



Sermon – 10/16/2022  
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**Verses Covered This Week**

*Acts 2:40 - 47*

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to spend our time this morning in Acts chapter 2. Acts chapter 2. If you're a guest with us in the room, whether you're here in the, in the room or watching this by video, welcome home. And I want you to know for each of you as we step into this time in God's word, that during the response time after this, I'm going to invite you to come and join me as we pray corporately here at the steps in response to what God is doing. And for the last several months, we've been journeying our way through the book of Genesis. And if you weren't with us last week, we got to Genesis 17 and the sign of the covenant. And in that moment, we talked about how last week Abraham was going all in with God's design for his life. And we shared about how starting this week for the next several weeks. We're going to step away from Genesis to wrestle with that same question for you and me. What would it look like if all of us went all in for Jesus? And so, over the course of this next period of time, we're going to wrestle with that reality. I'm just wondering what comes into your mind when you think about somebody who's all in for something. And maybe you're flipping through the channels and you come across a no limit hold 'em poker tournament on ESPN and you can watch a guy bet it all. He pushes all those chips and he goes all in on that bet or with that bluff. Or maybe you know somebody who's an exercise enthusiast in your world. They're at the CrossFit gym every day and they let you know about it because they always let you know about it. They're all in on the workout. Or maybe you've got a dedicated Aggie fan in your life who's decked out in maroon and white on game days in the Fall because they are all in with the team. But I can't help but wonder this morning, when somebody looks at us, would someone look at us and say, when it comes to Jesus, they're all in? Would they look at your life and say, "This is the life of someone who's all in with Jesus." Would they look at my life and say, "He's all in with Jesus." Would they say, if someone came to them and said, I want to see what it looks like for an entire church to be all in for Jesus. Would they look at them and say, you know what you need to do? Sunday morning, next week at 9:30, you need to show up at Central and you'll see it. And if we're not sure about that answer, why not? What's holding us back from going all in? What's keeping us from fully committing our lives to Jesus? Because what we're going to find this morning when we turn our attention to Acts 2, we're going to start down in verse 40, and what we're going to see is that in the aftermath of Pentecost, we see the early church going all in for Jesus. Where we see all of them all in for Christ. And right here in

this text this morning, it's going to give us a model, a picture, a calling for you and for me, for all of us to go all in with Jesus.

So, let's see how that plays out starting down in Acts chapter 2 and verse 40. Here's what the text says.

<sup>40</sup>And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." <sup>41</sup>So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup>And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. <sup>43</sup>And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. <sup>44</sup>And all who believed were together and had all things in common. <sup>45</sup>And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup>And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Let's pray together.

Father, in this moment we're confessing to You that so often our hearts are pulled away from You by distractions, by disobedience. And we're asking, God, in this time that You would take those distractions away and replace it with devotion, a passion, a fervor, a longing for more of You. And I'm asking, God, in this moment that you would work by the Spirit in our lives so that each one of us might be filled with a greater hunger and thirst for righteousness. We ask these things in Christ's name, Amen.

I'm sure some of you are wondering what in the world this tablecloth here is covering up right here on the table. Well, guess what? You gotta stay all in with my sermon before you find out. We'll see at the end. When we look here at Acts 2, think about what's going on. Jesus has just come. He's lived a sinless life. He's gone to the cross and been raised from the dead defeating Satan, sin, and death. He's given His early church a war plan, a battle cry in the great commission. And now as He's ascended to heaven, we see the Holy Spirit come upon them and right here in Acts 2 is the first recorded instance of the preaching of God's word and amazing things happen. We see it right here in the text. What we find as we look at this reality, when we pick up in the end of Acts chapter 2 is that when the word of God is used by the Spirit of God it changes the mission of God for the people of God. And when we see this reality at play right here, we're going to see a model, a pattern, and before we jump into that, I want you to turn your attentions to the screens. And what you're going to see here is an image of a gear. Then, what you're going to notice is this image will be something we use throughout the next several weeks together. We all know what a gear is. We know how it works. It's used to convey power from one point to another. You'll notice right there at the heart of this gear is a cross. It's a cross that marks out the logo of our church. What I want you to think about is we spend our time wrestling with what it means to be all in for Jesus together, is that God is raised up the church as a family working together as one body with many members. Or one instrument with many gears. And at the center of it, if we're going to go all in with Jesus, it starts with the cross at the center of our lives and our church. But you're going to notice that coming out from that center, there are four

spokes that radiate out from it. And those four spokes represent the four marks of what it looks like to be all in with Jesus. We see them right here in Acts chapter 2 and we're going to talk about them for the next several weeks together.

