

# Ger-08 What Is an Apostolic Church

by Art Katz

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*An apostolic church is a church that is eschatologically minded, living with the consciousness of the end being near, and recognizing the world as evil and in disjuncture with it.*

**Duration:** 1:15:46

**Scripture:** Exodus 6:6

**Topics:** "German"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker describes a powerful spiritual experience where a community of believers overcame darkness and experienced victory after years of investment and struggle. The speaker emphasizes the importance of a church that goes beyond surface-level fellowship and programs, and instead seeks to encounter the spirit realities of God. They challenge the audience to consider the extent of their intention with God and to be willing to endure inconvenience and suffering for the sake of experiencing the fullness of the body of Christ. The speaker concludes by urging the listeners to recognize the alternative to a shallow faith and to embrace God's intention for glory in his house.

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## Transcript

Well, let me begin with an apology tonight. I am distinctly not in the mood. I wish I had some other alternative than speaking.

And where has the day gone? Not even an opportunity really to pray. I'm embarrassed before the Lord. The day has just been completely eaten up with interviews and visits and going to the Jewish Museum in Fürth and so on.

Of course, we Jewish prophetic men love to read something significant into everything. So the only thing I can think to justify my condition tonight is that it's a picture of what your condition will be when you will be required to be ultimately spiritual, when the consequences are great, and you'll not at all be disposed to meet them. It is exactly the moment that God will require it.

Can you follow that? There's nothing more miserable nor wretched than the prophetic man. Lord, Lord, we appeal for your mercy tonight. I don't deserve the least of your considerations.

The day has been squandered and spent, and we have found time for everything except for prayer with you. So you're quite justified in leaving me with my face sticking out without any anointing. I deserve to be

so chastened, and you'll not hear a whimper of complaint from me.

But for their sake, for the church that you love in the nation of Deutschland, in this last night together, who knows if there'll be another? After all, as my wife says, you're pushing 80. We have no confidence about length of years. This might well be a last occasion.

And for the prophetic and apostolic man, every occasion is as if it's last. So instruct them that this ought to be the last occasion. That this ought to be the prevailing mentality of the church itself.

Every occasion is as if it is the last. As if it's once and for all. As if it shall not be given again.

Then we would have to cry with Paul, who is sufficient for these things? Only you. Great high priest and apostle of our confession, prophet, priest, and king, redeem this night, Lord, as if it were a last occasion through this servant to this people. May we cherish it and catch every syllable that is expressed.

We thank you and give you praise. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, can you handle a summary of what constitutes that which is apostolic? What are the constituent elements that makes a church apostolic? I'm not talking about the name of a denomination. I'm talking about that kind of ultimate end-time church that glorifies God. That moves Jews to jealousy.

That extends mercy that they might obtain mercy. That turns the powers of darkness to flight. Ultimate church.

So, what are the constituent elements that make such a church the church? This really deserves a seminar. But I'll try and touch the highlights because we may not have another such opportunity. A church that is apostolic is eschatologically minded.

Excuse me for the fancy Greek word. But it's one that you should be required to know. Eschatological.

The things that pertain to the end. That was in the consciousness of the church from the first. Who thought that the Lord was at the door.

And lived under the consciousness of God as judge. Who assumed to come and bring a reward with Him. The church was taught to endure, to overcome.

Two thousand years farther away from the conclusion than we ourselves tonight. So, was Paul psyching out the early church? To give them an unnecessary sense of the impending end. When that end was yet two thousand years distant.

Or does God intend for the church of every generation to so live? The end is the consummation of all things. After all, you Germans have the word for it. Heilsgeschichte.

Salvation history. Implies something from the beginning moving toward a great conclusion. The church that is the church lives with this consciousness.

It knows that the end is near. That the devil will be cast out and will be in a fury knowing that his time is short. That the last days are charged with apocalyptic judgments and conflict.

This sense brings, this anticipation brings a sense of urgency. The church lives in a kind of expectation. By which every issue is magnified.

There's a high seriousness in what the church is about. For the day of the Lord is at hand. And the church is the primary agent of God in the earth.

And we're not all expecting to come through that time alive. There'll be affliction and suffering. Increasing opposition in the world.

