

# A Ministering Church

by Keith Malcomson

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*This sermon focuses on the Church of Antioch in the book of Acts, highlighting the importance of sacrificial ministry. The church in Antioch demonstrated a Christ-like character, ministered to local sinners, supported suffering saints in Jerusalem, ministered unto the Lord in fasting and prayer, and ultimately sent out Barnabas and Saul for missionary work to unreached Gentile nations.*

**Scripture:** Acts 11:19, Acts 11:27, Acts 13:2, Acts 13:3, Acts 14:26

**Topics:** "Sacrificial Ministry", "Missionary Work"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want you to go to the Word of God here tonight. We're going back to the book of Acts in our series on the Church of Antioch and we've already seen the important truths that we have been drawn out. I believe these are very clearly biblical marks of the church at Antioch and that we can learn great lessons from these attributes of the church.

This is part five and we're going to go a bit further. Last week we dealt with Antioch being a Christ-like church. It was first at Antioch where Christians or disciples were called Christians.

There was something about these believers in Antioch that so marked them out in their individual lives. They weren't hypocrites, they weren't just religious, they weren't game players. When pagans, when idolaters, when people with no faith looked in on them, they said these people are devoted to Jesus.

They might have had a hundred views about their teaching, but one thing they knew, these people, I may not believe what they believe, but they certainly believe it and are utterly, utterly dedicated to it. I'm going to go a step further here tonight. So part five here tonight of the Antioch Church, a ministering church, and I'm going to explain what I mean about that, but let's just read a few verses here.

I'm going to jump to the three chapters here, chapter 11, chapter 12, and chapter 13. I'm going to read just a few verses and what you're going to notice about each of these verses, the church of Antioch is

ministering, ministering in different directions, ministering in different ways. We're going to deal with four distinct ways the church at Antioch ministered, because I'm fully persuaded what most people in today's church call ministry is not what I call ministry and what I believe the Bible shows as ministry.

So much is called ministry by the church that I believe the Bible shows it is faulty, there's something seriously wrong with it, and I pray that we get a right perspective on what it was for Antioch to be a church that really ministered. We're going to see in this message, what is ministry? What does it look like? What does it mean to minister? How do you minister? We're going to see all this in the church at Antioch, reading from Acts chapter 11 from verse 19. Now, they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phinehas and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none, but unto the Jews only.

And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, speak unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And then down to verse 29, then the disciples, every man, according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren, which dwelt in Judea, which also they did and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. And then over to chapter 12, just one verse from chapter 12, reading down chapter 12, verse 25.

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry and took with them John, whose surname was Mark. And then just lastly, chapter 13 here, chapter 13 in verse 2. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work we're unto, I have called them. Let's pray together.

Father, we love you. We thank you God for that ministry of your Holy Spirit to us. We thank you for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for your ministry. Thank you Father, Son and Holy Ghost for that constant ministry. Thank you.

There's no break in it. There's no lapse and there's no lack. We are literally having poured into our lives encouragement and grace and kindness and love from God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

And Lord God, we praise you tonight. Lord God, we don't want to be a selfish people. We don't want to use these blessings for ourselves, but oh God, we want to be a channel, a blessing.

As you love us, we want to love others. As you give grace to us, we want to give grace to others. As you forgive us, we want to forgive others.

Father, I pray that we would literally be an instrument that you can not only pour into, but pour through. And Lord God, that everything would flow through us freely, without hindrance, without obstacles. And Lord God, we pray that we would touch sinners in this city, that we would touch family members, that we would touch those around us, that we would be a blessing, an encouragement, a strength to many others.

And Father, we pray that we'd be a blessing to many Christians, many churches, that you would so pour into this church, that this church may be a blessing to many believers, many churches, many preachers unto the very ends of the earth. And Lord God, we are asking of you that you do a great work in our midst, that from this very place, that we might be a ministering church, that we might minister to many that we haven't laid eyes upon. Help us, O God, to be such instruments that aren't selfish, that aren't self-centered.

Lord God, that we don't keep the blessings for ourselves, but O God, the blessings of God would overflow our cup. And Lord God, touch and change many other lives, that your name might be glorified and sanctified in this dark and evil hour, in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

Part five, a ministering church. As we look at the church at Antioch, we are going to see that this church is uniquely a ministering church. And it's very beginning when there was only a handful of genuine Christians.

The church or the gathering of real Christians at Antioch received outside gifted ministry from the church at Jerusalem. First of all, through the ministry of Barnabas, then the ministry of Saul of Tarsus, then the ministry of Agabus, the prophet. But not only that, there was a ministry from God the Father.

There was a ministry from the person of Jesus Christ. There was a ministry from the Holy Spirit of God. You cannot read this without knowing much was being poured into these early Christians.

These disciples, which were first called Christians, are receiving the grace of God, the forgiveness of God, the mercy of God, the kindness of God, the presence of God. As God forgives them, they're able to go forgive others in that community. I'm sure in that church, there were those who got saved and come in and become Christians who had hatred in their heart, and murder in their heart, and anger in their heart.

I'm sure there were husbands that didn't treat their wife right, and wives that didn't treat their husbands right, and parents that didn't treat their children right. I'm sure all of that was there. And yet when they are touched and changed, they're forgiven by Jesus Christ, by God the Father.

I am fully persuaded they then pass that forgiveness on. All of a sudden, the prostitutes in the temple of the false gods, they come in and find Christ. Now they have morality.

Their life is cleaned up. They're forgiven. They're changed.

They begin to receive not a love that steals from them, and destroys them, and uses them, and then leaves them high with nothing. But when they receive the love of the Lord Jesus Christ through other Christians, they then began to walk in that and give it to others. So I believe these early Christians, they had much ministry, much blessing poured into them.