So, let's look at the first mark. If we go to the next slide, you'll see what that first mark is. That we need to be all in on the word. Now, when we look back at our text, we see that beginning here in verse 40. And what we find here is that this first mark of being all in on the word takes place here for the very first time after Pentecost. Because what Peter is doing is calling them to go all in with Jesus who is the word of God. So, what does it look like to go all in with the word? I want you to notice that phrase right here in the middle of this slide. Jesus is the word. The Bible is the true story of God's good news that changes our lives as we find and follow and focus on Christ. You see, what happens is, when we go all in with Jesus, who is the word of God in our life, it takes us from our complacency and it moves us to commitment. That's we find here with the church in Acts 2. This sense of commitment, I mean, look back there in verse 40. When Peter summarizes the nature of, or when Luke summarizes the nature of Peter's message, notice what it says in verse 40.

<sup>40</sup>And with many other words he bore witness and continue to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

In fact, in the original language, it's even more precise in that because when you hear save yourselves, it seems as if it's you can do. But in fact in the original language it, he's saying cry out, be saved, "God rescue me. Deliver me from my enemies." That's the kind of desperation. The kind of commitment that's on display here by those who are responding to this Gospel truth. They are going all in with Jesus who is the word of God. So what happens when we go all in. Well, what Acts 2 is going to show us is that it plays out in several different ways. The first one is right there at the beginning of verse 41. When we go all in with the word, we find Jesus. So, notice how 41 starts. It says,

<sup>41</sup>So those who received his word were baptized,

This word received means to believe or to accept, to buy in to a truth. And it's like the parable of the man who sees a treasure in a field. He goes and sells everything he owns so he can come back and buy the field. They go all in with this Gospel word. They find Jesus or perhaps the better way to say it is Jesus found them. And it changes everything. It changes their lives so that not just they find Jesus but the second piece of this is they follow Jesus. Look at what that looks like down in the second part of verse 41. It says,

and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Can you imagine this moment? I mean, this is more people responding than what you might have found decades ago at a Billy Graham crusade. You could fit every single one of them in a seat right here and it would almost fill up this entire worship center. There's this overwhelming response from people who find Jesus. And when that happens, they follow him. How do you know that? Because of that word at the end of verse 41, souls. You see that word? The word soul in the original language was one used for a description of your inner being, your inmost parts, the essence, or the core of who you are. That's what happens when you meet Jesus. When

you go all in on the word, you follow Him in a way that changes you to the core. They were transformed by this reality and that's what happens. Now, in verse 42, they don't just find Jesus, they don't just follow Jesus. But now they begin to focus on Jesus. So, look back at the beginning of verse 42. It says,

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching,

If you got your Bible, you're writing in it. Circle that word devotion. Devoted. Highlighted in your Bible app. Why? Because that's the essence of what it means to go all in. Because in the original language, this word "to devote" means to give intense effort over a period of time. To persist, to endure, or as we like to say each Sunday here to keep pressing on. They shift their focus from whatever brought them to this moment to now being fully focused on Jesus Christ. Their lives are now defined by Him. That's the essence of what it means to go all in with the word. And our church has a history of God working through it to raise up people who go all in with the word. I'm thinking about a guy I know named Shane who was a part of our church about 25 years ago in the late 90s. And he had visited our church a few times as a college student at A&M. But he had never given his life to Christ. And on one particular Saturday, the Lord opened his eyes to the need of the Gospel that Saturday night. He put his faith in Jesus. In fact, he got it so excited. He couldn't even sleep because he knew the next day, he wanted to come to Central, walk the aisle, and declare his faith in Jesus Christ. It changed everything for him. When he recognized what Jesus had done for him, it reshaped who he was and how he lived. Why? Because when he knew that Jesus had gone all in with him, he couldn't help but to go all in with Jesus. Are you all in with the word this morning? When you look at your life, does the word of God in the Bible, the word of God made flesh, Jesus Christ, is that at the center of who you are? Does it overwhelm every other desire in your life as it did for these men and women? Do you hunger and thirst for a righteousness that can only be filled through an eternal satisfaction that comes through the blood of Jesus Christ? It's what it looks like to go all in. All in on the word. But the text keeps going.

