

The church being the Church Ephesians 1:22-23

Announcements:

1. Douglas Day of Prayer
2. Women's Coffee Talk @ 3pm
3. AWANA's started: prayer
4. Oct 2: Last day of donations
 1. Thanks to Marsha and Patty, and all who have helped
 2. Need help to pack up
 3. Prayer for storage
 4. Open eyes and ears for the long haul
5. Oct 7: Women of Faith in FH

We are breaking into our study of Mark for a period of time to go through a study of the church, but hopefully it will be a practical look at the church being the Church. It isn't going to be all inclusive. It isn't meant to be. But, it is to give us some ground work and give practical understanding of what and who the church is and how the church is to be and do.

I have called this series, "7 Weeks to a Better Body." It's a play on words, because we aren't talking about the human body, but the church body. We will touch on topics of loving God and loving others, worship, serving, communion and baptism, stewardship and making disciples. I hope that it will build us up and make us stronger together in Christ, doing the things of Christ.

A couple verses I want to put in front of us this morning:
Ephesians 1:22-23

22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. **23** And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people (purchased: bought with Christ's blood—1 Cor 6:20). You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's

very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

Mack Stiles writes: “The church is the God-ordained local assembly of believers who have committed themselves to each other. They gather regularly, they teach the Word, celebrate communion and baptism, discipline their members, establish a biblical structure of leadership, they pray and give together. Certainly the church may do more, but it is not less than this.”

I want to take a 30,000 foot look at 3 questions this morning:

- 1) What is and what is not the church?
- 2) Who is and who is not the church?
- 3) What is and what is not the purpose of the church?

Let’s dive in with the first:

I. What is and what is not the church?

- a. It is the body of Christ, it is a living organism. It is the visible expression of Jesus to this world. We are the light, the salt, the hands and feet of Jesus.
- b. It’s called the body of Christ because:
 1. Joined to Christ in salvation (Eph 4:15-16)
 2. They follow the head (Eph 1:22-23)
 3. Physical representation of Christ in the world through which He manifests His life to the world today
 4. Indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
 5. Possess a diversity of spiritual gifts suited for particular functions (1 Cor 12:4-31; particularly v. 12)
 6. Share a common bond (1 Cor 12:25); regardless of race, background, or ministry
 7. Secure in their salvation (John 10:28-30)
 8. Partake of Christ's death and resurrection (Colossians 2:12)
 9. Share in Christ's inheritance (Romans 8:17)
 10. Receive the gift of Christ's righteousness (Romans 5:17)
- c. It is filled with baby believers to mature believers.
- d. It is not a building. It is not a country club, feel good get together. It is not a place to take from, but a place to give first, and receive when available.
 - a. It is not a consumerist institution

- b. It is an institution of giving, reaching out, seeking the lost
- e. It is not inclusive in that all are part of it, it is exclusive in that you can't be a part of the body of Christ without knowing Christ and Him knowing you.
- f. It is inclusive in that all are invited to be a part of it
- g. 2 distinctions of the church, not separate distinctions though
 - i. Universal church--those who follow Jesus in any race, place, or time. It began at Pentecost and will end when He returns.
 - i. when the church comes together to worship, we worship with all of those throughout time that have worshiped. There is a mystical union of believers, not in some new age spiritist way.
 - ii. Local church--these are believers in a location that support one another and minister along side one another, committed to God's work in that area, but also committed to one another.
 - i. Romans 12:5 "So we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
 - ii. Hebrews 3:13 "You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. "
 - iii. 1 Cor 12
 - iv. Those in the local church should be committed to meeting together regularly for worship, teaching, fellowship, prayer, and make disciples.
 - i. Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."
- e. The church body has structure.
 - i. God has put leaders over the body
 - ii. First, it's important to know who is the head, the most high leader of the church, and that is Jesus.
 - i. Ephesians 1:22 "God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church."
 - iii. God has put human leaders in the church too
 - i. Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy

- and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.”
- ii. Elders and deacons, a pastor is part of that
 - iii. For the purpose of caring for the flock...to grow the flock, protect the flock, lead the flock, and even discipline the flock
 - iv. Those are the leading roles in the church, the church body also has a role in the church...it is found through the use of our spiritual gifts
 - i. 1 Cor 12:4-7 “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. **5** There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. **6** God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. **7** A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.”
 - ii. Verse 27 says, “All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.”
 - ii. We all have an important, God-ordained role within the church
 - f. Filled with and moving towards right doctrine
 - a. Jesus is important
 - b. R.C. Sproul says, “I think the attribute of the church that is most seriously under attack in our day is its Apostolicity, because there has been a wholesale rejection within the church of the authority of the sacred Scripture. It is the Apostolic tradition that the church has not invented, but rather, has received. It received it from the Apostles, who received it from Christ and from His Holy Spirit, who received it from God. That’s why a rejection of the teaching of the Apostles is a rejection of the very authority of God.
 - a. When he speaks fo the ‘teaching of the Apostles’, he is speaking of scripture.
 - b. Ephesians 2:20 says, "Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.”