Even from the religious realm. Martyrdom will not be an uncommon experience. If we have not this kind of sense and expectation what is the consequence? One Sunday is like another.

Church is a succession of services. Governed by a certain predictability. And relieved only occasionally by some special speaker or other event.

So I want to commend to you the kind of mentality that is a factor in the church that is apostolic. A radical apprehension of the end being near. And that we are in an unbroken continuation with those who have preceded us.

Who have suffered and died for the things that we will fulfill. An invisible cloud of witnesses. Who have gone before us and are not yet complete without us.

Does this sound like make-believe myth? Or can we take seriously the presence of an invisible cloud of witnesses over us and with us? Not just as casual observers but participants from the other side. That would heighten the appreciation of every time that we come together. Because the church that has this kind of mentality is a church that recognizes the world as evil.

And it is an unconscious repudiation of that world. It's in disjuncture with the world. It agrees with God's condemnation of the world.

That those who love the world are at enmity with the father. And all that is in the world is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life. We're in the world but we're not of it.

We touch it only minimally as necessity. But we know that it's corrupt. And subtle.

Seductive and powerful. We treat it, keep it at a distance. We don't want to condescend to its mentality.

Or employ its tactics. We're aliens and strangers and pilgrims in this world. We're not at home here.

We're looking for something which is to come. And we live righteously in this present world. That's not my phrase, that's Paul's.

This present world. What does it imply? It's not going to be here forever. It's under judgment.

It's transient and passing. It's only the present world. It's the one to come that is enduring and everlasting.

And it's for that that we wait and seek. Consciously. We don't play with this world.

We don't take on its affectations and its fads. We don't puncture our ears, our nose and our belly buttons. Or get a little harmless tattoo.

Because it's cute. Because others are doing it. And because I'm sufficiently spiritual that I can indulge that without any loss.

I hate to tell you who'll have the last laugh at that. Anyone who already has such attitudes as this. Not of the world.

Looking to the age to come. In conscious repudiation of the world and its values. Is marked by the powers of the air as dangerous.

Of other Christians these powers might say, Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are you? But when they see this kind of earnestness, this kind of separation, this kind of hatred of the world and of its subtle values, you'll be a mocked one and an opposed one and experience new degrees of opposition that were not your experience before. And you're not startled or astonished by that. And you're in such a struggle together with others who share the same spirit and identification.

And for you the gifts of the spirit are not some kind of idle luxury or option. You're in the very context in which God intended the gifts of the spirit to function. Not an idle little kind of thing that will improve the atmosphere or renew our denomination in the way in which we have charismatically belittled the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit of God.

But the gifts of the spirit are life and death provisions of God. For we know that we're in a conscious struggle with the powers of darkness whose time is short. And we'll face situations that are unpredictable and for which our past experience is not sufficient guide.

There'll be critical junctures as the church in which we need to hear from God distinctly. And cannot afford some cheap soulish thing that purports to be a tongue or an interpretation or a prophecy and is only the exercise of flesh. We've got to know the trustworthiness of that one, which is the gift of the spirit.

We've got to trust the one who speaks by the spirit in the midst of the congregation. Because that life is tested and that character is known. How come? Because your Christianity is more than a succession of Sunday services.

Because you're in something earnest together. That requires more than Sunday services and midweek Bible studies. Because you're going from house to house daily breaking bread.

And you're not calling in advance to warn them that you're coming. Lest you find a housewife with her hair in her curlers. And the husband with his feet up on the coffee table watching the soccer game.

Where your visitor is looked upon as an intrusion rather than a delight. You're willing for your privacy to be violated. For you are the church of Jesus Christ.

The body of Christ. Not in the mere invocation of the phrase. But in the organic reality of a body.

That requires frequency of relationship. And intensity of life. And speaking the truth in love.

Taking the risk of such speaking. That it will be welcomed and not spurned. Able to confess your faults one to another.

Confident that no one will use that secret knowledge to humiliate you. Because their prayer will free you from that sin and that deliverance. That hang up.

In a word, we're taking the word of God seriously. We're doing it. We're praying for one another.

That we might be healed. We're confessing our faults one to another. And not ashamed.

Because we're a congregation of sinners being redeemed by God. We're not playing a Sunday game. We're in something earnest.

