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Let's begin with prayer.

Oh lord. You are all glorious in yourself. Having no need of the creature. What could all the creatures offer unto you? And adoration that could compare. To the mutual. Adoration that you have had within yourself from all eternity. And yet in your generosity. You have created and redeemed. That you might give to creatures to be worshipers.

To have this in fellowship with you. And here we are o lord. Creatures and sinners. Who sinned in and died in Adam. And had done nothing but express. That death from ourselves, that wickedness from ourselves. Until you gave life. How we thank you for your son. In whom you give that life.

How we thank you for your spirit. By whom. You give us to have that life in your son. We asked that. You would be glorified and Not only our. Love for you that you have now formed in us from christ. But in that imitation of you, that Childlike resemblance to you, father.

That expression of our union with you, lord, jesus. That you would be the firstborn among many brethren. That fruit that you bear in our lives. From christ. Oh, holy spirit. We thank you that among these is That aiming at alleviating, The misery that has come into the world by sin.

And the joy in displaying the character of our god. We thank you for the church. We thank you for your design for redemptive history. Thank you for giving us to study these things. Thank you for the place that you have brought us to in that study for this morning.

Now, help us by your spirit as we consider your word. And use the renewing of our minds, the storing. Of bible and theological knowledge. In our thoughts. Use it. Oh, lord, to conform us to christ and bring to an experience reality and expressed reality in our lives and corporately in the life of this church.

We ask it in jesus name. Amen. So, we're almost to the end now. Uh, we're into the book of Acts. The, the last Major. Uh, section god himself. Invading the world. In two stages. As famously, summarized in galatians chapter 4. In the fullness of time. God sent his son.

Into the world. To redeem us. He Came born of a woman under the law. Lived obediently died. At turningly rose again with power. Praise be to the lord jesus christ. And he showed his character. And he gave us instruction. For what the Reflection of that character in our lives in a world that still is full of sin and still is full of misery.

And yet now, Has. Uh, not only been visited by christ. But has all of these people in it who are united consciously to Christ by faith. This is one of the great differences. After crisis, coming to before people were always saved. By faith in jesus christ. But they did not have this experiential union.

With him, knowing The sun as the one he has saved us. Sake did not live in communion in fellowship with the incarnate crisis. He had not been incarnated yet. And so, their hope was in the salvation that god would provide that he had displayed in the sacrifices that he had

promised in the even going back to the promise of the seed, who'd crushed the woman's head, it was always the same fate and the same righteousness.

But life as a christian. Is different. Then life as a believer was, And one of the ways then that it is, different is That not only now. Do we want to express? Uh, the the goodness and righteousness and mercy. Of our god, you remember that when we were studying the deactonal life in israel and all of the laws that govern charity and so forth.

And even the laws that govern The justice of the society, one of their desires. One of the things that got instructed them should be their desire. Was that people would see. The israelites obeying these laws and caring about each other this way and say there's no other people on earth like this.

And there's no other gobbed like theirs. Well, now that god has revealed himself. Uh, and an ultimate climactic way in the lord, jesus christ himself. Who is the radiance of the glory of god and Especially in the character of christ as he demonstrated it. Living among those who are in the grips of sin and who experience continually the misery that comes With living in a fallen world and giving instruction for how those who follow him should do.

So Uh, what should we expect? But that the church. Uh, would display this character of christ. And that is something that we see highlighted emphasize as The church begins and the pouring out of the spirit. At Pentecost, it's one of the fruits in the Affirmation of the church with power over against persecution in chapter 4.

The steakanal ministry of the church is one of the main things. That we that we see come out. And then the deaconate itself. Is necessitated as the church grows. Uh, but appears to be Not appears to be but it becomes apparent that the church is still full of sinners and we are still Uh, very much needy.

Not only of the life of christ in us by his spirit. Uh but the ordinance of Christ by which he grows us and by which he governs us. And especially growing us in the ministry of word, sacrament, and prayer by the elders and governing us in. The attendance upon, and Uh, ministry in spiritual things by the elders, but then the divesting or the Or the.

