

ACTS 2:42-47
(Psalm 133:1-3)

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- Kicking off ministry year with 3-week series on the things that matter most to our church.
- Last week: Considered what it means to **Live Deeply**...
- Today: Consider our **Mission Statement** → Hope we'll see connection bt the two. **[Pray]**

INTRODUCTION

- Last week I asked what brought you to Knoxville?
- Today I wonder what brought you to Cedar Springs?
 - Grew up here? Friend invite you? Google?!?!
 - A girl? "Not really into Jesus but I'm really into her..."
 - I get it – and I hope it works out.
 - But in Jesus might get more than bargained for: True adventure of life.
- Sometimes people end up at our church in super random ways.
 - **One staff member** [Kris Johnson]: Moved here with her family from Wisconsin.
 - Drove through the night, ended up pulling off interstate at our exit.
 - 3 in morning, and their 3-year-old woke up (what kids do when car stops).
 - Pointed at our church and said, "That's where I'm going to go to school."
 - In coming weeks, family contacted bunch of different schools.
 - But since it was October – mid-semester – they were all full.
 - But *one* school had *one* place, and sure enough, this little one started school with us.
 - In months that followed, whole family visited our church.
 - But didn't think they'd join bc it was too big.
 - Another member encouraged them to stay: "Give it 2 years," they said, "I think you'll like it here."
 - 26 years later, she's on our staff: She looks after all our little ones bc her little one told her this was their church.

What about you? What brought you to Cedar Springs?

- Invite you to consider: Whatever your answer, that was just a circumstance used by God.
 - You are here bc God brought you here.
 - And he brought you here to Live Deeply – with him in his love.

Transition:

- Last week, we said that means living all of life with Jesus.
 - In the beauty/horror/everything in between – Jesus invites us to come to him.
 - Doesn't want you to be distant from him → Wants you to bring all that you are/have going on to him.
- Our Mission Statement takes us deeper into how we do that.
 - Here's today's SIS: ***We Live Deeply when we... respond to God's love by following Jesus in loving God, loving one another, and serving the world.***
 - Consider the parts with me.

We Live Deeply When... WE RESPOND TO GOD'S LOVE.

State: **Augustine** (saint from the 5C) wrote this: "If you have understood God, then what you have understood is not God."¹

- Far beyond our imagining...
 - Bigger and better and more majestic than we can ever think.
 - Theologians make a distinction bt apprehending God and comprehending God.
 - We can apprehend him...
 - But we cannot fully comprehend him...
- And the main thing we don't understand, is his love.

Illustrate: This summer, I listened to a book called *How to Stay Married*.

- Written by Harrison Scott Key NOT Francis Scott Key...
- Writes memoirs with a humorous tone.
- But this one is written in response to his wife's affair.
 - Difficult read: Raw, brutally honest, full of brokenness/pain.
 - Yet somehow, through it all, it's also incredibly funny.
- His wife writes the penultimate chapter, entitled *A Whore in Church*.
 - Reflects on phrase her grandmother used to say: *Sweating like a sinner in church*.
 - Describes how appropriate it was for her own journey with the church.
- But then shares **gospel realization** she had: Sinners don't sweat in church bc of Jesus – judgmental Xns make them do that.
 - But Jesus: He is gentle and lowly in heart.
 - He loves whores/sinners – which means he loves you/me – and he is pleased to receive us all into his family.

Apply: Remember: When Jesus calls you to come to him, he calls you to come as you are.

- Often, we don't accept this.
 - **Basil Pennington** (Catholic monk) wrote: "It is surprising how we fight against Love's accepting what we do not want to accept in ourselves — our defective, wounded, malicious self."²
 - But don't make the mistake of thinking that God feels about you the way you feel about you → His heart towards you is love.
- And the rest of our lives is lived out in response...

Summary: We Live Deeply when we live all of life in response to the love of God.

Transition: But let's get more specific. How do we do that? Here's the second part.

We Live Deeply when... We respond to God's love... BY FOLLOWING JESUS.

State:

- We're used to the idea of following people.
 - On social media or cable news.
 - World is full of "influencers" who call us to listen to them and imitate their lives.
- But when talk about "following Jesus," talking about something gloriously old school.
 - Comes straight from the GC.
 - Where Jesus calls us to "make disciples."

Illustrate: The word “disciple” literally means *follower*...

- In Jesus’s day, Rabbis would have people who literally followed them around.
- They’d listen to the Rabbi’s teaching and imitate their life.

Apply: Jesus says: “That’s what you’re to do with me → Come to me and follow me around!”

- We listen to his teaching, and then we imitate his life.
 - Take whatever is going on — the beauty/horror/everything in between...
 - Consider how it’s different bc we are with him.
 - King Jesus — not conventional wisdom, culture’s definition of good life, my family of origin, or any “influencer” on social media/cable news — King Jesus is lens through which I understand and direct my life.³
 - He is the end, but he is also the means.
- And it changes everything:
 - The friend, husband, father, and pastor I am.
 - How I think about a difficult colleague or changing diapers.
 - How I spend my money and my time.
 - What I prioritize in my life.