And the defect of one or more touches the condition of the entire body. And what we will not renounce or repudiate for ourselves will do for the whole church. Because we have become so authentic in what we are about even our children are persuaded.

It's no longer they're coming reluctantly like snails to the services. We have to find some cute program to engage them. Young as they are, they are persuaded.

That what we are about is not some adult culture that is removed from them. But something ultimately earnest that deserves not only their acknowledgement, their participation. So let our children be our test.

Are they reluctant and going along because they have to? The thing that really absorbs their life and their souls is to be found on their TV sets or their computer games. Or you have persuaded them about the reality of what you are about. Not because it's a performance for their sake.

But because it's a consistent and unselfconscious demonstration of a reality. Such a people have a deep regard for the subject of Israel. Not as some consequence of a German sense of guilt for the past.

But the recognition of how central Israel is to the ultimate last days purposes of God. Knowing that the age is not complete unless the law goes forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem. And knowing that the present state of Israel is not in any condition sufficient to be the locus of such a theocratic rule.

Therefore it expects and understands that there's going to be a time of Jacob's trouble. Wherever Jacob is in every nation in your own and there's certain anticipation that needs now to be understood that will require a sacrifice and is willful and embraced consciously as being the only agent of God's choosing for Israel's redemption. That if there'll not be salvation through the church there'll not be salvation.

And that the world will not appreciate the church acting so and that we can expect an opposition in that identification with the Jew. But we're willing for it whatever the cost even peril to our own life because even if our life should be taken we do not consider that a grim possibility because we have the silly notion that there'll be an eternal reward and there'll be such a thing as the martyr's crown and that martyrdom is not the fate of some hapless individual here and there at the end but it is the definitive call of God for every saint in every generation especially the last.

You shall be witnesses unto me is the Greek word for martyr and martyrdom is our expectation our crown by whatever manner and form it comes not by what last moments thing we shall be taken but the pattern of all our moments martyrdom is a mode and a mentality of being God's intention for all the church and not the unhappy fate of some one or two individuals at the end Who are those who overcome in the last days? Those who overcome by the blood of the lamb the word of their testimony and love not their lives unto the death So to such a church the cross has been restored No longer an idle piece of decoration at the front of the church or something to dangle around our neck but a significant symbol of the most holy faith with a perfect realistic expectation that there is a suffering that precedes the glory and that we shall be and what we are about is the glory of God not the success of our church or its services or its programs Paul says unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus world without end Now come on you dear German saints

and you American visitors Who has ever taken that seriously today?

Who talks like that today? Unto him be glory in the church We have only the most abstract vague sense of what glory itself is We are not glory oriented We are not glory expecting How then shall we bear the suffering that precedes the glory We have not made peace with the principle And it may be for that reason that we forfeit any such consideration For we have no stomach for suffering We have no desire for suffering We have pleasure satisfaction gratification amusement and joy That is charismatic Not glorious Certainly not apostolic So listen you dear saints What if you have a choice in the matter And what if God is presenting that choice to you tonight Through this tired uninspired and unwilling servant And would say to you Choose you this day How far you will go Things as you presently know them and enjoy them With certain happy improvements But not this radical alternative That requires a totality of dedication Reverses all your values And makes the church the first purpose for your being And your employment your profession your vocation your business the secondary enablement for your mere physical preservation This is a radical reversal of all values And you'll be looked upon as insane Not only by the world but by other Christians For they don't see the end as imminent as you This is the best of all worlds Yes, there's an occasional catastrophe But it will yet improve We're not looking toward an end and a conclusion a consummation Let alone one that shall come in apocalyptic fury or judgment Of which the recent catastrophe is only a first installment It's not only Jacob who'll be troubled But the church itself When it makes a determination I'm willing to go that far Because when the Lord comes and the church is destroyed and gives to every man the reward for his labor I don't want to be overlooked I don't want to have to face the shame and the chagrin of an eternity in which I have no distinction with God That my Christian life was thoroughly undistinguished Beautiful and sincere in a way Faithful in service attendance Even tithes and offerings But not sufficient in any way to threaten or jeopardize my deepest issues of life Jesus we know and Paul we know But who are you?

