

# THE224 Christian Narrative 2 Redemption

## Unit 5c The Mission of the Community

Presented by the



**LANCASTER BIBLE COLLEGE**  
CAPITAL SEMINARY & GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Hello and welcome to Session 5C of Christian Narrative 2. Today we'll be talking about the mission of the community, that is, the mission of the church. Our main teaching point today is this: The church is to pursue the completion of certain tasks in order to make certain she pursues the completion of her mission. What we want to look at today are the core functions of the church. What must the church do? What must the community do in order to maintain its key identity as the bride of Christ? So the first core function is teaching. In our last lesson, we looked at how it is absolutely essential that the elders teach the people of the church, bringing them up into maturity, ensuring that they are mature and able to withstand the schemes of others, the cunning of others, that they stand on their own. There are several passages that we can look at that talk about the need for the practice of and the importance of teaching.

Acts 2:42 gives us a description of the early church. It tells us that "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." Acts 5:28, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." What is this? This is the description of the elders of Jerusalem yelling at these early apostles for teaching the teachings of Jesus. And so we see teaching was early on an important part of the apostles' or leaders' job in the church. 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." So we see that teaching is a critical function of the local church.

And as we take it one layer deeper, what we discover is that the church needs to care for people at all stages of spiritual development. So we read in 1 Peter 2:2, "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation." Okay. So the church is to teach the basic tenets of the faith, those very core components of what it means to know who Jesus is and how we relate to him and how we live the life that he's called us to. But our teaching isn't supposed to stay there. It's actually supposed to develop into more mature teaching. So we read in Colossians 1:28, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ." So there's a teaching that is new, spiritual milk. We provide the basics to bring people into salvation, and then we build them up through teaching, to bring them into maturity in Christ. And we also need to talk about the truth of who Jesus is. So 2 Timothy 2:2, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." There's this idea that we're passing on a spiritual heritage and a spiritual truth from one generation to another generation. And the church, the community must care for teaching. It is an absolute critical component of what the church is called to do.

The second core function is fellowship. Again, we look in Acts 2:42, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." So here we recognize first that it's important that the church spend time together. We read in Ephesians 4:2, "With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love." Now, it's going to be difficult sometimes to spend time together. There are going to be times when, in truth, people of the church are at odds with one another. But maintaining the unity of the church is absolutely critical. So gathering together, regular gathering for common purpose. Why are we together? We are here because we love Christ, we love one another, and we want to spend time together.

Now, a couple of words that we can use to describe the type of gathering that the Christian community should be all about. First of all is sharing, a willingness to care for the needs of a brother or sister in

Christ. We see this again in Acts 4. The very earliest church is practicing radical sharing. So we read in Ephesians 4:32-35, “Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.” Now, radical sharing as it happens in Acts 5 is not a direct command that we have to kind of have this communal approach to living. Certainly, it's not inappropriate by any means. But the principle that comes out of this is that we really need to be able to take care of one another, sacrificially taking care of one another, sharing what God has given us with others who are in need.

Now, another principle that we see is acceptance, a willingness to allow for diversity in the church. Romans 15:5-6, “May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” You see, we read in Ephesians 2 that God has brought down the dividing wall of hostility that stood between different ethnicities, that in Christ, it doesn't matter if we are rich or if we are poor, if we are black or if we are white or we are brown or we are yellow. It doesn't matter if we've come from the city or the suburbs. We can come together. And so there must be a great acceptance in the fellowship of the church. It must not be a segregated fellowship. It must be an integrated fellowship.

Finally, we see love, a sacrificial care for one another. And of course, a great passage from 1 Corinthians 13, the love passage. “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give everything I have away and deliver up my body to be burned, but I don't have love, I gain nothing.” The church must gather together. It must fellowship with itself, yet it must do this in a way that is unifying, accepting. It is sharing. It is loving. It is sacrificial toward itself. This is the core function of fellowship for the church, and it's part of its mission.

The third core function of the mission of the church is worship. Now, we see worship throughout Scripture. Romans 12:1-2 is a good example. “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” So worship is a core part of what it means to carry out the mission of the church. A couple of things we can think about related to worship. First, singing, a vocal expression of who God is in our life is completely appropriate as the church gathers. Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” And we've talked about the role of teaching, but now we also see the role of worship, the role of singing.