Now, picking up in verse 42, we see a second thing we need to go all in on. So, we'll bring this picture of the gear back up on the screen. As you see what it is, we don't just go all in on the word but we also go all in on the work. All in on the work of discipleship. We see that taking place here in Acts 2 when these people are reached, they're changed. And what is that work look like? Notice what it says there on the screen. Discipleship is the work. We're saying that the good life is found in Jesus by taking next steps with them as we disciple, develop, and deploy our people. And this is exactly what we find taking place here in Acts chapter 2. That they don't reached them, they disciple them. They do the work and it brings about a transformation that shows up in several ways. The first thing we'll notice is that the early church disciplined their people. So, look back at verse 42 when it says,

<sup>42</sup>they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and the fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

I mean, just put yourself in this situation. If you're the leaders of the early church, and 3,000 people give their lives to Jesus all at once and they're looking at you and saying, what's next? What do I do now? Where do you even begin? How do you lead them? How do you shepherd them? Well, the way they respond is through discipling the people. And what discipleship is at

it's most basic element is cultivating rhythms and relationships in our life that help us to grow in Christ. And that's what they do. You see it there in verse 42. They devote themselves to teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking in bread, and the prayers. They spark these rhythms in their lives that are going to shape them to be more like Jesus over time. But us not just the need to disciple our people but to develop our people.

So, look back at the beginning of verse 43, and it says,

<sup>43</sup>And awe came them

When we meet Jesus, when we grow in discipleship, it doesn't just change our rhythms and relationships, it changes our entire perspective of reality. And that's what's happening here. It develops them as people to see the world in a different way. And what's that way they see it now? Do you see that word right there in the beginning of verse 43? Awe. It's the word that more commonly in the original language to be used for fear, to be afraid of something. Some of you are afraid of heights or snakes or spiders? Some of you are afraid of the future with anxiety. What happens in this moment when they begin to grow in Jesus, as God replaces those fears of the world with the fear of the lord. They stand in awe of Him. They see reality in a new way. It develops who they are in ways that have never happened before. And look what happens in the aftermath of that. That as we disciple our people, as we develop our people, we also see the way they deploy their people right there at the end of verse 43. It says,

and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

You see, the measure of discipleship is not just what the Spirit does in you but what the Spirit does through you. And we see the Spirit at work here. That the apostles are not only declaring the Gospel and its power, they are demonstrating the Gospel and its power. Through these miraculous signs and wonders. And even though you and I may not see God at work in the same miraculous ways today, everything we do that shows the kingdom and that shares the kingdom, if it's going to do the work of God, it's a miracle on its own. That the Spirit of God is awakening dead hearts to find and follow Jesus. The Spirit of God is at work in our lives to grow us so that we can look more like Jesus. And that's exactly what took place for Shane 25 years ago. After that worship service, he got saved on Saturday night. He came down front that next Sunday morning. And after the service was over, he went and found our old pastor Chris, and he says, "What do I do now?" It's a great question for a pastor to get by the way. Wrestling with what's next in his life. And Chris looked at him and said, "Well, what do you do? What's your thing?" He said to him, "Well, I play music. I'm in a band. I like that." And so, Chris called over our old worship pastor, Monty, and said, "Monty, Shane just gave his life to Jesus. He likes music. Can you help him out?" And he said, "Choir practice is tonight at five. We'll we see you there?" Shane showed up. And what happened is through the work of the church, as he was surrounded as a new believer, it empowered him to be discipled, to be developed, and ultimately to be deployed for the use of the kingdom. See, that's what happens when we go all in with the work of discipleship. So, again, the question I want you to wrestle with this morning is, are you all in with that work? Do you see the focus of your life as knowing Jesus and making Him known? Of growing in Jesus and helping others to do the same. Because we see it on display here in the early church and we should long for it today. I know some of you are parents, just like me, raising kids. And we're constantly wrestling with, are there things we can do that can