Um, The divesting is a good word. The the forming of the deaconate in order to take the oversight Administering how we serve one another in? And serve the lord with our wealth. The turning over the oversight of that, the administration of that to the deaconate. So, lord willing, we'll just look at those.

The two passages. And next, two, enacts four, Uh, this lord's day. If god helping us, we can complete Of looking at the formation of the deaconate in act six in one lord's day, that would be next week. I suspect will spend at least two weeks In that, i think we spent four weeks on it in the preaching, but we won't.

Use as many details. Uh, we won't go into as much detail. This time, of course, all of us sermons are Are still available. And then, move on to first timothy, And, Maybe six seven. Of these sessions left. So in Acts, chapter 2,

And the pouring out of the spirit, and Preaching with power. And then hearing with power and hearing with power, does not look like The triumphant hearer. It looks like the hearer who realizes that he is undone. Uh, if you come away from a sermon thinking that you're awesome, Uh, you did not hear in the power of the holy spirit.

They've come away from a sermon. Hearing that christ is awesome. Um, Doesn't mean you should come away from serving suppressed if you come away from the sermon depressed. Than something has gone wrong, either in the proclamation of christ or the hearing of christ. Um, But they, They hear by the help of the spirit, they are cut to the heart.

Uh, Not by itself. You remember those who heard stephen? Were also cut to the heart but the response when you're cut, right? There's a godly sorrow that leads to repentance. And then there's there are other kinds of soros sorrows, not always indicative of Of a work of the spirit.

They're cut of the heart. It's a Brett men and brethren. What should we do? Um, Need a response, repent, and let every one of you be baptized into the name of jesus christ for the remission of sins. It's the completion. Of what? Uh, jesus's cousin, john had. Had been preaching that they That they should repent.

And yet, none of us could repent. But Uh, what john had been doing with the water? There was one coming who had come and he wouldn't do it with water. You do it with the spirit. He do it with fire. And now he has done it and so it's not just for Penned.

That's repentant be baptized into the name of jesus christ. For the remission of sins. And you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit. For the promises to you and to your children. To all who are far off as many as the Lord, our god will call. And so, you have this group that have responded.

Uh, with the sorrow that submits to the word, not a sorrow, that rejects and hates the word. And you have immediately, the continuation. Of worship. This is one of the things. Sorry, i feel like i'm probably too far away from this is this.

And this is, yeah, it's very different. Um, Uh, and this is one of the things that we see in act, 2 and act, four, and act six. When we consider a contextually in first First Timothy 3. Is that there is a priority upon and facilitating of the worship of god, especially in his word.

That is the purpose of. The actual ministry. The actual ministry. Both facilitates worship. And it demonstrates the power. Of the word that has been proclaimed. In the worship and the power of the spirit who has changed the people. Uh, by way of that work. Uh, So it's interesting he says repent and be baptized and what does he do?

In order. Uh, to facilitate the repentance. He preaches more. Um, repentance comes by the power of god. Not by the resolve of the man. It comes by the moving of god. Not from the emotions of the man. And since it comes from god, we use god's means to seek it.

And that doesn't just mean, preaching, prayer also is a means, this is one of the upgrades from the three forms of unity, which are reformed confessions and documents in the 16th century and right at the beginning of the early 17th century. One of the upgrades when you get to the westminster standards in the middle of the 17th century is the people of god, have done a lot of suffering.

And not just from persecution. But in the difficulty of walking with god as christians and the shepherding ministry, The that has been done. And so, There are. There are some nuances like Um, Assurance is not of the essence of faith. Faith is sure about jesus, but faith is not always sure that it is in jesus.

It just keeps clinging to him even when it is, not sure of the work that has been done in itself. And so there's a much stronger emphasis on adoption. Uh, In the westminster standards than the three forms. But here's another one prayer as a means of grace. That. Uh, since Got.