But the great mark of the Antioch church, they didn't keep it for themselves. They didn't keep it from themselves. If they had have, it would have died.

The love would have died. The forgiveness would have died. The preaching and teaching would have died.

All of this, if they would have tried to just say, it's all for us. We just keep receiving, receiving, receiving. I believe it would have died and become a stagnant pool.

If you ever have a pool that water flows into, but it doesn't flow out of, it becomes a stagnant pool. If you ever find a Christian and they're stale, they're cold, they're weak, they're hard, they're dry. Do you know why? They haven't passed on what God gives them.

God speaks to them. God gives them the word of God. They never pass it on.

I'm telling you, the grace of God comes in. They don't pass it on. Forgiveness is given them.

They don't pass it on. Kindness is given to them. They don't pass it on.

But I want to tell you, the church at Antioch, it blossoms. You're going to see it tonight. They were a church.

They literally were a church. Not only that received, they were a church that gave. More than that, they are a channel of God's blessing, not a stagnant pool.

It doesn't just stop with them. They literally become whatever they get, they give it out to others. Remember I've told you before, if I ever got an audio cassette, you know, you younger ones, you don't know what an audio cassette is.

But if I ever got an audio cassette with a sermon that blessed me, first thing I used to do, I made 10 copies of it and went and give it to 10 other people. It was a principle embedded in me. If I got a book and it blessed me, I went out, bought three other copies if I could manage, and I would give it prayerfully to three other Christians because I knew there's something about receiving the blessing of God.

That's why God always brings me good things. That's why I always send things my way. That's why I get so many good things.

Now I'm struggling to keep passing it all on, but I want to do that. If God blesses me, I want to pass it on quickly. I want others to receive of that blessing.

And so we see here is a church. Now, every church, like a new child, receiving ministry from others must not just stop there. It is important to receive ministries from teachers, from prophets, from evangelists.

But do you know what? It's to bring you to maturity where you start giving back again to the body of Christ. Can you imagine your child? Imagine you're 70, 80 years old, and your 50-year-old child's still taken from you. Here, dad, give us a loan.

Well, I hope none of you are in that situation, but that is what we have in society and our world, a lack of maturity. We'll say there's something fundamentally wrong. If you don't reach a stage where you start giving back, a child that doesn't start giving back into the family, there is something seriously wrong.

You trained that kid wrong. You trained that child to be a taker instead of a giver. You know what a leech is? And there's spiritual leeches in the church.

They suck out the blood. They don't contribute anything. They just, they take.

Same with people in the church. If they only take, there's something wrong. Either they're very young and immature, and they need to grow.

That's fine. But if they're around here for years, and they never contribute, there's something wrong with your spiritual walk. Let me go to these points here, and I'm going to show you how this church is a ministering church.

Point number one, ministry to local sinners. The church at Antioch, as they only began, they didn't have all the order, all the structure, all the leadership. They didn't have that.

But immediately, you see Christians in Antioch scattered. They're not ordered yet. They don't have everything in place.

But as soon as they are in a city, they begin to minister. Listen to what it says in chapter 11, verse 19. Now, they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, traveled as far as Phinehas, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they came to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember what we said, the church of Jerusalem was persecuted. It was a terrible persecution.

Stephen died. He was murdered. And when he was killed, stoned to death, it began a great persecution of the church in the city of Jerusalem.

So, these Christians got scattered everywhere. They traveled 300 miles north and ended up in the city of Antioch. This was the beginning.

So, remember what I said in the very first message. These first Christians in Antioch, they were being persecuted. They had suffered the loss of house, jobs, security, safety, possessions, money, and much else.

They had lost everything. They were a people utterly displaced. They were running for their life.

They had people who wanted to kill them. This is how they arrived in Antioch. You could understand people like that not wanting to give out, just to be receivers.

But I want to tell you, they were in a crisis. They were suffering. They must have had many fears, but it did not stop them being an instrument to give out God's blessing.

What they had received in Jerusalem, when they got to Antioch, they wanted to give it to sinners, people in that city who did not have the gospel. And so, what is the ministry here? Their first ministry in Antioch was ministry to others in greater need than themselves. Here they are persecuted.

They don't have a house. They don't have possessions. They have lost so much.

Who was in greater need in Antioch? You know, the city of Antioch was very prosperous. It was very safe. It was a very tolerant city.

It had mega religion. It had immorality. Sex was everywhere.

This was a contemporary city. So, who was in greater need than these persecuted, suffering Christians? Do you know who it was? The sinners in Antioch. Do you know these Christians, when they arrived, they're not thinking about themselves saying, I'm being persecuted.

Do you know what I've lost? Do you realize what I've endured? For 300 miles, I've had to come up these roads. I'm here as an immigrant. I'm fleeing for my life.

Oh no, as soon as they get to the city with all of its richness and its splendor and its affluence, it's got everything. Everyone's laughing and happy in the streets. People are getting drunk.

People are filled with leisure and fun and entertainment. Do you know what? As soon as they arrived there, they went, these people around us, they don't realize that, but they're in greater need than us. We're being persecuted.

We're suffering for our faith. We're real Christians. We've lost everything.

We need to rebuild our lives again. But their first priority wasn't finding a job or finding a house or rebuilding their lives or their kids' education. Their first priority was to say, there are sinners all across the city.

This entire city doesn't know the gospel. And in fact, they knew this city is in a worse condition than us. We're suffering for the faith.