We also look at the idea that calling attention to God's goodness and providence in our life is an excellent aspect of worshipping God. Ephesians 1:11-12, “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according

to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be (the ones who do so) to the praise of his glory.” So again, there is an appropriateness in worship where we call upon or remind ourselves of both God’s goodness and his care for his people, that when we gather together, we should celebrate and remind ourselves of all the good that God has done. And certainly, there are challenges that we face, but when we gather, we want to remind ourselves of the goodness of God. And of course, prayer is an absolutely appropriate aspect of worship. Acts 16:25, we find Paul and Silas, they’re in prison. And what are they doing? It says they “were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Prayer is connected with worship. So we need to worship God. We need to describe and ascribe to him, his goodness, his worth, and his truth. We can do this through singing, by calling to attention God’s goodness and providence in our life, and through prayer.

The fourth core function of the mission of the church is the ordinances. Historically, for the evangelical church, we see two key ordinances: one out of Romans 6, one out of 1 Corinthians 11. Those are communion and baptism. I’ll address each one of these separately as we go along. First, let’s deal with communion. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 lay out for us the template of what communion should look like. Here it says, “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” So here we have the template of what we are to do. If you go to a church of any kind under the broad umbrella of Christianity, you have probably practiced communion. And so communion is a conscious moment of reflection on the necessity of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we’re told that we should do it regularly by breaking bread and drinking wine or taking some form of liquid grapes into our body. And so we see this.

Here’s the thing I want us to see before we talk about some of the different ways to view communion: that verse 26, “as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes,” the ordinance of communion is an in-between ordinance. It stands as a reality to remind us of what Christ has done, what he’s accomplished. And so between the time that he departed the earth for heaven and the time that he returns, we’re invited to remember his death and resurrection, his death on our behalf. The process of communion, much like the process of baptism, is connected to Christ’s death and our culpability and our responsibility in that process. And yet it also reminds us of his grace. So let’s take a look at four common views of communion. In essence, what does communion accomplish? What is it? How should we approach it?

The first common view or approach is what we call transubstantiation, the belief that the bread and the wine literally change from bread and wine to the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. This is traditionally a Roman Catholic view. This is why if you’ve ever been to a Roman Catholic Church, it is the priest alone who interacts with the part of communion. He is holding the wafer. He is holding the cup. This is very important. And it’s because this belief, as we look at that passage we just read, is that through prayer, this bread and wine is changing. It is no longer simply the bread and the wine that we see. It has been transformed into the literal, very real flesh and blood of Jesus, so that we consume the flesh and blood of Christ.

The second view is called consubstantiation. This is the belief that the elements are not changed, but that Christ's body and blood are with the elements. So there is a change that's going on, but it's not a literal change. This is typically the Lutheran view. It's an elevated idea of this element that there is still something mystical, something holy that is happening to the elements that are being presented. They are no longer staying. It's just bread and then just wine, or just juice. But they are being, in some way, changed to be related to or to find Christ's body and blood with them.

The third view is the Reformed view, the belief that the spiritual presence of Christ's flesh and blood is present in these elements. This is a Reformed or a Calvinistic view of this. Again, now, nothing is physically happening. Where in the other two, something is happening to those elements, here it is a spiritual change that through the process of communion, the bread and the juice or the wine take upon them a spiritual significance, and that through the process of taking communion, we invite a spiritual presence that would not be there if we were just taking juice and bread and pulling them out of a carton or pouring it out of a Welch's juice cup and putting it into a cup. That is not the same as what we see in communion, according to the Reformed view.

Finally, there is the memorial view. This is held by church historian Zwingli, the belief that nothing is actually happening to the elements, but that what we are celebrating is a memorial, that these elements represent what Christ has done, that they're a visual reminder of what he has done for us, but that there's nothing that is actually going on to the elements. They do in fact stay bread. They do in fact stay juice. And just those things. That is the visual picture. It is the memory that we are celebrating, not necessarily the elements themselves. So we have these four different views of communion, each one of them represented in a variety of churches, but all kind of bringing us back to the idea that when we take communion, what we are reminding ourselves of is the cost that Jesus paid in order to secure our salvation. And we are to do this on a regular basis. So the first ordinance is communion and the second ordinance is baptism.