Um, since the way we experience grace is personal from god, we not only have the word, as i means of grace and the sacraments as a means of grace, but the actual engaging of god in the sun by the help of the spirit that we call prayer. That, that is.

Uh, that that is a means of grace. But here The first and we'll actually see that when we get to act six when we see what the deaconet was, formed to enable the apostles and later elders. Uh, to attend to Uh, but here, they've they've given the instruction To repent and be baptized.

That there is this pouring out of the spirit from heaven, that jesus has given us a sign to affirm that. He is the one who doesn't, he is the one who will do it. Uh, we must get the spirit from him. And as we continue to need the spirit, we can rely upon him in his given, the field who has given the pledges, given the demonstration that he will keep giving the spirit whom we need to apply his redemption to us because he who accomplished it by his incarnation and his sacrifice will not withhold from you.

The holy spirit whom you need to give you that faith to grow that faith to give you that repentance to grow that repentance. And so, There is this priority then on worship. Uh, with many other words, we testified and exhorted them saying be saved. From the this perverse. Generation.

Heaven, intersects earth. The. Preaching. Via sacraments the prayer. And so, Uh, he he gives them that command. Those who gladly received his word, Uh, we're baptized that should Um, That should maybe be a question. For someone who comes to profess. Uh, profess faith. Um, Uh, how are you receiving the word, gladly.

Uh, that day about three thousand solds were added to them. And then they continue in what they continue in worship. The continues steadfastly. And the apostles doctrine or teaching and fellowship. Uh, you know, three thousand people having fellowship with 12. What does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean that they all became buddies with the apostles.

Now, the, the great fellowship in In the christian life, and in the christian church, is the fellowship of corporate worship. There's the fellowship of participating. One another in that which is led by christ from heaven. You know, there is a chumminess and, and appreciation and a feeling appreciated. That comes.

And that is not wrong and that is strengthened By being in christ being and filled with the spirit with one another. Uh, but the great fellowship that we have is the fellowship. That we have, when our citizenship Our new household. Are the? The identity of the new household, which we belong, when all of those things come to ahead in our experience in the public worship and heaven is intersecting earth, and we are enjoying something together.

That can only be had through faith in jesus christ, that can only be had through the power of the holy spirit. And as we know him, As we know him together in the public worship, there is a fellowship that imitates the fellowship of heaven. And even because of how we get it in the sun, and the spirit before the father participates in the fellowship of the godhead himself, we say that with reverence But when you read and hear what jesus is praying in john 17, You, we say it not just with reverence But with Uh, certainty that this is the reality and that for those who have experienced this, you know, now a little bit more perhaps.

Theologically why? That sort of worship? Uh, was an experience of such closeness with those. Around you, whom you might not have that much. Demographically. Or in the interests of this world in in common with and if you haven't had that experience that you should seek it from

God, Uh you should seek the knowledge of the father through faith in the sun by the help of the spirit.

That when you come among believers and your worshiping, this way you have a greater. This is my people experience. Then you do in any other context. Um, you know, even if you Well, this won't mean as much to some of you, even if you went to the same school and rooted for the same sports teams that were interested in the same arts or Liked the same bands.

I don't know. Uh, really branching out of my Uh, my sphere of understanding you. Uh, but there's nothing. Nothing. In this world. The produces a unity. Like worship of god as he is, commanded it. And as he himself supplies it, To the father through the sun. By the spirit.

And so, This is. This is what they have and notice that the demonstration of the power of the world to come. It does not come first by the wonders and signs in verse 43. If you have your bible open. You can see what is the first demonstration that this intersection or intersecting between heaven and earth occurs.

Uh, in the, in the public worship in the doctrine of the apostles and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread of the apostles, which is different than the breaking of bread in the homes now, You know, that's the lord's supper and in the prayers again. This is different than just praying with other believers.

This is the prayers that are led by the apostles in the public worship of the church. Uh, But the The first. Uh, testimony from God or a testing. By god using wonders is not the wonders and signs. That are done through the apostles. It is that fear came upon every soul.