The powers of the air are relentless in their knowledge of the truth of the church's condition We may have impressed men or ourselves but they know the truth of our hearts and how far we are willing to go and have gone and have an unspoken communion with God this far and no further An apostolic church is an ultimate church It has a radical apprehension of the cross It's willing to bring the subtlety of self-life into that death And know that it's called to something beyond its own ability to perform We might have been able to perform evangelically and even charismatically But something apostolic as ultimate as this in confrontation with the powers that yet brood over Germany is a great challenge waiting their next opportunity The last one was when the church was asleep in the Hitler time

And the next will be when the church is asleep in the present time The church that is the church wrestles against not against flesh and blood but against the world's rulers of this darkness The church that is the church wrestles We wrestle, Paul says It's not an activity for an individual virtuoso saint but something in which the church is engaged corporately There's no place for embarrassment The kind of travail and depth of prayer that such wrestling requires We have long ago left behind polite religious prayer There's an ultimate struggle on And it's not going to be taken by praise and worship as a technique or a method They know whom to fear They know whom to regard They know whom to ignore The kind of prayer and intercession that I'm talking about is not a technique It's the

statement of the truth of the relationship of those who pray together Prayer cannot exceed that truth Shallow in our relationships Superficial so also our prayer Mechanical religious obligatory I'm speaking out of an experience of 27 years in community knowing that it took 8 years of struggling together living on the same property with the same people day in and day out of what it took to finally confront the powers that

prevailed over our own locality Where we are 8 miles from what's the name of that Indian tribe the Chippewa Indian tribe where we are 12 kilometers from the next Chippewa Indian Reservoir and where we came to the prayer meeting and were already overwhelmed and totally depressed and then I thought that's a typical Jewish mentality but everyone was totally down and that is

the advantage you have a greater measure than just your own subjectivity you're in something earnest together with others and they said well Art there's a powwow taking place now didn't you hear the drums through the night the whole oppressive atmosphere has come other Christians are being troubled I said well let's pray and we started to pray and in 5 minutes I blew the whistle that's it quit you call that prayer what do you think this is a game put your gut into it this is earnest there's a struggle here and if you had walked into that room 10 minutes later you would have thought you had entered an insane asylum people were flaying with their arms and scratched out on their faces were groaning and travailing we were engaged in battle corporately and I saw the face of that local

principality I'm not given such vision often but I'll never forget that one that face was over us looking leering with contempt at us oh the Ben Israel community no threat they have their own problems they don't have it together but as that prayer continued consistency in its depth in its earnestness I watched that expression on that face change it began to look startled even afraid its lips were trembling what am I hearing this is authentic and that's a synonym for the word apostolic this is real this is unfeigned this is not religious this is not a method these people are in something and expressing the reality of it because their lives have been brought to a certain temper together and I watched that thing flee and we pursued after it in the realm of spirit and a certain moment it

broke and splattered everywhere and this one began to giggle this one began to laugh this one pulled its mouth this one began to giggle the other radiated with joy we knew a victory had been won but it took 8 years of investment of life together of struggle of disappointment of disillusionment of all the romantic things that we think the church is all these romantic ideas that we have of the church and had to learn the actual real condition of God's people in disappointment and failure and betrayal not only disillusionment with them but with oneself but we don't run looking for another alternative but we don't run away looking for another alternative where the grass is greener where the services are happier we're in something together and where shall we go he has the words of eternal life

and that's the apostolic distinctive of a people who are committed where they are planted will not lift themselves out of a difficult situation they're in a covenant thing that is not some game for them the Lord's table the bread and the wine is not some kind of dread monthly thing that one has to bear that's what it was for me in my Pentecostal background sitting with my plastic cup in one hand and my little wafer in the other taking something together when we were not together sitting alongside of essential strangers going through a formula and a process but when we came into community it only took a week to persuade us that being nice guys was not enough we needed the life of God the patience of God the courage of God the love of God and we needed to be replenished at His table for us

there was not some abstract idea for us it was not some abstract element that we took with us but the body and the blood of the Lord it is the substance and what makes up a character because without that we could not be as we should be once a month that was not enough once a week not enough daily that is apostolic community such a body is authentically submitted to authority and the calling of God and the salvation of God makes the whole thing valid not superficially but in a real way that one submits that one does not simply do one's own thing and then hopes that one finds a confirmation I could tell you stories for