get them ahead where they might earn a scholarship for that thing in the future. Maybe it's on this sports field or academically or in FFA. I heard a pastor say recently, what if we as parents invested in the spiritual growth of our kids and in their engagement with the church as if there was a scholarship on the line for it? What would change about your family priorities? Or for you students in the room who are right at the middle of the semester overwhelmed with midterms, what if you invested in your spiritual development and in the work of discipleship as if your GPA depended on it? You know that extra measure of effort you give when the test counts. When your future is on the line. How much more should that be true for us spiritually? We need to go all in with the work of discipleship.

But let's see now back beginning in verse 44, there's a third dimension of this work that we need to go all in on and it is that we are called to be all in on the way. Let's notice our image back up on the screen and you will see that reality there. Starting in verse 44. We see them talking about the way and what do I mean by the way? Well, six times in Acts, the early Christian church is referred to as the people of the way. It's a shorthand for their community, for the early church, gathered together, living out God's design for their life. And when we say we're all in on the way, look at that center section of the slide where it says, Community is the way. The church is a family committed to one another as we gather, give, and grow together. And that's what we see on display right here in Acts 2. This community, this way, not just growing in Jesus but showing Jesus to one another and the world around them. And when we go all in on the way, that manifest itself in several different realities in our life. So, we'll see back in verse 44 how he calls us to gather in our community. So, it says there,

<sup>44</sup>And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

So, who's gathering here? Not just some of the believers but all of them. And what are they doing when they gather? What do we see there? They had all things in common. They went all in with one another. They didn't just share their time, they shared their lives. And isn't that a danger right now when we're living in a live stream and podcast kind of world? Where you can be spiritually fed without being personally present. Slip away for that extra weekend at the lake before it cools off. Slide out for that road trip with your friends and roommates. Go somewhere on a trip. Whatever it looks like that keeps nibbling away at the edges of our intentionality in gathering together. That's not what's happening here. It says they're together. They had all things in common. They were all in on the spiritual community that God had provided for them. And look what happens. Because what we see now is in verse 45, they don't just gather with their community. They give to their community. So, it says that they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing to the proceeds to all as any had need. Can't you see the generosity here? I mean, these people had walked into Pentecost not even knowing about Jesus. And now, Jesus has changed everything for them. Now, they're investing their time but also here it tells us they're investing their treasure. That He has gotten hold of their hearts so deeply and they've gone all in so fully that they're selling their possessions. They're giving their things away in order to meet the needs of the world around them. That's a kind of radical generosity that going all in means for you and for me. You know, we can look around us and see the way that when somebody's in with something, their money often follows. If you take up a new hobby, you can't help but spend on it. Maybe some of you love to smoke meats and so you buy the nicest pellet smoker you can get and you get all the contraptions with it. Others of you are hunters and you you're locked and loaded, ready to go for November first. You got all that

you can need. Maybe you're more of a craft type of person. We can walk into that one oversized closet in your room and it's head to floor. You're almost embarrassed by how much stuff you have. Because what your heart prior prioritizes, your finances prioritize. Is that true for the mission of Jesus in your life? Would somebody look at your bank account, your giving, your investment, and saying, "Oh my gosh, this is Acts 2 on display right here in Bryan/College Station today." Are you all in in the way that they were all in? It will show up not just in your time but in your treasure. But look at how this portion of the passage closes. We also see how they are growing community. That's why it says in verse 46,