We're running for our lives. But I want to tell you, a sinner who doesn't know Jesus Christ is in a far worse way than the worst Christian in the worst trials in the fiery furnace. Look at these Christians here, their perspective, their vision.

Look at how they thought about life. They're thinking of others, not themselves. Me, me, me.

Do you know when you find a Christian and it's all me, me, me. Look at my problems. Look at my needs.

Why not in your greatest trial, when your heart's bleeding, begin to minister to others. Show me someone who in their darkest hour will minister to someone else. I'll show you someone who'll get lifted up out of their trial.

Show me someone who's stuck in a pit is someone who never ministers to other people. You don't realize how hard it is. You don't understand what I'm going through.

You don't realize the trials I have per you. Grow up. You know what? Either you're very immature or you don't understand this gospel.

But I want to tell you, see when a Christian realizes, I will minister to others. You'll find you'll be lifted up out of your pit, your trial, your suffering. You know your problem, you're too self-centered.

You know your problem, you're too proud. You know your problem, it's all me, me, me, me. I can't do this.

I can't do that. My mind is this. My heart is this.

My life is this. Nothing is changing. You know what you need a good dose of? Go out and minister to sinners who are on their way to hell.

See in this city, they're throwing themselves in this river to commit suicide. There are young people blowing their brains on drugs. There's terrible things happen in this city.

There's people who are in torment of hell. They're going through, there's ladies, mature ladies. I sat at a table in this city as a woman self-harmed herself in front of me.

I won't tell you all the details of that. Don't tell me there's not great trouble in this city. If you're locked into your little world, you need a real wake up.

I want to tell you that's what this Antioch Christians were like. You see they had a ministry to local sinners. The first thing when they get to this great city, they knew we've got to give them the gospel.

This city does not have the gospel. This city does not have a church. This city does not have unconditional love.

This city does not know the power of forgiveness. This city does not know the kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you know what? That's our greatest task.

What are you living for here tonight? I believe this is our greatest ministry is to those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. And so what did they do here in these verses? It says they began to preach Jesus. That's true ministry.

Do you realize giving Jesus to others is the greatest ministry you can do? You tell them about Jesus. You tell them about what Jesus has done in your life. What you receive.

I look around this room. There's people sitting here two years ago. You didn't believe in Jesus Christ.

You didn't believe in this gospel and yet he has transformed your life. He changed you. Those people here didn't believe in a God in heaven.

They believed in evolution. They loved their drugs. They loved their sin.

Nobody could have convinced them you ought to live holy. They would have laughed. You would have laughed in my face at a point in time.

If I tried to talk to you in the street you would have laughed at me as I walked on down the street. You would have said never heard anything more ridiculous. And yet here you are.

Now you have received Christ. Now your eyes are open. And you know what? If God's grace is on your life you want to give him away to everyone else.

You know Jason can't stop talking to people in this city about Jesus. There he is. The devil almost destroyed his life.

Left in that prison. Destroyed drugs, crime, hatred, everything. You know what happens? The grace of God comes.

And now I've got to tell somebody. There was a song. Got to tell somebody.

Got to tell somebody. You know what happens when the grace of God comes? You've got to pass it on. You see real ministry breaks through.

It breaks through your situation. You know what else it breaks through? Church tradition. You remember on this instance those that were scattered didn't preach Jesus until they got to Antioch.

300 miles. Church tradition. Keep it within the Jews.

Evangelize the Jews. Don't go out there. Don't go evangelize the Muslim down the road.

You'll be quicker to go to an Irish white person than to evangelize the little lady with her headscarf from the Middle East. I want to tell you we're going to have to evangelize. They need the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They're not okay. They're not okay. They need it.

And so real ministry from the heart from God breaks through church tradition or cultural traditions. When you care about people, when you know that their need is very great and your heart is filled with love, you want to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ. He changed your life.

How can I keep silent? When I know what Jesus has done in my life, how could I keep silent? You know someone says, why do you want to talk about Jesus? Like I said, this young couple, do you know it must be unbearable anyone being around them. They'll want to talk. Ethan will want to talk about Jonah.

I said it last week. Jonah will want to talk about Ethan. If I was working with them, I'd be going, they're doing my head in.

I don't know what they're like in those situations. But I'm telling you, it's the same with this Jesus. I love him.

He changed my life. He loved me when there wasn't anything lovely about me. He put my life back together again.

Keep quiet about him. Are you kidding? I'll keep quiet about religion. I'll keep quiet about my hobby.

But not the Lord Jesus Christ. He changes your entire life. You see, Barnabas saw that this people did not just keep, when he came, it says he saw the grace of God upon them.

You know what the grace of God is? It's the ability of God. The influence of heaven. He'd come and he went, man, these persecuted Christians, they're just going everywhere.

They're stirring up the entire city. Thousands are coming to Jesus. These persecuted Christians are not selfish.

They're not caught up in their own problems. You know what? They're going, gotta tell somebody. They've gotta evangelize.

Gotta share about the love of God. God loves you. Jesus died for you.

He'll forgive you. He'll change your entire life. It's so, so real.

And so when Barnabas came and saw the grace of God, he went to look for Saul. Saul's a Bible teacher. Saul's got a lot to say.

And you know what? I know this people won't waste it. Why not go get Saul? Bring him here. Let's begin to teach for a year.

Do you know why? People like this are not going to waste the teaching of God. It's not going in one ear and out the other. They're not sitting here for an hour on a Wednesday night and they'll wake up tomorrow and act as if they've totally forgotten.

I'll come back for another lesson next week. Thank you, preacher. I'll come back and listen to you Sunday.

Come back and listen next Wednesday. Oh no. You know what Barnabas said? This is falling on good ground.