example of a black sister in our community she was as old as I was the mother of one of our younger brothers without any consultation without submitting the question as if we

can unilaterally at any time move and do our own pleasure not knowing that the body is affected because I'm the man who went mad in Denmark and almost fell off the platform foaming at the mouth because the Pentecostal church was celebrating the separation of one of its elders he had been promoted in his career that required moving to another city and so they were sending him off with blessing and the only one who was upset was me I said you're allowing the fabric of this body to be torn in order to be separated out from that body not by the head over the body of the Lord but through the business community in the world because it's a promotion and you're celebrating that what kind of a mind do you have about the body of Christ what is eldership some honorary title that you can dispense

like that they never invited me back I was insane they couldn't understand what I'm upset about nor could this black sister trying to coerce me to endorse what she has already determined who's going to take issue with an older black sister come on Art it's only a vacation yes but it's also a manipulation it's also a unilateral act that is unsubmitted and if we allow that to go on because we don't want to raise it as an issue that would be uncomfortable what does it do to the credibility of our body and the whole issue of authority under the head of the Lord and so it erupted in one of our morning prayer meetings and that dear woman was beside me and this dear woman was out of her mind if you want to indicate that I am enraged with this young man that I was immoral I'm twice as old as him

I hadn't even thought about that but she said her honor was being touched because she had grown up in a certain culture of tradition about womanhood in the south the Lord was going deep because we made it an issue and what was surfacing was the whole issue of culture values that the world has determined that were really the guidelines and the motives of this woman and you should have heard the outcry in the deep of what was being challenged in the reality of the church that does not avoid such confrontations because it believes with God unto him be glory in the church and the glory requires suffering and confrontation and the threat of misunderstanding she told me later if she could have punched me she would have but you ought to see her now you want to see a spiritual woman it's not just

affecting some kind of charismatic appearance who acknowledges that it was God and she needed that confrontation and revealed the depth of things that to her were a startling revelation and she thanked God for the jealousy of the servant who would not let her go that's the difference between community and an aggregate of individualities who come only for services are you willing to be identified and found out when you've been getting away with murder for years or have you or have you or have you simply escaped living privately unto yourself and for yourself not submitted unto any real authority choosing and making your own choice decisions unwilling to see if they would be confirmed by those under whose oversight you are responsible we make the body of Christ a mock we make the faith a

Sunday culture the powers of the air are completely indifferent to us we constitute no threat to them and by that very same measure we make the body we will constitute no challenge to the people Israel when shall Paul's word be fulfilled that we should move them to jealousy by what by the superiority of our services or a reality that they have never found in the world even in their own Judaism with eloquent rabbis and Hebrew liturgies what will move them to jealousy is the reality of another kingdom a heavenly phenomenon being performed in the earth that is utterly Hebraic and Biblical unfamed and authentic not a performance but a reality that is consistent by people who have paid in suffering to obtain it in which they will have to acknowledge this is God the same fellowship that can

move them to jealousy terrifies the powers of the air and delivers those who have been victims under their bondage and delivers those who have been victims under their bondage not only because we say the right thing but because we are the right thing because we are living as a people freed from the influence of these powers because we cannot be manipulated because we don't ourselves manipulate they know whom to fear you know who is sufficient for this this requires resurrection power resurrection enablement in the last analysis an apostolic entity like this is the fellowship of the sons and daughters of the resurrection don't think you presently qualify because you subscribe to the truth of the doctrine when you have been consistently for years living beneath its reality because you have

never been able to say for me to live as Christ because you have not yet first cried out who is sufficient for these things you have been only too sufficient for these things until they become apostolic until they become earnest until they become ultimate until the churches are suffering before it's a glory you'll need the power of his life that will only come when you forfeit your own when you bring into death that minimal human thing by which you have been up till now living and learn that the great grace of God is that we should live through him this cannot be fulfilled on any other basis because it sees everything in the light of eternity everything has ultimate significance everything is once and for all everything is a moment that shall not pass charged with eternal consequences and

