

Pastor's Paragraphs March 2016

In my last paragraphs I drew the parallel of the growth of Jesus as a boy, to the growth of the church - which is "the body (Luke 2:52) of Christ." Luke 2:52 says "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*" We looked at the parallels to the early church in Acts 2:41-47 Luke says Jesus grew intellectually, physically, spiritually and socially. When we have children, we hope that they will grow in all of those ways. As a matter of fact we expect it and if that doesn't happen something is wrong. When that is the case, we take corrective measures. Growth is natural but it can be hindered. Acts is the record of the growth of the early church and the theme and key word in the book is "unhinderedly" -Acts 28:31. It's a record of all the things that attempted to "hinder" the church and how God overcame them. We know that Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that he would build his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it and He has never ceased to do that. Enough time has passed since he said that however to know that He has had to employ corrective measurers often and sometimes His Body the Church has responded and continued to grow. At other times and I would say in a general sense the body of Christ has not responded to corrective measurers and is idle at best. Like any body the church is dynamic and is always gaining or losing according to it's level of health and statistically right now would not be considered gaining. Now we know that there are local churches that are healthy by comparison to other local churches but as a whole it doesn't look good. We face the same hindrances as the early church and we have the same ability to depend on Gods Holy Spirit to help us with those hindrances but it seems we have a tenancy to depend on other things instead. Understanding how the Body of Christ works is vital to church health. We must measure health by "wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man. It may sound oversimplified but we exist to 1) Glorify God, and we do that best when we 2) Love God and our neighbor, Matthew 22:37-40 - that is called the great commandment, and 3) we do that by keeping the Great Commission, ...**18** *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** 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, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:18-20

This should characterize all we do! There will always be hindrances and Gods Holy Spirit is always with us to help us be unhindered. He is our first resource and the very breath of this body. We need Him more than air. Breathe deep precious Body of Christ!!

Pastor Mark