I need to go get this Bible teacher and we're going to pour into these Christians, these disciples. Remember what it says in Romans chapter 1, Saul, Paul writing Romans chapter 1, 14. Listen to what he says.

I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. In other words, he's a debtor to everyone, no matter what their situation was. So as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at room also.

Do you know what the word debtor means? You owe somebody something. It means an outstanding debt that you have not yet paid, something you need to pay back, a responsibility that moves you to action. That's what a debt is.

Paul the apostle is saying, I am a debtor to all men, all men, barbarians, Greeks, Romans, every sinner, every person who doesn't know Jesus. I feel indebted to them. Can you imagine that being a Christian and you feel you have a debt that you need to pay to everyone who doesn't know Jesus, really know him.

You feel an obligation. You feel like you owe them something. They don't know this.

They don't know what you know. They haven't experienced the love that you've experienced, the power of forgiveness, the power of God changing your entire life, but you're not the same person. Your mind has changed.

Your heart has changed. Your life has changed. Your marriage has changed.

Your work has changed. How can I keep that to myself? I've got to share this. And so that's what these believers at Antioch, there was a church arising that as soon as it began to function, we don't even have elders in place.

We don't even have a regular weekly meeting in place, but we are given the gospel. We have a sense of obligation. It says in 2 Corinthians 4 and 3, if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

Your gospel be hid. You know the gospel. You have the gospel, but you don't share the gospel.

You know what he says? And whom the God of this world, that is Satan, the devil, has blinded the minds of them which do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine onto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. You know what Paul is saying here? He says we cannot hide the gospel.

We are servants of God. It's not about us, not about you, not about all of us together. It's about the real Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the first point about ministry. Ministry to local sinners in the city of Antioch. They felt they had an obligation.

More than that, you could be obliged but not enjoy it. You could feel obliged to do something, but it's not a passion. Oh, it was far deeper.

They loved this. They desired this. They were compelled to.

They couldn't help themselves, but tell men about Jesus. Number two, ministry to poor saints in Jerusalem. Look at chapter 11, verse 27.

And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth or a great famine throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. This is the first mention, and I'm going to mention three first mentions here.

In this chapter, you have firsts, three firsts. The first thing is, here is the first mention of prophets in the church, the New Testament church. These prophets are not the same as Old Testament prophets.

New Testament prophets were only given to the church after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, not before it. Prophets in the church are only after His resurrection from the dead. So, there's the first mention of a group of prophets coming to Antioch and beginning to minister at Antioch.

They're in ministry. They're called prophets. They have a ministry that's called that of prophets, or to speak forth what God gives them to speak.

Now, there's the first mention. It's definitely not the last. There's the beginning of prophetic ministry in the church.

Some people say it finished in the first century. No, it began in the first century. Here you have prophets, prophetic ministry beginning in the church.

Those who say it came to an end in the first century do not know their Bible. This is only beginning. Notice what happens.

A man called Agabus stands up and signifies by the Spirit that there's going to be a dearth, a great dearth. Now, what is this great dearth? It means a great famine. It means great hunger or great scarcity.

It doesn't say a small famine. It says a great famine was going to come. He gives them a clear prediction or prophecy.

He says, it's going to be so great, it's going to be through the entire world. That means the entire Roman empire. The entire empire is going to suffer a great famine.

So, what is a prophet? Here is Agabus. He makes a prediction of a future event that's not here yet that nobody could know. He is in the church at Antioch.

He's from Jerusalem, given a prophecy to them. Remember what I said, ministry to saints in Jerusalem or in other churches. Here he is.

He stands up and by the Spirit of God, he reveals a great famine is about to come. The emperor doesn't know. Caesar doesn't know.

Governors don't know. But this man knows and it's being revealed to this church. Why do you think God reveals things in the church if he doesn't want action? God does nothing without a purpose.

So, if he works in the church and begins revealing things, you know what was revealed here. See right here in this church in October 2020. You know that I stood in this church and I told you COVID's going to continue for at least two years.

It will not stop before two years. Others are saying it'll be over by the end of the year. Everything's going to open up.

I told you it's going to be over two years. Now, why is that revealed to a church like this? So you can act on it. So you can function in the midst of it.

Don't tell me every church knew that. Every church did not in this entire nation. I don't know one other church where the preacher stood and said that publicly in the entire island.

You know what? I'm telling you God actually moves in a church. He reveals things. He opens things up.

It says it came to pass. This thing actually happened. So he makes a prediction.

That means it hadn't happened yet. But Luke who later writes about it says, but it did come to pass. It did happen.

This prophet warns them about a coming famine. Then he can say, you know what these prophets, they were accurate. Agabus' word was accurate.

You can test it. You can judge it. You know, it says in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 verse 21, let the prophet speak two or three and let the other judge.

You're meant to judge prophecies within the local church. A prophecy should never be given here unless it's judged. It ought to be judged.

Do you see how Agabus didn't come here by himself? There was a group of prophets. Do you know why it was a group? They're all judging the word. They're all testing it.

There's going to be a worldwide famine. There's going to be a famine across the entire empire. It's not here yet.

You know what? They're all going to test it. Is this God? Is it not? See real prophecy. It's impossible to know this information unless it's actually God.

Now look at this. He gives a revelation. There's going to be this famine, but he doesn't tell them what to do.

There's no prophecy to say you need to do something. So what does the church at Antioch do? It responds. If you really believe God speaking, you better respond.

God doesn't just reveal things. The church here didn't sit down and begin discussing prophecy or diagnosing it or saying, do you know that God told us this? That's very dangerous ground. If God reveals something supernatural, there's a reason and it means you need to act on it.

