

God is at Work! (Acts 2:42-47)

Sometimes our circumstances can seem so daunting that we can miss God at work in the midst of them! When you look at the backdrop of the beginnings of the New Testament church it would be easy for the untrained eye to miss the fact that God was at work at all! Jesus, the leader of the new Christian church had been executed, the authorities continued to persecute the remnant of the Jesus movement causing them to be scattered and the Roman occupation continued unabated! And yet in the midst of these difficult circumstances, God was at work, planting the seeds that would ultimately establish a worldwide movement of Christians, followers of Christ, represented in virtually every nation of the world!

In the midst of this worldwide pandemic, do we see God at work? After all, churches in many nations are still closed, there appears to be little corporate witness, prayer and worship and the gospel that the Lord instructed us to “take to the whole world” seems at best to be “on the back burner!” Is God at work today? Well taking the early church as our inspiration, let’s look at three ways in which God continues to be at work, regardless of our circumstances.

Here’s the first piece of evidence:

God has taken the church to the people!

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:46-47

For years, even decades the church has done its best to draw non believers to its buildings to hear the gospel. Yet in more recent years, the idea of trying to reproduce the past, when people willingly went to church because it was seen as a natural part of our way of life, has produced little fruit. In today’s world, fewer and fewer people want to go to a church building and sit through a 2 hour service on a Sunday morning. With this truth in mind, intercessors all over the world have been crying out to God to do something new in order to reach the non believers with the gospel. And an example of that new thing has sprung up right before our very eyes, catching many of us by surprise!

Currently, virtually every church in virtually every nation is now meeting on Sunday mornings **online!** The gospel is still being preached, not from our church buildings but literally in the homes of millions of people! As I mentioned a few weeks ago, before the corona virus exploded on the scene approximately 5% of the UK population attended church buildings for Sunday worship at least once a month. Now that figure has risen to nearly 25% of the population, who are meeting for Christian worship online every week!

God has performed a miracle, by continuing to fulfil the great commission using 21st century technology! The gospel IS going out into all the world, straight into the homes and living rooms of people everywhere, just as it was at the beginning of the Christian church where homes, rather than church buildings were the central focal point of the Christian community. Paul, in his letter to Philemon begins by saying to his friend “to the church that meets **in your home!**” It is truly remarkable. It’s as if God has pressed the reset button and we have returned to His original blueprint: church, that meets in people’s homes!

Is God at work during this pandemic? Yes, by taking the church to the people and into their homes rather than expecting the people to come into the church!

Here's the second piece of evidence that God is at work:

A sense of community has been restored!

“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.”

The first century church was characterised by a sense of community, generosity, unity, helping one another out and ensuring that no one was in need. This is a key characteristic of the early church: community and meeting the needs of others! “I was hungry and you gave me something to eat: I was sick and you looked after me. I was naked and you clothed me.”

Historians may look back to this pandemic period and record that this was a key moment when a community spirit was restored to the nations of the world. Day after day on our television screens we have witnessed great acts of kindness and compassion towards those in need. Neighbours have gone shopping for those who were unable to. Phone calls have been made to the lonely to see how they were. People, unable to attend funerals, have stood on the streets and clapped as funeral processions have driven past them as a sign of love and solidarity. Lifts have been given to those in need of hospital treatment who couldn't get there otherwise. Millions of people have stood on their door steps every Thursday evening and shown their appreciation for those on the front line. Groups like Pulling Together Ludlow have appeared in many towns and cities in order to coordinate voluntary efforts to help and befriend those in need. This is God! This is His Spirit! “Act justly! Love mercy! Walk humbly with your God.” This is His call upon the people of the world. And we have witnessed millions responding to it.

Is God at work during this pandemic? Yes, restoring a sense of community right across the nations of the world and it's a beautiful thing to witness.

And finally, a third piece of evidence that God is at work during this pandemic:

The maturing of our faith!

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.” Isn't extraordinary to think that not too long before this moment in scripture, we read that the disciples were “together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews.” And yet now they have a boldness and are completely willing to be seen ministering in public, their fear of the Jews having gone! What has happened to them? Their faith has been strengthened and matured through the trials they have faced together and now having witnessed the Risen Lord and having been filled with the Holy Spirit, they had matured to such an extent that Jesus could hand over the baton of leadership to them!

The current pandemic has tested the faith of many. “Where is God in all this?”

God has never promised the Christian an easy journey. But He has promised to walk alongside us and in His infinite wisdom, use the trials that we have to face to fine tune, strengthen and mature our faith in Him. For many, perhaps all of us, we will emerge from this pandemic trial with our faith stronger and mature than it was when we went into the trial. The testing we have all faced has developed within us perseverance, a determination to cling on to the Lord even when all around us seemed to be falling apart. We emerge more mature in the Lord than we were before, ready for all that is to come.

So there we go, 3 pieces of evidence that God has been at work during this time of international crisis:

- He has taken the church to the people
- He has restored a sense of community
- He has matured our faith through the trial of testing

God knows what He is doing! And nothing can stop His plans from coming to pass. Not even an international pandemic. Amen!

From:

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