

Be the Church (Eph 3:10) pt 1 The Church is THE PLAN

Intro: Stefan Duerksen, Lead Pastor

Church-Wide Prayer: Southland Church:

- Praise God for the many lives impacted at the Camp this year!
- Pray - youth as they go back to School (public, private, home)
- Pray - youth as they engage in Church Ministry - Know Jesus, connect with friends
- Pray - those who are serving inside & outside the church
- Pray - SC staff as they launch ministries: favor, Spirit filled, wisdom, opportunities
- Pray - Southland Church to be known for our Love, generosity, standing for truth, mission and for serving the needs of those within our region

Fall Kick-Off series.... BE THE CHURCH!

We live in a day where church attendance is declining, while people are simultaneously reporting being MORE spiritual!

It seems that every other month, another scandal comes to light and we hear of a Christian leader failing

The media and culture have long since turned against the church and hold her responsible for many problems within society – suicide rates amongst LGBTQ youth, misogyny, systemic racism... and more!

Maybe you have referred to our faith and the church as a crutch... even inside the church are asking

WHY SHOULD I GO TO CHURCH?

- T.M. Luhrmann from NYTimes writes, “ONE of the most striking scientific discoveries about religion in recent years is that going to church weekly is good for you. Religious attendance — at least, religiosity — boosts the immune system and decreases blood pressure. It may add as much as two to three years to your life. The reason for this is not entirely clear.”
- Lower rates of depression, anxiety, blood pressure, better immune systems, lower rates of cancer, lower rates of divorce, stronger families, etc.

Despite the negative press – it appears that church is good for individuals and society!

Ephesians 3:7-12 Of this gospel I was made a minister ... to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light.. what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God... so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

CHURCH IS GOD’S PLAN

A. What is Church? Church is God’s Family –

- An event → “Kids we are going to be late to CHURCH!” did that trigger anyone?
- A building → “where is your church located?” “Church building project”
- An institution → leaders, particular beliefs, denomination, structures, etc. “what type of church do you go to?”

NONE of these are wrong to use! Depending on the context, all three can be appropriate.

Church: The word used is EKKLESIA which is Greek for gathering/assembly. It is derived from two Greek words put together: EK – out of, from, by, away from AND KALEO – to call

- **You could say, the church is a “called-out assembly of people”**
- **IN the NT the Church is referred to as the family, household, bride & body of Christ!**
- We are going to focus in on one important aspect - FAMILY

Church is God’s Family: It is the universal and local gathering of people - male & female, rich & poor, every nation, every tribe, who have put their faith in Jesus, have been forgiven their sins have been adopted into God’s family!

Until the 4th century, what we call “going to church” an event. The early church called, **“the gatherings of the church”**. **THINK: the gatherings of God’s family – THIS IS A FAMILY GATHERING!**

Ephesians 1:4-5 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Mark 3:33-35 “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Romans 8:15-17 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

2 Corinthians 6:16-18 ... For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people... then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

We are invited into God’s FAMILY – to be treated as his SONS & DAUGHTERS! We are **ADOPTED** into God’s FAMILY! In a **UNIVERSAL** sense, we are the “gathering of God’s people” past and present and are part of that family regardless of where we are at any given moment! and in the **LOCAL** sense, **“this is the gathering of God’s family” the CHURCH.**

Matthew 16:17-18 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

- **Of course – every analogy has its limitations – which is why Scripture refers to the Church:** 1. The Bride of Christ; (we looked at that in the Grand Story) 2. Family; 3. The Body of Christ; 4. God’s House

Ephesians 2:18-22 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,...

Many of the commands: to love, forgive, serve, etc. though universal in one sense – are given specifically to show how are to treat each other in God's FAMILY.