You need to do something with it. If you simply sit around and have Bible studies and talk about and go, aren't we great, the Holy Spirit's here and he reveals things. You are going in the wrong direction.

So what did the church at Antioch do? There was no prophecy to tell them what to do or how to respond, but the church did respond. It acted immediately. It made decisions and when it made that decision, it sent Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem to fulfill their obligation.

So what happened here? You see these Christians knew a famine is coming. What's just happened in Jerusalem right now? Remember how this church started back in chapter eight? It was a great persecution. Stephen gets stoned.

The church gets scattered. Saul of Tarsus gets converted. The man attacking the church in Jerusalem gets born again and then it all becomes peaceful.

All the persecution stops and it was peaceful in Jerusalem straight through until chapter 11 where we're reading from. Do you know what had just happened here? Do you know what was going on in Jerusalem? King Herod, actually in chapter 11, beheads James. Sorry, in chapter 12, he beheads James.

Then he puts Peter in prison and he's going to kill Peter as well. Real persecutions going on in Jerusalem. Do you realize that these Christians in Antioch know the condition of things? All the Christians in Jerusalem are under terrible persecution.

They're being chased out of their homes. They're being thrown in prison. Now we're hearing a prophecy saying there's going to come a terrible famine where you won't be able to buy bread or the price of bread is going to go through the roof.

Scarcity is going to dominate the city of Jerusalem. It's going to affect the church. So they're thinking they're using their brain.

Persecution has just happened. Famine is just coming. You know what they do? They move to action.

We're not under persecution. We're not suffering for the faith. We've got freedom here for our Christianity, but Jerusalem doesn't.

Terrible persecution and we remember what that's like. That's where we began our journey. We were once there.

That happened to us. That's why we're actually here. This is how the church raised up.

So they immediately went, we want to help them. You see, there's a great dearth that comes here throughout the whole world and if you knew your history book, it was in the Roman Empire under the reign of Claudius. It says under the reign of Claudius it's going to happen.

And he actually reigned from AD 41 to 54. During his reign there were four famines that affected Rome, Egypt, Greece and Judea where Jerusalem is. But this specific one was the worst.

It began in AD 44. One year after the church begins in Antioch. One year and it lasts for a period of four years until 48 AD.

It was a massive thing. Do you know what happened? Herod dies. He gets smitten by an angel.

An angel comes down because of his pride and allowing worship to go to him. Two years later the famine starts. That's where this church acts.

This church ministers to a persecuted church. You know what they've done? They took in a great gathering of money. It says, look verse 28.

Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea. The disciples, not the leaders, not Saul, not Barnabas. The entire church made a decision.

They've heard the prophecy. A prophet has spoken. Things are being revealed.

What's just about to happen? They're hearing of the persecution. All of their hearts are moved. All of them act together.

Every man makes a decision. Remember what I said last week about a Christ-like church? This is a Christ-like church. It's practical.

Oh, we're spiritual, but you don't have eyes to see the needs of others, the problem, the suffering. You're not spiritual at all. If your Christianity isn't practical, then you're not spiritual.

The most spiritual people have their feet on the ground. Those that are away with the fairies are very unpractical. You know that sort of spiritual person? The Lord said they're getting carried along, emotional experiences, but they're not practical.

Your Christianity is worthless. It can't make you live as a husband or a wife, raise your kids to function in your job. No testimony.

You know what? Your Christianity is worth nothing. It says, then the disciples, every man according to his ability. You know what ability is? It means according to your means.

It's not what you don't have. Oh, I would give this if I could. I'll give this.

Lord, you bless me. No, give what you have. Oh, but it's not much.

I don't care. So all of them made their own decision. Do you see what I'm saying? It's a ministering church.

First, it gives the gospel. No, it's given of its resources. They're suffering.

They're not going to have food to eat. We're acting before the famine comes. The famine hasn't come yet.

And they're gathering. They're storing up. They're determining.

The word determine means to set aside, to set apart according to their ability. They make a decision. They're active.

You know what? If there are gifts in operation in the church, you better be responding. And it says that they sent the relief to Jerusalem. The word relief is the word diakonia.

Remember, it's the word for deacon. It means to help, to service, ministry, or to act like a servant. The entire church, every disciple according.

You know what they're doing now? This church in Antioch is ministering to another church. This Gentile church, this church saved out of paganism, is now ministering to the mother church. They're gathering money, it says, and to send it on to the brethren.

Don't say they sent it to the poor in Jerusalem. You know, John Hagee, the big preacher in America, some years ago, he had a ministry and he put a book out, raising all this money right across America to send to Jews in Israel. And he had a whole ministry preaching on it, putting his books, putting out his programs, saying, we need to send all this Christian money to Jews in Jerusalem.

I went, that's false. That's wrong. So I went on and looked at his book online.

I opened up the very first beginning of the book and he quoted a scripture from Romans and it said about the poor, that they sent money to the poor from Romans. Do you know what it had? It said poor, dot, dot, dot. So I looked up the scripture, it said poor saints.

He removed the word saints because he wanted to send millions. They've sent millions, millions to secular Jews. You know what? He had to remove the word saints.

He used the scripture, removed the word saints. It doesn't say that they sent the money to sinners in Jerusalem. It didn't just say they sent all the money to Herod.

Can you imagine all these Christians turn up at Herod's palace? We're here to help your city. We are here with a social program. I know you're persecuting the but do you see how much we care about your city? Here's all of our money.

Why don't you use it? Now you're going to think really good. They never done that. This church in Antioch, it wouldn't have ministered to the poor saints.