Now, we take this out of Romans 6. I won't read the total of Romans 6 for you. I'll read some different pieces of it. But let us talk about baptism. Baptism is the outward expression of an inward reality. So baptism, according to Scripture, is really supposed to take place after conversion. Now, in a moment, I'll talk about some alternative forms to baptism and we'll walk through those. But when we look at Scripture, what we really find is an example of post-conversion baptism. So we see in Acts 8:34-38 Philip and the eunuch. Starting in verse 34, "The eunuch said to Philip, 'About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch." And Philip baptized the eunuch.

Post-conversion baptism. There's a confession and there's baptism. Now, why is that? Well, we see in Romans 6:4-5 a real key connection between what baptism represents and the idea that we've been saved by grace. In Romans 6:4-5, we read, "We've been buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his." Baptism really is a representation of what God has done in our life, that our life has been hidden in Christ and we are associated not only with his new life but also

with his death and resurrection. We killed the old man that once ruled in our life. He was put into the ground. And yet we weren't completely laid bare. We weren't completely made dead. We were resurrected to new life. New life in Jesus.

Furthermore, when we look at the word *baptizo*, its primary translation is the word "immerse" or to dunk, to fully immerse. So immersion best pictures death and resurrection. When you think about the concept, especially in a western culture where the body of a diseased person is put into the ground, we see that immersion really is that best picture of what death means, and when we come back up out of the water, what resurrection means. So immersion is the best way to understand this phrase into. We've been baptized into Christ's death. Really being brought into it. So baptism is an outward expression, a visualization of an inward reality. Our old person has been done away with. Behold, we are new in Christ. Our old has been crucified with Christ. Our new has been resurrected with Christ. And so we want to visualize that.

Now, there are two alternative forms of baptism. One, we have the Roman Catholic view. Here, as in the one below it, baptism is done during infancy. But there's a slightly different view of what each one is doing. In the Roman Catholic view, baptism is performed at infancy for all people because it is looked at and believed to be necessary for salvation. In other words, if you remember the order of salvation that we looked at, baptism causes regeneration in the Roman Catholic view. You can take a look at Titus 3:5 to kind of understand one of the verses that they attach this to. There's a few others and their theology is a little bit different. But basically, the Roman Catholic view would say that during infancy, you want to baptize all people because it's necessary for salvation. A Protestant infant baptism is also a reality. This is done during infancy. It's not for all people, but it's for all children of believing parents. And in this, it's a little bit different. It's not necessarily related to salvation, but it's a counterpart to circumcision. It's a sign of belonging to God's community. And so it's very important that children are baptized in order to be identified as being part of God's community. Again, they look at Colossians 2:11-12 for one of their base texts for that. And you can look at that at your own time if you kind of want to be interested in some of the thinking for these alternative forms of baptism. So our fourth core function is the ordinances, that is, communion and baptism.

The fifth core function is making disciples. Super important, obviously. Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, (even) to the end of the age." Really, the first four that we looked at, the core four functions are what the church is to do when they are gathered. This core function and the one following it, numbers five and six, are really what the church are to do when they are scattered. They are to make disciples. They are, in a very real sense, to do two things: Share the gospel message. Romans 10:15, "How can people "preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" In other words, we have to take the message of hope of Jesus to those who don't have it.

Also then, we have to live a distinctly Christian life. James 2 verses there. "What good is it, my brothers," verse 14, "if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? For as the body (this is verse 26) apart from the spirit is dead, so faith is also, when it is apart from works, dead." Now, James is not saying that works saves us. He's saying that works are the fruit, the natural fruit of the life of Christ. If there is no fruit, then we've not truly been resurrected. So we must make disciples. It's a core function of the church. It is the mission of the church to make disciples. And really, the four things

that we've talked about earlier (teaching and worship and fellowship and ordinances), these are all there to build up people and make them disciple makers. This fifth core function is critical. We must go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Finally, core function six, really doing good to all men. Galatians 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." The general Christian charity that is a mark of the church is critical because it is this that accompanies core function five. When we go to make disciples, we need to temper them first with goodness, with charity, with love, with kindness, because as we do this, we begin to tear down the walls that people have of defense, of mistrust for the Christian community. And as people experience Christians being genuinely good, they become more receptive to the message that they share. So six core functions of the church: doing good, making disciples, practicing the ordinances of baptism and communion, fellowshiping, worshiping, and teaching. The truth is the church is to pursue the completion of certain tasks, these six things, in order to make certain that she pursues the completion of her mission.