They knew. That they were in the presence of god. They began to know the Greatness. The holiness. The power. And, That all of those things are in the goodness of god to us. Someone who You know, because of the simplicity of God the because of the fact that all of his attributes are invested in all of the other attributes that he is one pure simple being all the way throughout.

It is. That fear that comes upon the soul. That really drives home, but goodness of God. Liking to think of god as As really nice to us. It does not even. Scratched the surface. Of the believers experience of god's compassion and grace and long suffering. When it comes in the context of his greatness, his glory.

And so the sphere comes upon every soul. How then do those who have this experience? Of the love and glory of god act with one another. That's versus 44 through 47. Which i hope you know, because we didn't run right into versus 44 to 47. But we we paused on the priority of worship.

I hope you can see how Empty and vapid and superficial. The social justicey kind of way of looking at the ministry of the saints, in alleviating earthly things really is Because what verses 44 through, 47 are describing as What happens when redeemed sinners have experienced this intersection, which between heaven and earth?

They act on the earth, even on the fallen earth with the neediness. That is a consequence of that fallenness. In a way that lays hold of heaven and desires that all others would also be able to lay hold of heaven. This is not attempting to eradicate world poverty. This is expressing heavenly richness.

And we shouldn't expect it to be eradicated. If our master said, Before you will always have with you. Which is, by the way. The same thing that god had told israel, if you remember. Back

to our studies. That if they obeyed, they wouldn't have any poor but they would always have poor.

So, We know that we won't. Always obeying. We're grateful then God's giving us not only his word. To, to form christ in us more and more. To use the language of the apostle uses in one place. Uh, but When the spirit who does that through his means. But the ministry, both of the elders for the means of grace.

And, The deacons helping us experience and express. The difference at crisis, made in us. So what does that look like when the corollary Of being a heaven experienced earthling. Um, The corollary of material provision. Comes out. All who believed were together. And had all things in common. What does that mean?

It doesn't mean communism because they still had stuff to sell in the next phrase. And sold. Their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need. And so, this is not communism. This is you doing for your brother. What you would have done for yourself. That if you have these assets, And, Uh, you're hungry, you need clothing, you need shelter.

Uh, you don't say, well, it's all right. I don't really need food, clothing or shelter. I'll just hold on to the assets. But you sell as you have need. Uh, you don't sell everything you You are hopefully wise enough to To act wisely for yourself and for your family, and even for your descendants, Um, but then If the hunger.

Or nakedness. Or exposure belongs to your brother. Then you think of your brother in the same way. And, you know, when we get to He who will not work shall not eat. That's also thinking of your brother in the same way. Because if If you're hungry, naked and exposed and you don't go out and work, Then you're harming yourself.

Well. We don't want to harm our brother anymore than we want to. Uh, to harm ourselves. But the, the point here, Is that having this heaven and earth? Uh, intersecting experience that has produced this fellowship that belongs is especially to the public worship. Means that even if the hunger is in my brother's belly The assets to feed him might be in my bank account.

And so, All who believed were together and had all things in common means, they're obeying. The love your neighbor as yourself. They're obeying. The Love one another as i have loved you. Having in their minds. Um, Living in themselves. The mind that is in christ, jesus looking out, not only for their own interests but also For the interests of others.

And so they sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had needs. So there's a heavenly reordering of their time, they were devoted to the public worship back in verse 42, if you're following on the outline and skipping down Um, You know, b11 and then b2 one, then we'll come back and get b12 and b2 to, i just put it on the outline, in a way to show that the purpose of worship drives, the corollary of material provision and we're not even going to finish this, what?

We'll just Finish up and act two, and then Uh, we'll start with act four next lord's day, lord willing. Uh, so not only the reordering of their time and the reordering of their finances, or the purpose of Of their wealth. So time in verse 42 wealth, and verse 45 also, the reordering of their home, So, continuing daily with one accord in the temple.

