



Sermon Notes

Term – Autumn 2020

Series – Acts: manual for a scattered church

Gathering & Date – 11.00 livestream, 13 September

Title – Introduction

Preacher – Paul Langham

Reading – Acts 8:1-8 (Acts 1:1-8)

Main points –

Covid-19 has accelerated what the Lord has been saying to us for some time about the significance of small communities

The early church met in both big and little expressions of church (ekklesia) (Acts 2:46)

Persecution removed the big expression overnight, just as Pandemic has done for the church today

In Acts 8, we read that the church was ‘scattered’ = a word used for scattering seed (which is done to bring more life and fruit)

The reality of the early church was that it was showing no sign of fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20) recaptured in Jesus’ missional charge to his followers in Acts 1:7,8. From an earthly perspective, persecution seemed an existential threat: from a heavenly perspective, it led to the exponential spread of the good news of Jesus.

Might God’s hand in the Pandemic be nudging us towards a bolder commitment to the Great Commission? To rebalance the emphasis we traditionally place on ‘big church’ with an equal emphasis on ‘small church’?

Many of our small communities are increasingly looking like ‘small church’ ... pastoring, evangelising, proclaiming and demonstrating, teaching, growing, multiplying, praying for people, inviting in neighbours, colleagues, family, friends ...

But some 50% of our church family are not yet members of small communities ...

For God, the key value is placed on the gospel (and the Kingdom) and not the church: the church is good, but must not lose its identity as chief vehicle for the gospel

God is always at work to bring good out of bad (redemption). Because of the persecution of the early church, Philip travelled to an unnamed city in Samaria, where he proclaimed and demonstrated the gospel, with the result that *there was great joy in that city*

For further thought and prayer –

What does ‘church’ mean to you?

If you’re a member of a small community, does it exhibit the hallmarks of church? If not, how might it do so?

If you’re not a member of a small community, is there a reason which has stopped you joining one?

How would you describe the ideal small community? [I’d love to see your answers!]