that takes the very life of God to fulfill such a people can be stripped and take their strippings with joy knowing within themselves that they have a greater recompense in heaven so does Paul compliment believers in Hebrews chapter 10 brother if I have to be stripped I'm not going to enjoy it I'm not going to rejoice for it I'll have to do everything to hold my resentment back from whoever is stripping me will I have experienced this and I don't think it will be the last time when I came back from a trip to find that our seven horses were gone and all of the leather harnesses by which they could be employed for farm work a provision for the last days when we cannot buy nor sell nor use diesel for our tractors the horses were gone the harnesses were gone even the oak boards upon which the

horses stood and urinated were gone the rope to carry the hay was gone every tool every nut every bolt every screwdriver every vehicle gone because the brother called me long distance he said I'm ready to go what shall I take a man who came to me with a pig and two dogs against whom I was warned he's a character but I'm always willing to take the risk for something redemptive I paid his child support payments and provided this that and everything what shall I take I'm leaving he came with nothing but a pig I don't know let him take half the brother with me said let him take what he thinks is right and I came back to find we were stripped and local believers had helped him to carry it all out didn't it occur to any one of them that he was getting a little excessive and something rose up in

me the moment of truth on whether we just have some kind of celebrated vocabulary or we have submitted to the dealings of God by which his sanctifying work process takes place something rose up like resentment anger murder self-justification and the Lord said uh-uh take your strippings with joy knowing that I am enthroned in the heavens that nothing that befalls you is in any way accidental that I have no obligation to explain it to you but know within yourself not just in your head and in your credo that you have a reward in heaven many times over for all of which you have been stripped that you might take it with joy for when the powers of the air see your response that is an unfamed response not a calculated religious performance because joy in stripping cannot be performed it's the

measure of the truth of God in you that heaven is not an abstraction that the things that are eternal are more real than that which is present and they know whom to fear and they'll be driven out and release

those that were under their bondage well, I could go on enough for one night more than you can take already but one question how far are you willing to go what is the extent of your intention with God happy fellowship successful services enjoyable programs nice worship good biblical messages but leaves the spirit realities unmet, untouched but the realities in the spiritual world remain untouched leaves you essentially in your individuality living for yourself and unto yourself falling short of the glory of God in the house of God for which you'll be eternally embarrassed if not

ashamed willing to use the phrase the body of Christ but not willing for the inconvenience or the suffering to obtain it this is my farewell address I'm not expecting to be back and had to say this much in my departure so that you'll be without excuse before God that you didn't know that there was an alternative and that his intention is still for glory in his house by Christ Jesus a world without end throughout all ages an eternal masterpiece which if it existed in Germany in the 1930s there would not have been a Hitler success let's pray and tell the Lord how far you're willing to go I'll tell you what the apostolic mentality is this word will be required of you when you'll stand before the judge this word is required of me when I stand before the judge a service is more than just

preachments a service is more than just preachments preaching it's an event a transaction with God every time you'll have to come into the house of God with fear with trembling for it's earnest so Lord in Jesus name in your great love for this nation in your great heartache and grief for it's failures in the supreme knowledge that you have that nothing really has been profoundly altered since the Hitler time yes there are some charismatic improvements but the basic constituency of the church has not altered an aggregate of individualities living essentially for themselves the powers of the air are yet unimpressed waiting their next opportunity to take the nation captive when there's not a church to resist it so transact with your people tonight Lord as if this is a once and for all

occasion that will not be given again hear as many as will call and give themselves without reservation whatever the cost whatever the requirement because they want to see glory in your house unto Christ Jesus the Christ Jesus the Christ Jesus world without end in Jesus name keep your head bowed and transact transact I solemnly assure you that anything and everything you say to God now will be heard and taken to his heart tell him how far you are willing to go let him hear how far you are willing to go let us now have a moment of peace that God has shown you where he has been laying his hand on for a long time where he says are you willing to give this to me maybe it has to do with your time things maybe in a job maybe in your sexuality maybe it has to do with your hobby whatever and you

know it is time to go on but let us now have a moment of peace just a few minutes of peace to look at the Lord Hallelujah and Holy Spirit I thank you that you are here and I pray you are the spirit of grace and Lord there are things that we can't get out of there are also not things that you expect that we do to please you but Lord I pray that you show us where we can go on to just take this place so that we are a community that is really in your will Jesus Hallelujah I pray Holy Spirit speak to us

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