

## **Life in the Outpost of the Kingdom of Heaven**

Acts 6; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 5-29-2022

### **Outpost Christianity**

*Perception is reality. No. Truth is reality.* But perception shapes our response to people and life. The local church is like an outpost in the Old West. What will you do for the sake of her mission and community? – Hebrews 11:13; Revelation 20:9; 2 Kings 6:11-17

### **The Widows' Complaint (1)**

*In the best-ordered church in the world there will be something amiss, some grievances, or at least some complaints; those are the best that have the least and fewest.* – Matthew Henry

### ***We are to care for our own.***

The local church is to care for members that have no other resources. – Galatians 2:10; James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:3-16; Ephesians 4:28

But church members that can provide for themselves should do so. – 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

But, as much as possible, the church is also to do good to those outside the church. – Galatians 6:10

Problems can be seen as *opposition* to our happiness and goals or as *opportunity* to grow, love and see God work in new ways.

### **The Apostles' Solution (2-4)**

Elders are the *spiritual leaders* of the local church who are responsible for the stewardship of the Truth and the worship of the body. Elders are not the only ones who teach in the local church but they are the primary teachers and are responsible for the teaching that takes place in the body. Deacons are the *servant leaders* of the local church being responsible for practical matters in the church including the benevolence ministry to those in need. Deacons are also spiritual leaders being godly men (as we can see by the example of Stephen). And deacons are not the only servants or ministers in the body. In fact, every member of the body is a *spiritual servant*: a child of God who is gifted by God to serve others in particular ways.

### ***We are not meant to do everything.***

Some are called to be elders (spiritual leaders). – 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Some are called to be deacons (servant leaders). – 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Not everyone is meant to do the same thing. – 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31

No one is meant to do it all. – John 1:20

It's okay and even necessary to say 'no' when to say 'yes' would hinder your commitment to your calling and your priorities.

### **The Congregation's Selection (5-6)**

In this example, we see the importance of male leadership in the church. We see that the church is both led and involved in decision making on important matters. And we see that different members of the body play different roles.

***We are meant to do something.***

No one is meant to do everything, but everyone is meant to do something. – Ephesians 4:11-16

What each person is meant to do revolves around what they can do and are gifted to do (spiritual servants). – 1 Peter 4:8-11

We need each other in the body of Christ more than we realize. – 1 Corinthians 12:14-26

The smallest role in the church is greater than we can imagine in God's eyes. – Psalm 84:10

We are not to justify our sin by saying '*This is me so celebrate it*'; but we are to embrace our differences and honor our Designer by saying '*This is me regarding my gifts and abilities*' which should shape our lives for His glory and the good of others.

**Faithful and Fruitful Ministry (7)**

The church has a mission. The mission of the church is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed. The church is to be faithful in the proclamation of the truth of the Word. The church is to pray to be fruitful in that proclamation as well. But regardless of the amount of fruit, seen or unseen, the goal must be faithfulness. The fruit we are looking for in people's lives is a faith in Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life that produces obedience to God's Word.

***We are to be faithful regardless of how fruitful we are.***

Ezekiel's ministry was difficult. – Ezekiel 3:4-11

Jeremiah's ministry was difficult. – Jeremiah 7:23-28

Faithfulness is our focus because fruitfulness is up to God. - 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

We are not the best judges of our lives and the fruit of our efforts. God can be at work in ways that we can't even perceive to grant fruit to what we do. On Judgment Day, God alone will tell us what the fruit of our lives and ministries and efforts have been when the light shines on all the hidden things of history. – 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

**Opposition to Stephen's Ministry (8-15)**

Stephen is an example of what faithful ministry might cost us. The story of Stephen's martyrdom (the first in the history of the church) highlights the hostile world in which the church is called to bear witness to the truth of the gospel. The Church speaks the truth and that's why it is hated by the world.

***We should expect to be hated because we stand for the Truth.***

We need to understand the hostile territory in which the outpost of the kingdom of heaven resides. – John 7:7; 8:40; Matthew 10:22; 24:9; Luke 6:22, 27; John 15:19; 17:14; 1 John 3:13

But we must continue to speak the truth in love and to care for one another. – 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Luke 6:27-36

Satan is a liar and a murderer and those who are his children will often kill, not because of personal hatred, but because the one they kill is made in the image of God or is a child of God. – John 8:40-44; Genesis 9:5-6; Matthew 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15; Romans 1:30

**Conclusion**

*What difference (for good) can you make (in the lives of others)? In your family? In your world? In your church?*