46 Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

Can you see the kind of growth taking place here? And I'm not just talking about quantity, the thousands that we're at. I'm talking about quality. The way that God is not just growing them in numbers but He's growing them in spiritual health. I mean, if you look it there, it talks about how they were attending. You see that word there? Attending the temple? Well, in the original language, it's actually the exact same word as back in verse 42 where it's translated as devoted. And this word, attending or devoted, like we said, communicates intense effort over an extended period of time. But what I didn't mention before is that often this word would be capturing that intense effort in the face of opposition. Resistance. Hostility. When it says they're attending the temple to grow in the Gospel, it's not the equivalent of you waking up this morning and your motorized garage door opening and your push button car starting and your internal combustion engine conveniently transporting you here after you make it through all the red lights on University or Harvey Road. No. There's a fervency, an intensity, a desperation for growth that's here. And even more than that, when you look at the way the text plays out, it says that they receive these things with glad and generous hearts. What it's reminding us of is the reality that our hearts are those places where we are desperate for the deepest growth, where we need the greatest change. And God does that work. And the way He does it is by bringing them together in community. By going all in with the way. And as we look at this reality, could someone look at the life of our church and your investment in it and see the kind of snapshot that we see right here in Acts 2? When they look at you, they look at the way contributing to the body of Christ here at Central and say, "They are all in on this community. They are all in on this church." See, the way that happens, as we saw on the slide earlier in this portion, is that by the Spirit, God moves us from a point of comparison to connection. Where we look at those in the room and those in our community, not with the eyes of comparison, not to see were spiritually superior to or who we might connect best with, but one of connection where we long to be united as one, to be on mission together.

And speaking of that mission, it takes us to the last reality of this passage down in verse 47. The fourth mark of what it looks like to go all in with Jesus is we need to be all in on the world. So you'll notice on the screen there, the complete diagram we'll use throughout our time together. All in on the world. And you notice on the next slide, the way it describes what it means to go all in with the world. Look at that center portion. The mission is the world. The vision is to reach our neighbors, the nations, and the next generation as we serve and share and send. And this is the exact heart we see in the early church right here in Acts chapter 2. Where we find them doing that precise same thing. They are raising up in order to send out. They are not keeping what's changed them to themselves. They are instead pouring themselves out for the

sake of the Gospel. And that begins by them serving the world around them. So, look back at the beginning of verse 47. It says,

<sup>47</sup>praising God and having favor with all the people.

So, you'll notice they have a servant's heart. It says, they're praising God. But they also have servants hands. They're finding favor with all the people. How? Because they're pouring themselves out. They're serving. They're giving their lives away for the sake of the Gospel that changed them. But they're not just serving the world. We see them sharing Jesus with the world. That's why it says there in the middle of verse 47,

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

You see, at Pentecost, Peter was used by God and he brought 3,000 to salvation. But the work of God didn't stop there. It was only just beginning. That now, as they're discipled and they grow, they learn what it looks like to share Jesus with their neighbors and the nations and the next generation around them. And we see what happens. And what we find is that the Lord does the work. We're the witnesses. He's the one at work in their hearts to save them and to add to their numbers as it says there daily. And when that takes place, we see that this reality culminates all through the book of Acts with another dimension. Not just that they serve the world, not just that they share Jesus with the world, but we find throughout the book of Acts now that they send their people to the world. So, the story of Acts is a story of a missionary God sending a missionary people empowered by a missionary Spirit to serve and share the love of Christ with those who need it. Let me tell you, Shane needed that love of Christ. When he came to faith 25 years ago, he walked that aisle. He got connected in the church. And that next Sunday, after coming to practice for one Sunday, he was up in the choir loft. This is back on Coulter Avenue if you were with us at that time. And in that choir loft, this 21-year-old junior was standing there wearing his choir robe for the first Sunday. That was still a thing back then. And they did a special music. And I learned this week that not everybody in the room knows what a special music is. I was with some of our pastoral residents and they're like, "What is a special music? I've never heard of that." So, if you're not familiar, it's when the choir in a sense does a performance and sings over the congregation rather than with him. So, this particular Sunday, Shane was doing a special music and it happened to be selected that this song was not sung in English but in the language of Swahili. So, here's this new believer, a week into this, wearing this robe he would never otherwise wear, singing this song in a language you would never otherwise know. And while he was sitting up, standing up there singing, there was another student in the crowd that day who looked at him and noticed him and recognized him even though they had never met. And after the service was over, that student in the crowd came to speak to Shane. Started talking about, "Hey, I didn't realize that you had become a believer. I didn't know that you were into music. I've got a community of guys around me and we're all doing some music together. Do you want to come and connect with us and we can do life together? This one in the choir 25 years ago was a man by the name of Shane Everett. This one in the crowd that met him that day was a man by the name of Shane Barnard. You probably know him as Shane & Shane. And right here in our church, Shane Everett came to Christ. Right here in our church, God brought him and Shane Barnard together and they went all in on the mission. They cultivated those gifts of music. They used them for God's glory and God has been shaping people's lives through what started here at Central for decades. And we could tell that story over and over and over