It had a relationship. It knew who they were. Don't send your money to India to someone you don't know, especially an orphanage in India.

I want to tell you, I've had thousands of emails from people send me photographs. Soon as I get photographs of an orphanage, delete 100% of the time. I'm sorry to say that, but you know what? You better get in a plane and fly there.

Don't send your money there. You go there and here. We know missionaries on the ground.

You know what they used to do? They'd rent out this building, rent the kids. They'd wait for the American missionary to come and then the British missionary and they had them all there. And then they put it all back and they built themselves houses.

You know, being a Christian, you're not stupid. You don't set aside your head and say, oh, I move with love and I move with compassion. You use this brain.

And so look at them. They gather, they want to minister to this other church back in Jerusalem, 300 miles away. What do they do? They send their most trusted leaders.

Barnabas, Saul, here's the money in your hands. Send it to the Christians. And it says when they went there, they put it in the hands of the elders.

You know, that's the first time elders are mentioned in the church of Jerusalem. So another first, you've got another first. Where did they put the money? In the hands of trusted elders who have character, who know how to use the money, who will use it wisely and carefully in a very sensible way.

It's also the first time we read in the book of Acts where money is raised for other churches. Here you have it. Paul deals with this again later in Romans 15, 1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians chapter 8 and 9. This is something that the Gentile church has said.

You know what this done? This brought unity. You know, the church of Jerusalem says, we're not sure if we should give you the gospel. We're not sure if we should be preaching to you.

We're not sure how right it is for you to come in without keeping Jewish law. Do you know what the Gentile church has done? They were sending their money saying, we love you. We care about you.

You may be hindered by traditions towards us, but we care about you. You know what this done? This unified them all. This made them one in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It revealed love. Imagine if they'd said, you wouldn't give us the gospel. You aren't getting our money.

You didn't give us the gospel. We're not going to minister to you in our hour of need. But this is the second great thing.

Antioch, the church at Antioch ministered to the needs of other churches. It was there to serve, to send money, to help them in a great crisis. And God prepared them.

It says they sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. In chapter 12, verse 25, it says, and Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem. Do you say that word Jerusalem there? I'm throwing this in.

Most of you won't even know what I'm saying, but maybe there's just someone online or maybe someone here who needs to hear it. It's a very strange thing. Look at this chapter 12, verse 25.

Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem. Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, two documents I consider corrupt that underline new versions of the Bible. Do you know what they have here? They say, to Jerusalem.

So all the people who produced the NIV and the new versions, they say, oh, well, it's obviously wrong. So we don't put that. It means from Jerusalem.

I'm not sure if any of you are catching this, but if you do understand what I'm saying, this proves how hypocritical they are. I would rather stick with reliable, the majority text. It clearly says there in that verse, and Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry and they took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

So they fulfilled the ministry. This is ministry. Do you hear me? The ministry of giving the gospel to sinners in Antioch.

Now you have this ministry of helping a church in need. Third of all, ministry to the Lord. Look with me at chapter 13, verse 2. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, this is indeed the highest form of ministry that we're going to deal with here tonight.

But without ministry to sinners and to other Christians, your ministry to the Lord could be filled with hypocrisy. If you actually don't minister to others, think of others. If you don't minister to the lost, don't tell me you're ministering to God.

You could say, oh, I'm all caught up in God. I walk with God. I hear from God.

Why don't you minister to others? Why are you so self-centered? Why are you so selfish? You know, a selfish person is a terrible thing. They are a leech. They're a taker.

They're all thinking, what can I get out of this? It's a terrible plague. When you get a selfish person, they'll destroy a home. They'll destroy everything they have.

They want to take it for themselves. But someone who's re-being touched by God, they want to give. They want to give to sinners.

They want to give to other Christians. They want to give to their family. They want to give to their husband or their wife, whoever it is.

They want to have a life that's laid down. It's a beautiful thing. And so here, you see the highest ministry.

Yes, they ministered to sinners. Yes, they ministered to other Christians. But their greatest ministry was unto God.

But this shows its authentic nature. It was real. They are a ministering church.

They do it to sinners. They do it to saints. Now they're doing it to the Lord.

But without ministry to other believers and sinners, such spiritual ministry is revealed as utterly counterfeit, empty, and it's a mere mirage. Do you see how it says they ministered? Some people think it means the five leaders mentioned in verse one. I don't believe that, though I wouldn't argue with anyone over it.

It's not a big issue. I believe it means the church. Look at verse one.

Now there were in the church, then it mentions the five leaders. Again in verse three, and when they, I believe they is talking about the church that contains the five leaders. It's not saying they ministered unto the Lord.

The five leaders, I believe it means the entire church was ministering unto the Lord. What does this word ministry to the Lord mean? How do you minister to the Lord? What does this word mean? It's the word letter geo. It means to be a public servant or to have a public gathering.

Listen to what it means. This word minister to the Lord is the Greek word that means at your own cost, not getting money so you can minister to the Lord, not gaining something so you can minister to the Lord. It means drawn on your own resources, seeking no payment.

What do you do in ministry? You're not looking for a reward. There's no wage. There's no comeback.

There's no personal benefit you're looking for. The people doing this publicly together weren't a give me people. They were ministering to God, not so God would bless them or answer their prayers or give them something.

They weren't asking for anything. They weren't saying, I want this and I want that, and I want you to do this. They were not like that.

This word means you minister to someone without desiring anything back from them. This is a beautiful, deep picture of genuine, real ministry. You see, it costs you to really minister to God.

You see, anyone can pray or worship and say, no, feed me Lord. You know, there was someone sat down in the church once. In fact, there was a few people and they said about tithing and given to God and they said, we write in a bit of paper down what God needs to give us every time we give something.

