

**The Life of the Church (Part 3)**  
**Acts 2:42-47**  
**May 13, 2007**

**I. Devoted to Sharing (vv. 44-45)**

**A. The Spiritual Nature of Mercy (Matt. 25:31-46)**

**1. Saved by works or by grace?**

*v. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."*

**2. For the sake of Christ (v. 40)**

*v. 40 "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."*

**3. Evidence of our love for God (v. 35)**

"What it means is that God wants us to show active compassion through service, because this is one of the surest signs that we have been saved by His grace. How we treat the poor and needy indicates where we stand with God Himself. If we don't care to have a relationship with God, we won't care very much about the needs of the poor. . . Therefore, He told them that mercy was a matter of life and death. Acts of charity are not optional; they are at the very heart of what it means to be a servant of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup>

**B. The Sanctity of Service**

**1. The office of deacon**

*Acts 6:2-3 "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty."*

**2. Jesus Christ – the first deacon (Matt. 20:20-28)**

*v. 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

**3. The holiness of waiting tables**

**C. God's concern for the truly needy**

**1. objects of his special concern**

*Ps. 72:12-13 For he delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.*

**2. God's people – a home for the sojourner**

*Dt. 10:18-19 He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *City on a Hill* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 155.

**3. Physical needs, spiritual ministry**

*James 1:27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

**D. Mercy ministry as gospel ministry**

**1. primacy of the Word**

*Acts 6:2, 4 “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. . . But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

**2. begins in the church**

*Gal. 6:10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

**3. but also our neighbors**

“As a priority, we should give to needy Christians both intensively and extensively, until their need is gone. But we must also give generously to nonbelievers as part of our witness to the world. . . . In other words, the ministry of mercy is not only an expression of the fellowship of the church, but also an expression of the mission of the church.”<sup>2</sup>

**II. Devoted to Growing**

**A. Result of sharing**

*Acts 6:7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

**B. Result of a well-rounded church (Teaching, Fellowship, Breaking Bread, Prayers, Sharing)**

*Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

**C. By God’s grace alone**

*Acts 2:47 And the Lord added to their number. . .*

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<sup>2</sup> Timothy J. Keller, *Ministries of Mercy: The Call of the Jericho Road* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 80, 83.