people living as a community formed by God, fueled by love and fellowshiping in grace enabled, Bible taught ways.
- We will be equipped to expand the kingdom by being devoted to the apostolic teaching and its deposit in the Word of God.
- A commissional church expands God's Kingdom not primarily through creating, sustaining and doing ministries. It is about an intentional living out a life together as God's people.

Here is to call from our text this morning. For the expansion of God's Kingdom we must be committed to the gospel. We must be committed to gospel centered evangelism and to gospel living community.

What does that look like in our lives together?

We will be committed to the gathering of the church for its life-sustaining ministry.

We will have a growing sense of the supremacy of God with awe filling our souls.

We will be sacrificial in our giving and meet the physical needs of our members.

We will live humbly, worshipfully and joyfully with each other while being recognized by all.

We will then experience the increase provided by God as He multiplies people in the context of increasing the Word.

As we hear God's Word, may His Spirit grant us faith to believe it in an obeying way. May who we are be expressed in our worship, our walk, our work and our witness.