And I'm saying, you do what? They were doing it in this church. I said, you do what? I said, please stop that. You're going to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

I says, I never in my entire life, give one penny to God or done anything to God to get anything back from him. He promises to get, he promises to answer prayers. There is so many blessings in this, but I don't give a penny to get anything back.

Oh, yes. He promises that if you give, you will get, he'll care for you. He really will.

He really will. But I've never given him one penny to get anything. Thank God they told me, I said, stop it, stop it.

You're going to ruin the blessing of this place. Notice as well. What, what is this ministry that they're actually doing here? This ministry is not preaching.

It's not doing, it's not going, it's not given. It's not money isn't involved here. No money.

They're ministering onto God in a public gathering, the entire church. Do you know what it says that they were ministering? It was the, it was Ergon. It was work, active ministry.

They're not doing all those things. They're in a meeting ministering directly to God, not looking, not asking for anything, but it's an activity. It is ministry.

It is energy. It is personal service to God. Notice as well, it says they ministered to the Lord and fasted.

This means prayer was involved. Prayer always goes with fasting or fasting always goes with prayer. So here they have a special meeting at Antioch.

They didn't gather to pray for a special need and breakthrough. They're not praying for revival. They're not praying for missions.

They're not praying for their personal needs. They're not praying for the persecuted church. They're not doing anything.

This is a meeting only to minister to the Lord. Do you know how many times in the church worldwide in my entire lifetime that I've found a church that only calls meetings or has a meeting that is only for ministering to the Lord? Almost never in my entire life. It's a lost concept.

Saints, we need it in this church. We need actual meetings where we don't ask for anything. We are going to do it in this church.

We are going to have gatherings where we only minister to the Lord. We're only focused on Him. There's nothing in it.

We are literally using all of our own resources to minister unto Him. And so we see that they fasted. They set aside their food to minister unto God.

I'm putting aside my plate. I'm putting aside my food. I'm going to stop eating because I want to minister unto God.

Why do you fast? Do you fast to get something? Do you think fasting is an emergency thing to twist God's arm? You're so wrong. You know what? Fasting can be a pure ministry unto the Lord Jesus Christ. It reveals something about your heart.

This word ministry used here is the word liturgio. It's where we get the word liturgy. Do you know denominational church? They have liturgy.

It means we do this. We say these prayers. We do this then.

We bow. We stand. We say these prescribed prayers.

That's liturgy. What a load of trash and rubbish. This is where they get the word.

Get rid of the liturgy. Liturgy isn't in the Bible. Ministry and worship is in the Bible.

I minister unto the Lord. Imagine reading a prayer and up, down, up, down, up, down, bend your knee. Gotta do this.

Gotta say that. And we do our nice little service. Say that's liturgy.

Do you know what? It's not biblical. It's not biblical. You get together and you begin to minister unto the God and love him and worship him and say I love you.

If you never answer a prayer, I love you and I'll serve you all my days. This is quality ministry. Do you know what happened as they're in this meeting? Right in the middle of this meeting.

Listen carefully what happened. In chapter two verse three. As they ministered unto the Lord.

In other words something's gonna happen. As they ministered and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, God speaks like he did through Barnabas in warning about the famine. Right in this ministry, we're here.

We have no plans. We have no agenda. We're not telling you what to do.

We're just ministering unto you. You know what God begins to do? Reveal his plans to speak to them very, very accurately. The Holy Ghost said separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work we're unto.

I have called them. You know what God does? The Holy Ghost speaks in their midst. This is a response from God.

You're just ministering to God. Do you know what God does? God responds. You're going there.

You're not telling them what to do. You're not inventing ideas about ministry. We could do this for the Lord.

We could do this ministry. I'm gonna be caught up in social activity. We could feed the poor.

Why don't we do this? Why don't we do that? How about they didn't do that? You know what? They're just ministering to the Lord and right in the midst of it, he says, you know what? I'm gonna do this. He gives them a command, not information, not a suggestion. He says, see Barnabas and Saul, separate them from my ministry.

I've got a ministry. You separate them and a further call comes to this church to sacrifice, to give. Do you know some, they always say, ask a busy man to help you with the job.

Don't ask a lay about who's very gifted. Find the busiest man or woman you can. Do you know people are always, they say, oh I didn't want to bother you.

You're very busy. Don't you realize you better ask a busy person. Don't ask someone who's not doing anything.

Jimmy Jones just hanging around doing nothing. Be very careful. Do you know why? If I'm gonna ask something of someone, if I'm gonna ask sacrificial ministry, they better be already ministering.

If you're not already selflessly ministering to others, other Christians, sinners, or to God, if you're not selflessly pouring out, I'm not gonna give you more things to do. I will not do that. Look what God does.

Here's a church ministering to him, giving freely to him, worshiping him, loving him, just gathering to be in his presence, fasting to minister on this heart. You know what he says? I've got more sacrificial ministry. You're the very church I've been looking for because you're gonna pour yourself out.

I proved it with the sinners in Antioch. I proved it with the saints in Jerusalem. And now you've just proved it by ministering unto me, making me all the focus.

Well, I'm gonna call you to deeper sacrifice. Here's my fourth and final point I'm gonna finish with. Ministry to the unreached Gentile nations as they ministered to the Lord and fasted.

The Spirit says, separate me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed again and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Look here how God's will is revealed.

His previous will, his plans opened up. God says, I can trust you as a church. I can tell you what I'm gonna do.

