

WORSHIP SERVICE - 5.29.2022

CHURCH MATTERS - PART 2

I. INTRODUCTION

MAIN POINT: The local church matters because it is God's design for each believer to be submitted to and part of a local community for their spiritual formation.

1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, 15 if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,

vindicated by the Spirit,

seen by angels,

proclaimed among the nations,

believed on in the world,

taken up in glory.

II. CONDUCT AND CONFESSION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

- Paul was writing to Timothy hoping that he could make his way to Ephesus soon, but in case he was delayed, Timothy would have some things with which to instruct the church.
- He expresses two main concerns in these three verses, the church's conduct and the church's confession.

1. CONDUCT

- "...you may know how one ought to behave..."
- The first chapters of 1 Timothy include instruction on right doctrine, right gender relations, and right spiritual leadership.
- Those who belong to the church need to know how to behave in relation to one another.
- And it seems that Paul is giving Timothy, who is the elder over this particular church, the charge to make sure he is teaching them how to behave rightly.
- Just like families have rules, the family of believers also has rules.

a. THREE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CHURCH

- Paul then tells why believers should know how to conduct themselves in the church by giving three descriptors for the church:
- Because the Church is the household of God
- Because it is the Church of the living God
- Because the Church is the pillar and buttress of the truth.

i. GOD'S HOUSEHOLD

- The church is God's family.
- God is our Father. We who have trusted Christ have been graciously adopted into his family. We become his children and that makes each one of us brothers and sisters in the Lord.
- That means that our relationship with God's family, our brothers and sisters in Christ, is an eternal relationship. It is of higher value than even blood relationships.
- We need to learn to get along with one another.
- We need to conduct ourselves, with regard to one another, in a manner that is fitting for those who are eternally part of God's family.
- **Galatians 6:10** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

ii. THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD

- The church is the household of God but it is also God's house.
- The eternal, immortal, living God, is dwelling with his people. We are the temple of God.
- Ephesians 2:22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.
- When we come together, when we gather on the Lord's Day, there is a greater awareness of the reality of his presence in our midst.
- There is a greater glory assembling together with God's people than you can ever experience on your own.
- This is why God's word strongly exhorts us to meet together.
- Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 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.

iii. THE PILLAR AND BUTTRESS OF THE TRUTH

- The Greek word used has in view a structural component that stiffens, supports and strengthens a framework. Not a building's foundation but rather the supporting structure of a building.
- Paul is using these architectural terms to describe how the church is also the home of God's truth, the Word of God.
- The church has the responsibility to hold firmly to the truth, to strengthen itself with the truth, so as not to collapse under the weight of false teaching.
- The church has to hold the truth high, lift up the truth so it can be made visible to everyone.
- God's Word is the foundation of our life, it is the mortar that holds us together in community, it is the bricks and stones that builds us up as the temple of the living God by His Spirit.

2. CONFESSION

- Paul's second main concern was the church's confession.
- They not only need to conduct themselves rightly they need to confess rightly as well.

- The confession is with respect to what they believed about Christ.
 - Right theology matters. Right Christology matters.
 - This is the truth they must hold high and the truth they must safeguard against distortion.
 - Paul quotes what many consider to be an early church hymn or creed.
 - v16 Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness...
 - Notice it is a confession, Christians are confessional.
 - What are we to confess? The mystery of godliness.
 - Mystery does not mean something mysterious or something unsolved. Paul uses the term to refer to Christ as the revelation that was previously hidden and has now been disclosed. God's secret plan of redemption through Christ is no longer a secret because God has revealed it.
 - The mysteries of Christ are great indeed, they are profound, they are glorious, and they are to be confessed by all of his followers.
 - That is the truth that the church is called to undergird and uphold in the world—the gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - It's why teaching and preaching are central to what we do as a church.
- In these few verses we see the authority given to the church to assess and affirm the conduct and confession of its members.
 - It's why we need to be part of a local church.

III. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PART OF A LOCAL CHURCH

1. SUBMITTING YOURSELF TO A LOCAL CHURCH

- You don't really join a local church—you submit yourself to a local church.
 - We submit to a local church much like we do to our family and governments.
 - From the standpoint of the Christian life, it is not a voluntary association.
 - The local church is an authority over your life established by Jesus Christ, the founder and head of the Church.
 - Scripture clearly teaches that we are to submit ourselves to the authority Christ has appointed over us.
- What exactly are you submitting yourself to?
 - You are submitting yourself to other believers in obedience to Christ:
 - Ephesians 5:21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.
 - Why do you do this? Out of reverence for Christ, we submit ourselves to one another in the local church for accountability, for mutual support, for encouragement, and to live out the "one-anothers".
- You are submitting yourself to the local church's leadership in obedience to Christ:
 - 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.
 - Jesus has appointed spiritual leaders, elders/pastors, as a spiritual authority in your life.
 - Notice what the leader's responsibility is, to keep watch over your souls. And they will have to give an account to God for how they are doing that.
 - So those are the two groups of people you are to submit to in the local church context.

2. IMPORTANCE OF SUBMITTING YOURSELF TO A LOCAL CHURCH

a. Spiritual Protection

- We need the protection of the local church by being relationally connected with other believers who can encourage us, call us to account, pray for us, and strengthen us when we are weak.
- Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
- You need elders to exercise oversight of your life to protect you from false teaching and from wolves.

b. Participation in the Lord’s Supper

- Both the institution and the meaning of the Lord’s Supper indicate that believers are to come together for this meal.
- It assumes a corporate, not an individual dimension.
- Jesus gathered with his disciples and told them to take and divide it among themselves (Luke 22:17).
- Paul’s admonishment in 1 Cor. 11 to the church concerning the way some were abusing the Lord’s Supper was in the context of their coming together as a church.

c. The “one another” passages

- There are fifty nine "one another" passages that are explicit commands on how we are to relate to one another in the local church context.
- The Greek pronoun for 'one another' means mutuality, reciprocity.
- All of these happen within the context of the local church family.

d. Spiritual Gifts

- 1 Cor. 12 tells us that the Spirit gave us gifts for the “common good” for the edification of the church. The divine intention has been to equip individual members for the purpose of building up the whole church.
- We are given individually spiritual gifts, and we are given the context for the operation of those gifts--the church.
- The possession of the gift is a charge, a stewardship. We must seek to use it for the benefit of the whole body. But how can we do that apart from the visible body of believers?

e. Your Sanctification depends on it

- The NT never indicates that the covenant community that comes together as a local church is perfect, completely holy or pure.
- Doesn’t the existence of problems in the churches (those mentioned in the Bible) beg the question regarding membership?
- The phenomena, the sheer existence of these problems, teach us something of the nature of the early church. She was never pure and this mixed body was always weak and fraught with problems, from within and from without. These problems did not stop them from being churches. The problems meant that a visible body of professing believers was functioning together.
- Sanctification is something that God brings about in the life of an individual believer. This is something that happens in us individually but there is a corporate aspect to it as well. The challenges we face in church are meant to grow us up, make us holy, make us like Jesus.
- We are called to be committed to believers who have problems, who are not perfect, and are still struggling.
- For all her weaknesses, the local church is still part of the bride of Christ, his body. The weakness, the failings, the problems, the hypocrites

within, show us that the church is trying to obey.

- These are just some of the things that it means to submit ourselves to the local church.
- And this is why we formalize membership.

3. WHAT IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

- “Church membership is a formal relationship between a church and a Christian characterized by the church’s affirmation and oversight of a Christian’s discipleship and the Christian’s submission to living out his or her discipleship in the care of the church.” 9Marks, Church Membership by Jonathan Leeman
- Take note of what some of those elements are:
 - The church exercises their authority to formally affirm an individual’s profession of faith as credible.
 - The church commits to giving oversight to that individual’s discipleship/spiritual formation.
 - The individual formally submits his or her discipleship to the authority of this body and its leaders.
- Formal membership is the expression of mutual responsibility.
- Formalizing membership in the local church helps us live by the family rules and preserve and defend our confession of faith.
- There is so much beauty in the local church and there is a lot of messiness.
- But it’s still Jesus’s church!
- We invite you to formalize your membership with Sent Church.
- You can initiate that process by going to <https://sent.life/membership> and submit the short form so that we can send you details of our upcoming covenant membership class. We will also send you a copy of the membership covenant, our theological convictions, and statement of faith for you to review prior to the class.
- The local church matters because it is God’s design for each believer to be submitted to and part of a local community for their spiritual formation.
- And we endeavor to be a healthy church that by God’s grace will continue passionately following Jesus and trusting that he will be glorified by a church membership that is growing in Christ-likeness and loving one-another deeply in community.