

Unity in the Church: The Flourishing Church

Acts 13:1-12 || Pastor Paul Hahn || 15 November 2020

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW together as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: What is the most generous and creative gift you have ever received or given?

Worship: Acts 2:42-27 (*Read aloud 3 times, reflect and listen for God's invitation to you.*)

Sermon Summary for Acts 13:1-12 (*Read the passage before reading the sermon summary.*)

What does it look like to flourish as a church community? The church of Antioch is a wonderful example for us. By meditating on how God worked in and through it, we see three marks of a vibrant, Christ-centered church:

Gospel Generosity // All of Scripture speaks of God's radical generosity and grace toward His wayward children. He never quits on us; His love never runs out. And He sent His Son, who lovingly declared, "I came that you may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). From its beginning, the church of Antioch was abundantly generous. They gave away their best, both extravagantly of their resources and by sending out members to spread the Gospel. Through worship, prayer and fasting the Spirit of God gave them a sense of how to further Christ's mission. We too can hone in on the wonders of the Gospel by engaging in these practices. They will further open our eyes to the reckless generosity of God... and we will come to realize that we are made and remade to go and do likewise.

Gospel Creativity // Our Father is immeasurably creative. This is abundantly clear throughout His creation... but it's also manifest in His path for redeeming us. Even though a Savior was foretold and long anticipated, Christ's life, death and resurrection were anything but what was expected. The same was true of the early church; it was beautifully and powerfully creative. Borne out of its Jewish heritage, it forged ahead into an independent identity. People from all backgrounds came to Christ, uniting themselves in worship. They shared and served in ways that no one had seen before – so uniquely that an entirely new name was given to them: Christians. Jesus and the Apostles knew – and we must come to realize – that the Gospel is the power of God for our ongoing salvation and for continuous, ongoing renewal creativity. The Gospel gives us fresh encounters with Jesus over and over again, encounters which are meant to change us, change the church, and change the world.

Gospel Humility // Every Christian's story – both personally and corporately – is a story of God growing His humility in us. God is completely all-powerful, all-knowing, all-sufficient... yet He is also all-humble: humbling Himself to create and sustain and engage and redeem humanity. The mission of the kingdom only goes forward as we embrace humility together with Jesus. Not just humility about ourselves but also humility towards God as we realize that His ways are not ours. Therefore the path we walk as we follow Him will rarely go in directions we expect. And so our Father will mold us – humbling us as He does – into the beloved children He yearns for us to be. The Apostle Paul spent the rest of his life being humbled by his own sinfulness and his deep, ongoing need for mercy and forgiveness. Just like Paul, we must embrace times when we find ourselves being deeply humbled by God. And we must look for and turn to Jesus in them.

The hope, the life, the mercy, and the engagement of Jesus only becomes part of a church through this blend of generosity, creativity and humility. This is how lives and communities and the world change. This is how Christ moves in us and through us. And so we ask: Where does God want us to write beautiful stories of His generosity, His creativity, and His humility? May we seek to be a church that flourishes as we follow Jesus on this path.

Discussion Questions *(You will not be able to discuss all the questions. Pick the ones you like. Some are personal perspective and application questions for life-transforming discussion.)*

- Talk about the immense **generosity** of God.
 - Tell some stories of people in your life who floored you with their generosity toward you or others.
 - What are your personal struggles in becoming generous?
 - Discuss the **creativity** of God in creation and redemption.
 - How have you let the creativity of God inspire your creativity?
 - In what ways can our creativity contribute to the flourishing of the church?
 - Who are some of the most **humble** Christians you have gotten to know?
 - Do you find their lives compelling and attractive? Why or why not?
 - In what spaces of your life do you feel God humbling you?
 - How do you see Jesus as the embodiment of generosity, creativity, and humility?
 - How does learning and practicing generosity, creativity, and humility become the basis of a flourishing church?
 - What did you find most hopeful, encouraging or challenging from this sermon and passage?
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Prayer

Pray for the flourishing of our church. See this week's CG Prayer Guide [Here](#). Use the prayer guide prompts for group, family or personal use this week.

Engage & Experience

What characterizes the church in verses 1-3 of Acts 13 is their fasting, worshiping, and praying? Have you ever felt constrained to fast from something in order to spend more time focusing on God for a particular reason? Was it worthwhile? What part do you think fasting plays in helping us to become more generous, creative and humble? Could God be calling you in this time of great challenge to fast from something for a time in order to focus on Him? Share your fasting experience with your group.