

"What We Believe"

Session 11

Church-- God Sends

I) INTRODUCTION

- A) Prior to Jesus' death, He said that He would build His Church and the gates of Hell would not prevail against it. After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the upper room, the life of the early Church was released and its impact is unending.
- B) With only 120 people receiving the Holy Spirit, Jesus' life was taken from inside the building into the streets. By the early Church and through Peter's first sermon in the second chapter of Acts, 3,000 people were saved that very hour.
- C) Beginning with just a handful of Christians, a couple thousand years later there are roughly three billion Christian worldwide.
- D) Today, life looks much different than it did for the early Church. After a recent study of people in their teens and early twenties, this is what they had to say about the Church: 91% viewed it as anti-homosexual, 87% viewed it as judgmental, 78% viewed it as being old fashioned, 70% viewed it as being insensitive to others and 68% said it was boring.
- E) When these same people were asked about Jesus, they said they liked Him, but not those that follow Him.
- F) For the Church to return to the place God intended it to be, it must return to scripture; it must rekindle love for God the Son and learn to be led by the Holy Spirit.

II) What Is The Church?

- A) The Church is not a holy building in which spiritual meetings take place nor is it a moral police force seeking to control people by behavior legislation.
- B) **Acts 2:42-47** *"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."*
- C) You could say that the Church is "A community of regenerated believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. They love scripture, organize under qualified leadership for preaching, worship, baptism, and communion. They are joined by the Holy Spirit, disciplined for holiness, filled with passion for the great commandment and scatter to fulfill the great commission."
- D) As Christians we are part of both the universal Church and the Local Church. Universal, meaning that we are a part of all Christians worldwide, at all times and in all places.

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- E) The local church is a smaller gathering of Christians that assemble together weekly.
- F) Through Acts 2:42-47 we can see 8 things that help us provide the standard of evaluating every Church.
 - 1) The Church is made up of regenerated believers.
 - (i) Because the Holy Spirit lives in them, they gather together in buildings and in homes. They pray together, read together and have big, generous hearts.
 - (ii) Non-Christians have an important place within the Church as extended family, but the actual Church is made up only of born again believers.
 - 2) The Church is organized under qualified and competent leadership.
 - (i) In Acts 2 we see that these leaders used their gifts of teaching over the whole Church. This is done through Pastors, Elders, Deacons and other leaders.
 - 3) The Church gathers regularly to worship Jesus and hear God's word rightly preached.
 - (i) The Church is governed by the Apostolic scriptures, so we read them not just for information but for internal transformation. We gather not only to listen, but also to worship the Risen King.
 - 4) The Church is where we practice both baptism and communion.
 - (i) These are performed regularly as visible symbols of the gospel in the life of the Church.
 - 5) The Church is unified by the confession and shared life of Christ through the Holy Spirit.
 - (i) We must have unity in theology, in relationships, in style of ministry, in our common mission of sharing Jesus with lost people, both in the world, and within our organization.
 - 6) The Church is disciplined for holiness.
 - (i) Leadership uses the holy Scriptures to teach, train, correct and equip Christians to grow into Christ-likeness. When believers sin, they should confess and repent. If they fail to do so, Church leadership will lovingly become involved and help that person understand what has taken place.
 - 7) The Church obeys the great commandment to love.
 - (i) The Church must first love God. Second our families. Third our Church and its leaders, so that we aren't a problem for our Pastors. Fourth we are to love fellow Christians. Fifth we are to love our neighbors even if they are difficult. Sixth, we are to love strangers. And seventh, we are even to love our enemies.
 - 8) The Church obeys the Great Commission to evangelize and make disciples.
 - (i) The Church is an evangelistic community where Jesus is made visible through preaching, through the way its members live their lives, and in the Spirit's empowered life of love.

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- (ii) The Church should understand firsthand the devastation of sin, therefore we don't impose religion, but the *reconciliation* to God through Christ.

III) What Is Jesus' Relationship To The Church?

- A) Jesus' incarnation was much like a mission trip, led and empowered by God the Holy Spirit. Jesus' transition from Heaven to earth was the greatest culture shock any missionary has ever endured.
- B) Jesus spoke the language of His culture, enjoyed their holidays, ate their food, enjoyed their drink, attended their parties and made friends. And just as God sent Jesus, so the Holy Spirit now sends us.
- C) In John's gospel alone, Jesus told us no less than 39 times that He was a missionary sent from Heaven.
- 1) **John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23, 24, 30, 36, 37, 38; 6:29, 38, 39, 44, 57.**
- D) Jesus doesn't want His missionaries so liberal that they sin along with the people of their culture or become so conservative that they sin by staying too far away from the people of their culture.
- E) Our vision statement is that we would **"Encounter Jesus and the people of our culture."**
- F) **John 17:18** *"As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."* **John 20:21** *"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*
- G) We must become both Spirit filled *and* Spirit led, not one or the other. Acts tells us that just as the Holy Spirit fell upon Jesus it also falls upon us, so that we might also do what Jesus did.
- H) As we build churches, spiritual communities of Christians, it is essential that we remember Jesus is:
- 1) The head of the Church. He is supreme. He is prominent. He is preeminent.
- (i) **Eph. 1:22, 4:15, 5:23**
- 2) The Apostle who plants a Church. Jesus is the only One who can start a Church. He is the Chief Church planter.
- 3) The leader who builds the Church. It's Jesus alone that builds a Church.
- 4) The Chief Shepherd who rules the Church. Jesus is our senior Pastor, which means everyone else serving in leadership, is actually serving under Jesus.
- 5) Present with the Church. Jesus promised us in Matthew 28 that He would be with us until the end of this age.
- 6) The Judge of the Church. Sometimes Jesus shuts Churches down, when they become faithless or truth-less. Sometimes Churches lose their love for Jesus and for people; they do more harm than good, and Jesus shuts them down.