Biblical metaphors for the church

1. The Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:22-23)-we are subject to Christ as the head, and we are in complimentary relationship with the rest of the body
2. Bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-33, esp 32) Christ is our love and we can relate to and thrive in the knowledge that He loves us and chose us as his bride
3. Family (household) of God (Eph 2:19)-church is more than a Sunday affair, but a giving, part of, and ebb and flow of life and emotions and support and more
4. Temple of God (1 Cor 6:19)-He dwells in our midst and we must be holy in all our behavior
5. Flock of God (Acts 20:26; 1 Peter 5:2)-Jesus is our shepherd, but He has put under-shepherds to care for the flock.
6. Pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim 3:15)- we must stand firm in the truth of God's word and proclaiming it. If we do not, the church will have no effect upon the world.
7. Kingdom of God- (Col 1:13-14)--the kingdom of God has broken into this world through the church...it is not a finished product. It has a king and is growing. The finished and established work of the kingdom is when Christ comes back to reign.

The church is meant to be the visible picture to the world of our faith in Christ and who Christ is. It is about the very will of God, led by Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is not meant to be a country club, a moralist club, or a community get together.

II. Who is and who is not the church?

1 Peter 2:9 gives us some insight, “But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession.

1 Corinthians 6:20 tells us the those in the Church are ‘bought with a price.’ What was the price? the blood of Jesus. His life.

Romans 10:11-13 says, “As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.”^[e] **12** Jew and Gentile^[f] are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. **13** For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

A. Those that call on Jesus for salvation are the church.

A. I will dare say it goes deeper than just calling on Jesus, but following, becoming a disciple of Jesus. It’s a change of heart.

B. Who is not the church?

A. This gets to be a tricky question, but there are some clear delineations.

A. The opposite of Romans 10, those who do not call upon Jesus for salvation, or they call upon something other than Jesus for salvation.

B. Those who deny Jesus as Lord and Savior, the God incarnate.

C. It's also important to remember that there are institutions of the church. And some of those institutions are not of God's true church. They are not filled with the Holy Spirit, but of some other spirit.

A. How do we know the difference?

A. What do they say about Jesus and who He is and what He did?

B. What do they say about the authority of scripture and what it says? Do they pick and choose what commands they want to obey?

III. What is the purpose of the church?

A. When the church comes together, there are at least 4 things that seems to be important to the institution of the church.

A. Acts 2:42 gives a framework or purpose statement of the church, "They devoted themselves to apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

1. The gospel is preached, it's proclaimed

a. not just Jesus' death and resurrection, but the entirety of the full gospel, the faithful proclamation of it

b. Why?

a. Ephesians 4:14 "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming."

b. But, there it is not just a teaching to, but a going out with that teaching.

a. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.

b. Likewise Matthew 28:19 "Go and make disciples"

- c. Often when we think of the gospel being proclaimed, we think by word of mouth, but it's also by action...through serving.
 - a. Jesus said He came to serve, not to be served. He did this as an example for us. Philippians 2:5 speaks to this, "have the same attitude as Christ"
 - b. The church in institution and action is how the world sees the Kingdom of God. We are the visible form of Christ. Granted it's an imperfect form, which is why we are to live up the grace of God. It is about Jesus, not us and our works. It's about what He did.
 - c. James 1:27 says, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."
 - d. We are called the 'salt of the earth', 'light to the world'
- 2. Communion and baptism is rightly administered
 - a. An aspect of the church together is the serving of the sacraments
 - i. Many organizations are not the institution of church, but the support of the church. There seems to be a distinction in scripture.
 - ii. Because of this, scripture seems to put weight upon the believer investing in and being a part of the institution of the church, the regular gathering of the church.
- 3. Fellowship
 - 1. It's being together, but Christian fellowship is more than that. It is Christ-like.
 - 1. It is devoted to one another
 - 2. Honors one another (Romans 12:10)
 - 3. Instructs one another (Romans 15:14)
 - 4. It's kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4:32)
 - 5. Encourages one another (1 Thess 5:11)
 - 6. Loves one another (1 John 3:11)
- 4. Authentic discipline of it's people
 - 1. God disciplines—out of His love

2. The church should discipline out of His love and with the purpose to restore (Gal 6:1)
 3. Godly discipline through Godly administering of His word and the Spirit working in us points us to right living
 1. We are all on different stages of our walk in Christ, and that is extremely important to remember
 4. This is a tricky one, but a needed one
 5. Discipline over the centuries has gone from extreme to almost negligent
 1. 16th century fierce persecutions against those committing sin in the church. It was because they truly believed the reality of hell. But, they missed the part of charity covers a multitude of sins.
 2. Today, church discipline in many ways is lacking.
 6. So the question becomes when does a church become apostate?
 1. When verbally denying an essential truth of scripture?
 2. When it doesn't adhere to what it says it believes?
 7. This brings another question? When should one leave a church?
 1. Not to be made lightly, but for serious reasons
 2. If the institution we are in commits apostasy, it is our duty to leave it
 8. Why do I mention discipline? Paul tells Timothy to 'be about sound doctrine', and that scripture is God-breathed, useful for teaching, rebuking, and admonishing.
 9. But, may we never forget it is meant to encourage and lead toward building up.
5. Prayer
1. There is something powerful when the people of God come together in prayer.
 2. We are told many times over to bring our requests to God.
 3. This was a common thing from the beginning of the temple
 1. Jesus called it "a house of prayer."
 2. They spent time in prayer, they had a week set aside devoted to prayer
 3. Romans 12:12 "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer."

4. Colossians 4:2 “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”
5. Acts 2:42 “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”
4. If these things are present, you ought not leave. You ought to work to be an edifying part of that section of the body of Christ.

THIS IS THE CHURCH: a people for *His* own possession who live together to glorify Him