We listen to his teaching, and then we imitate his life.

Summary: We Live Deeply when we live all of life in response to the love of God → And we do that following Jesus, our Lord.

Transition: But how do we do that?!?!

- How do we follow Jesus?
- Let’s get more specific still. Part 3:

We Live Deeply when... We respond to God’s love... by following Jesus... IN LOVING GOD, LOVING ONE ANOTHER, AND SERVING THE WORLD.

State: *[Slide of Venn Diagram]*

- We Live Deeply by doing these three things:
 - We Love God in **Worship**.
 - We Love One Another in **Fellowship**.
 - We Serve the World on **Mission**.
- Everything we do as a church falls into one of these three categories → And we didn’t make them up.

Illustrate: They come from the early church: **Acts 2** gives us a picture of their life.

[Put the text on a slide and have it come up.]

- Notice how these three things – Worship, Fellowship, Mission – describe their life.

[Have highlighted slide come up.]

Worship | Fellowship | Mission

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. 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.

- That's what the early church looked like, and that's what we want to look like too.

Apply: Let me close with two pastoral encouragements [THE CLOSE].

First: Get connected to our church.

- Our goal is to engage ALL our people in ALL three of these areas.
- Here's an observation:
 - People tend to come to our church for one of them – often worship but maybe not.
 - But they only stay/experience lasting life-change if they get connected to the rest.
 - This is why the member who suggested Kris Johnson stay for 2 years was so wise.
 - It takes a little time to get embedded in a church so that it helps you in your life.
- We only Live Deeply when we do all three:
A disciple is one who loves God, loves others, and serves the world faithfully.
- If that's the case, what's your next step?
 - Maybe you're in worship but you're disconnected from fellowship?
 - Maybe you're in the first two but haven't started to serve?
- Your life/growth in Jesus depend on doing all three.
 - Let me encourage you to do this now → You need this Xn maturity.
 - Before the trouble comes, build up the spiritual resilience that you'll need.
Live Deeply with Jesus and you'll be equipped.
- Today great day to figure out what next step might be → Today is Connections Sunday.
 - [8:15/9:30]
 - Hosted in The Watershed → [Find wiggle man and you're in right place.]
 - All our ministries are represented there → So you can find a place to get connected that you'll enjoy.
 - If already connected, let me still encourage you to GO!
 - Might find a new connection.
 - Might BE the connection for someone else.
 - [11]:
 - Go to Welcome Center after service for a personal Connections Sunday.
 - Team there ready to tell you about all our ministries → So you can find a place to get connected that you'll enjoy.

Second/final pastoral encouragement is this:

If you're struggling today, you're in the right place.

And I want you to know this church is a refuge.

Come to Jesus, and rest.

- If you need to arrive late/leave early/talk to no one in between, that's fine.
 - Don't need to sign up for a community group, volunteer in the nursery, or tithe.
 - This church can be the place where you just lay down and bleed a while.
- That's a line from a poem I love by Thomas Moore:
 - "I am hurt, but I am not slain; I'll lay me down and bleed a while, And then I'll rise and fight again."
 - Sounds like Paul: **2 Cor 4:8-9: We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.**
- But if you're in the first half of these phrases – hurt, bleeding, afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, struck down...
 - I've had seasons like that...
 - A friend of mine is in a season like that: His fiancé just died from liver cancer. She was only 29.
- ...If that's you today, if you're struggling, let this church be a refuge for you.
 - Come, sit around the fire of the gospel → Enjoy its warmth and light.⁴
 - In time, you'll rise again and fight again, but for now: Just heal. Find life.

CONCLUSION

- I was in NYC for Tim Keller's memorial service this week.
 - Took place in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan → Directly across street from the Rockefeller Center.
 - Outside Rockefeller Center is large statue of **Atlas**: Straining/struggling to carry the weight of the world on his shoulders.
 - But go into St. Patrick's Cathedral and you find **Christ**: Serenely holding the entire world in a single cross-scarred hand.
 - Come to him and he will give you rest.
- Then, in time, we'll all Live Deeply together:

By responding to God's love...

By following Jesus...

In loving God, loving others, and serving the world.

AMEN.

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a littler deeper.

- John Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew*.
- Michael Easter, *The Comfort Crisis: Embrace Discomfort to Reclaim Your Wild, Happy, Healthy Self*.
- William Hendriksen, *Matthew*.
- Irwyn Ince, *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best*.
- Harrison Scott Key, *How to Stay Married: The Most Insane Love Story Ever Told*.
- Logos Bible Software.
- Dane Ortland, *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers*.
- Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Desire: Discovering the Neuroscience of Longing, Beauty, and Community*.

Endnotes

¹ Quoted in Harrison Scott Key, *How to Stay Married*, 300.

² Basil Pennington wrote this in the foreword to David Benner's *Surrender to Love*, 11-12.

³ This line is adapted from the *Cedar Springs Presbyterian Church: Members' Handbook*.

⁴ This line is adapted from a missionary video we showed at CSPC on 8/20/23. [Accessed here](#).