Excuse me. Uh, and breaking bread from house to house. You know, they still are having this fellowship in the apostolic ministry in the public means of grace. Uh, and you know, daily Uh, but when they go home, Other not going each to their own home. Uh, They're gathering in one another's homes.

They hadn't had enough of each other, apparently. And so, This is not the fellowship of public worship. This is not the breaking of bread. Now of the lord's supper. Uh, like we saw in verse 42. This is hospitality Uh, yeah, it's become. Common for For people to. To pick up a phrase from some burst and second century, christian writing and say all these are the love feasts.

You know what? Y'all come over to our house on a thursday or friday evening and we'll have ourselves a love feast. Uh, this is this is the difference that being united to christ. And therefore, having A union and communion with. With one another in christ. Makes for our hospitality for our home.

Uh, yes. Your home can be a refuge and a castle. Uh, but When you're a believer. The church's family. It's a refuge for them. Not a refuge from them. Um, Because we are all still sinners. We don't always experience it that way, but that is something to amount. That not only our time would be reordered and not only the purpose of our wealth would be reordered.

But even the nature of our home, Would be reordered. There's a profound difference, isn't there? That. Being a heaven intersected person in union with christ and the indwelling of the spirit. Um, Was a profound difference that it makes and how we experience and employ earthly things. Like time and money and home.

And, So, they're breaking bread from house to house. They're eating their food with gladness. And simplicity of heart. Now that guilt before god has been wiped away. And yes, we're still sinners but we're reconciled to one another in a way that is promised by and guaranteed by the death of christ and the seal of the spirit to increasingly decrease, right?

Our distance, our tension with one another is something whose days are numbered. And as we grow in grace here and then especially when we have been perfected and grace in In the next life, we will have an increasingly Sweet fellowship with one another. And so we we have simplicity of heart before god.

We have a cleansed conscience through the shed blood of Christ. Not always worried about what he might be doing to us. And we have increasing. Simplicity of heart with one another, not trying to manipulate one. Another not always worrying about one another thing. What one, another might think of us, Um, There is.

Even in. That ministry and earthly things to one another in this. Hospitality this, increasing Um, Gladness and simplicity of heart. Even in our experiences one another And then, you know, back to the The worship praising god. And having favor with all the people. Even when people aren't being converted.

They can tell that there's a difference. And those who are. Uh, thank god in this case. It was favor. With all the people. Uh, sometimes the response to the differences in favorable. There are those who Uh, when they hear Christ and his exclusive claims even in the offer of his gospel, preached They hate the glory of jesus, they hate his exclusive claims.

But they can tell. There is something glorious there, and that's what's Producing the The intensity of the negative response. Well, it's similar with the life of a christian. The life of a christian is awaiti thing. And sometimes in god's, providential mercy. Not so much to us as it is to the culture.

He's always being merciful to us. But sometimes in his providential mercy to the world around us. The weightiness of what a christian is, like. Is responded to favorably. And they may wish

they had that even though they're not able to produce it within themselves, Sometimes the weightiness is responded to quite negatively with with great hostility.

This is. The majority experience. Throughout church history. Uh, salt and light. Are not always enjoyed. Uh, by those Who are rotting and And tasteless. On the one hand and who love darkness. On the other hand. But displaying god glorifying god, attesting to the reality of him. Whom we experience and worship.

This should be the consequence and the aim Of the way we live in our material with respect to our material things. And that should be the consequence of a properly overseen properly administered deaconal ministry in the church. That's right.

Oh lord again. As we began in prayer. We thank you and marvel before you that you would show Such mercy to such sinners as we are. And we pray that your majesty and your glory. Your spirit would make us to know. We gripped with experience. In interaction with you.

In your worship especially now. As we are, just about to come to the public worship. Oh god, meet us in it. And grant that when we come from it, The. Weightiness, the majesty. Of what it has been to know you and to be known by you. Would shape the way we interact with one another.

The way we.

Experience and employ your material provision for us in this world. And the display of what christ is like in us as your people. Grant that we ask in his name, amen.