

INAUGURATION AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH Part 2

Introduction

- Let's go back and look at the definition:

Definition: The Church is the New Covenant Community of God as it exists in this dispensation between the events of Acts 2 (Day of Pentecost) through the rapture of the Church prior to the Day of the Lord.

PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

Purpose = To glorify God through **worship**, **edification** of the saints, and the **evangelization** of the world.

This is essentially a three-legged stool regarding the purpose of the Church. Glorifying God is the top of the stool while worship, edification of the saints, and evangelism of the world are the 3 legs. Let's go ahead and take each leg and discuss it. The first leg shows us that part of the purpose of the church is to facilitate:

I. The Worship of God.

- Worship can take place corporately and individually. For the purpose of this class we are looking at the corporate side of worship. So, what are the essential elements of corporate or assembled worship?

Assembled Worship Elements:

- First of all, we said that it is prescribed by God and should be directed by God's Word. A good summary of the contents that should be included in corporate worship can be captured in this phrase.
- "Read the Bible, Preach the Bible, Sing the Bible, Pray that Bible, and See the Bible." - *Ligon Duncan*. Let's discuss these:
- The last time we met, we discussed the first two essential elements, Read the Bible and Preach the Bible. Now today we will look at the last 3 starting with:

- 1) **Sing the Bible:** The duty of singing God's word is urged upon Christians in Scripture, we see it by example if we look in Matthew 26:30 or Mark 14:26, here Jesus and the disciples are singing a hymn after the last supper.
- 2) So, we see it by example, but we also see it by way of a exhortation. If we look at Ephesians 5:19-20, Paul exhorts the Ephesians when he says they should be:

Ephesians 5:19-20

⁹ Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

- If you think about it, the reality is that the praises of the Christian assembly on earth, are just a foreshadowing of the praises which will be offered in heaven, Revelation 5:9-14. That is a wonderful truth.
 - Okay so, the essential elements of corporate worship so far can be summed up by, Read the Bible, Preach the Bible, Sing the Bible, and next we see we are to:
- 3) **Pray the Bible:** So, what does that mean? Well, when we pray, we are to be mindful of scripture. Prayer for what Paul or David prayed for, pray for sanctification, pray for God's will to be done. In other words, pray according to God's will which is found in the Bible. When we do this, we glorify God. This happens in a number of ways. Through prayer we make known our reliance on Him, we demonstrate obedience to His command to pray, we show that we remember God's faithfulness to answer previous prayers, and we show that we are relying on God's kindness in the fact that we are praying for still more.

- In corporate prayer, God is magnified while the church is edified and encouraged.

We see Jesus teaching His followers to pray in a corporate fashion in Matthew 6:7-15; Luke 11:1-4. Here he tells them to begin with "Our Father who is in heaven." Or in James, (Jam. 5:16) James urges the church, "confess you sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

- The book of Acts is full of prayer. In a corporate setting, it tells us in Acts 2:42,

Acts 2:42

⁴² They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread ***and to prayer***.

- So, we need to make sure that prayer is a part of the corporate service. It is essential to the church.
- The final element of assembled or corporate worship is that within this context we are able to:

- 4) **See the Bible:** This refers to the celebration of baptism and the Lord's supper, which depict the gospel. They depict the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, they remind us of what Christ did for us. These ordinances need to be apart of the corporate worship service.

Now, with all of that being said, what is behind the assertion that Christian worship must consist of these God-prescribed elements? It is the Protestant understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture. The idea that the Scriptures sufficiently reveal everything God's people need for salvation, perfect trust, and perfect obedience. This is the conviction that scripture should regulate the way God's people approach worship. This principle has often been referred to as the "Regulative" principle.

Regulative Principle = Congregations should conduct worship based on these elements that are clearly found (by command or example) in Scripture. Holds strongly to *Sola Scriptura*. This is where we want to land.

- Another principle sometimes used by churches is known as the normative principle.

Normative Principle = Congregations may incorporate any activity into worship as long as there is agreement within the general practice of the church and no clear prohibition in scripture.

- This opens the door for almost anything, we should steer clear of this kind of principle.

- Now, what about other issues? What about the time and place of corporate Christian worship? What do you think, any ideas or strong beliefs in this area? If so what do you base this on?
- Well, this is not clearly prescribed in the New Testament. We see both public places like

the temple or a riverside, as well as private meetings like in individual homes.

- As far as the time (as far as the day we are to meet) there are several reasons the Church meets on Sunday.
 1. Christ was raised on Sunday. Matthew 28:1-2.
 2. The risen Christ first met with the disciples on Sunday. **Matt. 28:8-10.**
 3. The pattern in the NT for Christians points towards Sunday meetings. Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
 4. This pattern was quickly established in the language of, “The Lord’s Day.” Revelation 1:10.
 5. It is appropriate to give the firstfruits of the week to God in order to acknowledge his ownership of the whole, just as one does with income.
- So, the purpose of the Church is to glorify God, and that is done corporately through 3 avenues. If we go back to the 3-legged stool example, we would say **to glorify God** is the top or seat of the stool, and it is supported by the 3 legs. The legs of **worship, edification of the saints, and evangelization of the world.**
- Next week we will look at the 2nd and 3rd legs of the stool, Edification of the saints, and the evangelization of the world.

Let’s Pray