again and here's what I'm saying to you this morning. God's not done with us yet. He wants us to go all in on the next generation so we can have multitudes of stories like that in the future. But there's only one way it's going to happen. And the only way it's going to happen is if you and I make a choice.

See, there are two ways that each of us can live and they're represented by the bowls that you see here in front of you. You'll notice this bowl right here, it's filled with rice. And that rice represents the things in our lives that fill our lives, the daily demands, the commutes, the work projects, it's the notification you get on your phone. All of those things that fill up most of our schedule. But then there are other things in our life that we add, not just to fill our days but to find fulfillment in our days. Maybe this one, this Rubik's Cube with the heart on the front representing the family and our desire for love. Maybe for your family, it's sports and practice. Maybe you try to be a superman to others in your life and to meet their needs and fix things. Maybe it's the emergencies that this ambulance represent that you couldn't anticipate but now, demand your attention. Maybe it's the school work you have to do as a student at A&M or in the classroom that you're constantly running. Maybe it's the entertainment, the music, the movies, the Netflix that you watch. Maybe it's the ladder you're trying to climb at work. These things fill our days. And if this bowl is a representative of our time, you can tell it's almost full, isn't it? And here's the danger. We could choose to live our lives in this way. Where so much of our life is taken up. Then, we, when we try to go all in on the word, there's not enough room for it. When we try to go all in on the work, living as faithful soldiers for Christ Jesus in the spiritual battle. We can't get all in there. We try to give ourselves a way to the community of the church. We just can't seem to squeeze it all in. And we don't have time for the world either. We try to cram as much in as we can, but you can see all of it's above the fill line. But what if that's not the only way we can live? What if we reshaped our perspective? We revised our priorities and instead of starting with what fills our world, we started with the foundations instead. We began with the word of God. We began by going all in with the work. All in with the way. All in with the word. And then, hey, let's keep being faithful in the things that are trying to fulfill our days as we invest in our work, in our families, in our school, in all of these other things. Then watch what happens. When we begin with those foundational realities, those things that we began with, that filled our world, can begin to fill our time around it. Do you notice something rising to the top of this bowl here? Something that was hidden beneath the rice as we began. There was a serpent lurking in that first way to live, hidden in the midst of that reality. And when we try to go all in and to start with those foundational truths, that serpent will try to find his way back into our lives. That's why we need to say, "Get behind me, satan." But watch what happens when we go all in with these foundational truths first, what seemed as if it would never fit, there is now all the time we need to live in a way that honors God. There's two ways to live. Are you ready to go all in?

Let's take a moment to pray together. As we ready our hearts to respond to God's word and to come to these steps and pray, I just ask you in the quietness of your heart now to spend a few moments asking the Spirit to convict you of your complacency and to call you to commitment. Take a moment now in this time to plead with God that He might light a spark in you to go all in.

Father, as these men and women come face to face with the reality that there is more to life than we can handle on our own. We stand face to face with You. That the measure of our lives is not determined by the success that the world sees around us or the significance that we find within

us. But instead in our investment in what will outlast us. Lord, I'm asking You during this season that You will work in us and through us so that we might continue to become a church that goes all in with You. And I pray in this time of response that You would stir us with one heart and one mind to come and pray at these steps. That by Your Spirit You would make this reality true. And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.