Do you realize this was the beginning of worldwide ministry, church planting, apostolic ministry of churches sending out apostles to evangelize entire nations? We are the end result of that 2,000 years later. But it all began in this gathering where they're selflessly ministering unto God. Now God calls them to deeper ministry.

He gives them a command. Separate Barnabas and Saul. They've been preachers in your midst.

You're ministering unto me. Now I'm gonna ask for a greater sacrifice. You see, ministry that leads to others, to sinners, flows out of the ministry to God.

Fasting and prayer again. Now look at this. It wasn't their decision, their planning.

They didn't discuss this. It wasn't their timing or desire to initiate ministry or apostolic ministry to the nations. It was God's initiative.

They gave their best, their most mature and gifted leaders. Look at the sacrifice. What are they gonna give now? We're gonna give our two most gifted men in the church, our two most mature men, the two that were here first, the two that have poured most into the church, the two that we need most, the two that we rely upon most, the two that do most around here.

Do you know what God says? I want them. Do you know why He asked for that? Because that church would release them. He's not asking the men.

He's asking the church. He's asking the brothers and the sisters. Give me your two greatest preachers.

Give me them. You're finished with them. I know I can trust you.

This is gonna hurt you. It's a sacrifice. It means you lose out.

They're not gonna be in the pulpit every week. Now some of yous are getting worried where I'm going to here. They go, Malcolmson, you ain't going anywhere.

Are we ready for that ministry meeting unto the Lord? We're calling it next week. I wanna tell you. So here they are.

It's not their decision. And look, it says, then they not only separate them. We're gonna come back to this in another week.

They not only separated them at the command of God, it says they sent them away. That term means they released them. They set them free from the local responsibilities, from local burdens, local responsibilities, local work, and sent, laid their hands on them, fasted and prayed again, and then sent them away to do the work of the ministry.

This is my last verse I'm giving you. Chapter 14, 26. And since they sailed to Antioch.

This is a year and a half later. They sailed back to Antioch from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled. And so the first of three great missionary journeys where they're gonna return back to Antioch.

This is my fourth and last point. Ministry to the unreached Gentile nations. You know what this church done? It sacrificed Barnabas and sacrificed Saul.

And what a sacrifice. See, as soon as they get sent out, they become apostles. See, if you sacrifice to God, whatever you sacrifice as a church, God will enlarge it.

God will bless it. While they're in the church, Barnabas is a prophet. While they're in the church, Saul's a teacher.

As soon as they release them, let them go, release them to the call of God. These two men become apostles who are going to raise up churches. Do you realize as a result of this, the church at Ephesus is birthed? The church at Corinth is birthed.

Hundreds of other churches begin to rise up in many different nations, all because there was a church that ministered. And so I leave it with you. They ministered to local sinners.

They ministered to the suffering saints in Jerusalem. They ministered unto God. And last of all, they ministered unto entire nations by starting a missionary movement.

Saints, you know what was at the heart of this church? Antioch was not only an evangelistic church. It was not only a Christ-like church. It was a ministering church.

Everything it done, whatever it got, it wanted to give. Well, we've had Barnabas preach for a year. We've had Saul teach us for an entire year.

You know what? We're going to sacrifice him. Imagine if you wasted that. See if you wasted Candace's ministry here in worship with the kids and teaching the ladies the text.

So many of you have got text after text, WhatsApp message after WhatsApp message, phone call after phone call. She's gone now. Her ministry is fulfilled, utterly fulfilled.

What did you do with that? Did you waste it? Did you take it for granted? Did you do anything with it? Have you still done anything with it? The words of wisdom, the encouragement, the advice, the prayers. You know what? Her ministry is fulfilled. Our ministry continues.

And can I exhort you tonight that we as a church, LCC, are to be a ministering church. We have a remarkable example. And we're yet in this going to see the fulfillment of what happens when you get a church, a sacrificial church, a ministering church, a church that's not self-centered, a church that doesn't keep the blessings for itself.

Let's pray together. Lord God, Father, we thank you for the word of God, these encouragements. I pray that right now in this meeting, you touch every single heart in this room.

Lord God, everyone online that's listening to me now. Lord God, I pray lay your hand upon them. Turn their hearts inside out.

Lord God, right way up that we have become a selfless people. That the ministry we have received, the forgiveness, the love, the teaching of the word of God, the kindness, the fellowship, the communion of saints, that all of this, we are going to pour it back out. Lord God, that we wouldn't hold on to it lest it become worms in our hand instead of living bread in our hand.

Lord God, I pray make us a given people. Make us a vessel that simply whatever we receive, we give it back to the church. Give it back to the world.

That we are debtors to every sinner in this city to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ. My God, teach us as a church how to minister to you. Lord God, I pray without desiring something back, without reward, without desiring an answered prayer, that we have times where we just love you and worship you and fast before you and give on to you and offer ourself.

Lord God, as a church, as the years go by, that we would be willing to release, that we would sacrifice in this church, that we would let go of those that need to be let go of. Lord God, I pray that this church would have a worldwide impact on other lives. And Father, we pray for the anointing of God, that you do more than we could possibly imagine.

And we can believe that because it's not our plan. We're not telling you what to do. We're not planning or strategizing.

We're not engineering. We're not laying out a strategy to evangelize the world. But oh God, we're ministering to you.

You're our focus because you died for us and you bled for us and you forgave us. And my God, we offer ourself as a church even tonight. Lord God, all those that listen to my voice, we give ourselves to you.

And Lord God, we ask that our lives would be a living sacrifice, that we wouldn't tell you what to do with our lives. But oh God, we'd offer to you and say, do your will, perform your plan and your purpose, that your name, your son would be glorified in all of the earth. In Jesus' mighty name.

Amen.

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