IV) Who Leads A Church?

- A) Jesus is the head of the Church, the Senior Pastor, so this means those who are in Church leadership must become good sheep that follow their shepherd before they even think about being an overseer over God's people.
- B) The Bible speaks about three positions that people can hold when it comes to the life of the Church. These are Elders, Deacons and Members. These positions are a place of responsibility, authority and trust assigned by the Church to common people for the common good.
- C) The Biblical office of an Elder-Pastor (Lead Pastor, or Lead Elder) is the highest office within the local Church and his primary job is to oversee sound doctrine and spiritual health.
- D) Alongside the Lead Pastor is a team of Elders that work together for the purpose of equipping Christians for ministry and for oversight of the Church.
- E) They are called to guide and guard the Church and as Elders they are the primary leadership team of the local Church.
- F) An Elder is to be a Godly Christian man whose life is clearly and faithfully devoted to Jesus Christ, a faithful husband, a Godly father and a Godly man in all other areas of his life. This includes his job, his time, talents, treasures; he is a servant within the body of Christ.
- G) Paul's order of leadership is Elder, Deacon, Church member. Elders are called to primarily serve with their words, and Deacons are called to serve mainly with their works.
 - 1) **Philippians 1:1, 1st Timothy 3:8,12**

V) Why Is Preaching Important?

- A) God created the world through preaching. God spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden. But so did the devil. Adam and Eve listened to the wrong voice and fell prey, like many today; sin, death and global destruction ensued. Today the devil continues to preach through false prophets, both within and outside the Church.
- B) Jesus' ministry included feeding the hungry, healing the sick, loving the outcast and befriending the sinner. But we must never forget that His ministry began with and centered on preaching.
- C) When Jesus sent the 12 on their short-term mission trip, He sent them preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. Peter's first sermon was the first activity of the early Church after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Churches priority ministry is preaching, and everything else we do should be centered around and supporting the preaching of God's Word.
- D) The Church must not only preach good spiritual advice and better living, but the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the Holy Scriptures.
- E) Paul tells us that a time is coming when people will not tolerate preaching, and even some today choose not to preach; they say preaching has no place within the Church.

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- F) The Church throughout world history has always valued the preaching of the Word as its central ministry in the life of the local Church. We preach with passion so that the authority of God’s Word is upheld in the lives of people that sit beneath it.
- G) Good preaching should be Biblical. It should preach the scriptures. It should be practical, helping people where they are at. It should transform people’s lives, leading them into repentance, response and spiritual maturity. It should be *missional*, because it’s helping people understand the mission of God in the earth. And it should be all about Jesus.

VI) Why Should Christians Join A Church?

- A) Some selfish people don’t join a Church because they don’t want to learn, obey, serve or give. Some join the Church for their own selfish cause, which is often spiritual, social or political. We don’t want to be among those that use the Church for ourselves. Selfishness destroys the Church faster than anything else.
- B) Here are some reasons why Christians *should* join a Church.
 - 1) Salvation means forgiveness and new life in community.
 - (i) Salvation and forgiveness isn’t just a personal relationship with Jesus, but an invitation into community with others.
 - 2) Real Disciples commit to the Church because they know they need the help of others while following Jesus.
 - (i) Real disciples know that fellow members will expect them to attend meetings which will cause accountability, which will help them on their spiritual journey.
 - 3) Disciples know they need to be equipped for the work of the ministry.
 - (i) Only in the community of others can we be joined together so that every part works properly. You need help and that’s what we’re here to do.
 - (ii) I’ve talked to many of you about setting up appointments with me or others to get help, and you never do. It tells me you don’t really care. So I don’t chase you down. You will either get help, or you will continue to struggle and do it yourself.
 - 4) It’s easy to fall into deception on your own, apart from other believers.
 - (i) Fools stand confidently on their own wisdom. We all need elders and spiritual leaders over our lives to help look out for the oversight of our souls.
 - 5) Jesus’ heart for and commitment to the Church should compel us to love and serve the Church.
 - (i) **Ephesians 5:25** *“Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her...”*
 - (ii) Jesus continues to serve the Church despite her flaws and struggles, and so should we.

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(iii) Those who ignore the Church, criticize the Church, despise the Church or even harm the Church must understand that they are not disciples of Jesus Christ.

(iv) John F. Kennedy said in a speech "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Jesus would say the same thing today. Ask not what your Church can do for you, but what you can do for your Church.

VII) What Are Water Baptism And Communion?

- A) Baptism and communion are visible presentations of the Gospel performed regularly by the Church.
- B) In water baptism we believe that people are going under the water, joining themselves to the death of Jesus Christ and then coming out of the water again, joining Him also in His resurrection. This is symbolic.
 - 1) **Romans 6:3-4** *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*
- C) Communion is a powerful reminder of Jesus' death for us. It is a call for Christians to put their sin to death in light of Jesus' death for us, and we are to take our sin seriously, before we share in communion.
- D) It also declares our unity around the Person and work of Jesus Christ regardless of denomination and lesser Biblical doctrines and Theology.
- E) Through preaching, the Gospel is heard. In communion and baptism, the gospel is seen.