Your Bibles will often say, 'brothers' or, 'brothers & sisters' or, 'all people' depending on translation to translate one word: ADELPHOS which is Greek for "belonging to the same people" or "siblings of the same father"

- It is used 346x in the NT! It is used in two primary ways. TO describe relationships between actual blood family members e.g. genealogy AND the relationships that God's people – his FAMILY – are to have with one another.
- **Matthew 5:47** And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?
- **Matthew 7:3-4** "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"
- **Matthew 25:40** "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'
 - **Braveheart:** "an attack on the Kings servants is the same as an attack on the King himself!"
 - The Passage on the least of these... clothing, feeding, visiting, helping, etc. THOUGH GOOD TO DO TO EVERYONE – is specifically talking about BODY LIFE. CHURCH LIFE. how are FAMILY TREATS EACH OTHER. We LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER.
- **Matthew 18:35** "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."
- **Matthew 5:22-24** But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' (insults) is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.
 - **Forgiving others is a MAIN CHARACTERISTIC Of our FAMILY!**

Church - the Family of God - whether gathered, or scattered, is where we find BELONGING - we belong to God and each other, we receive FORGIVENESS from God and each other, we receive HEALING, we serve each other and discover our PURPOSE, we SHARE our possessions & money with each other! We find STRENGTH & ENCOURAGEMENT to keep going when things are difficult!

Some of you have been hurt by your family, by the church and others! and it has left you fearful of engaging your heart with Jesus and the Church!

DO NOT GIVE UP ON THE CHURCH!! DON'T TRY AND DO LIFE ON YOUR OWN!

Rather – BE A PART OF THE SOLUTION – BE THE CHURCH.

Rather than wait for the perfect church to come along – it doesn't exist – PLUG IN, SERVE, MINISTER to OTHERS, OPEN UP, GIVE, ENGAGE – and BE THE CHURCH.

B. The Church is THE PLAN to fulfill God's Mission!

Mission statement: love God, love people, BE disciplined, MAKE disciples!

The Church - is CRITICAL to the success of the MISSION!

Colossians 2:9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

Ephesians 1:22-23 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The CHURCH IS NOW THE FULLNESS OF GOD ON THE EARTH!

Right after Jesus left... the church came under SEVERE persecution! Yet by 313AD it was legalized. How?

The Church on Mission: (Glenn Sunshine – why you think the way you do)

Despite persecution. The church stood firm in Truth. they rejected...

- Gladiator games
- Abortion and infanticide
- Sex outside of marriage between one man and one woman (the original sexual revolution!)
- The church stood against homosexuality
- Slavery
- The church rejected patriarchy

And PROMOTED not only a risen Savior! But also... demonstrated extravagant love! Even at personal cost to themselves!

- Boldly proclaiming that all people were EQUAL and IMAGE BEARERS!
- Regardless of Race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.
- Women were lifted up! The poor and the sick were cared for! Abandoned infants were adopted!
- When plague broke out and people were leaving their family members in the street to die – it was the CHURCH that came and cared for the SICK!

This is our heritage. This is the Church. God's family. Known by their love. Faithful unto death. Radically generous. Counter cultural. Guardians of truth.

Our world today... our region... Steinbach... NEEDS THIS KIND OF CHURCH!

- Suicide, depression & anxiety are on the rise!
- Our kids are being taught that truth is relative – whatever they want it to be!
- Broken families – broken lives!
- Addiction! Worldliness!
- People are no longer lovers of truth but lovers of pleasure!
- We see DECEPTION all over!

Ephesians 4:11-16 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 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 people

in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

THAT is what we will be discussing in this series! What it means to BE THE CHURCH. What our JOB is.

REFLECTION: Church is God's family – a called-out assembly of people

- **Are you serving your family?**
- **Are you holding onto hurts or bitterness within your family?**
- **How can you love and serve those around you?**

AFTER SERVICE PRAYER – PRAYER ROOM – 9AM and 11AM (NO 11 ASP!)

MARANATHA!! Come soon Lord!

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SC CHURCH WIDE PRAYER REQUESTS 2024

Cruise ship → → → → → Battleship

1. **Life on Mission** (Mt 28:18-20, Mt 22:37-40): Love, serve & disciple people to Jesus
2. **Next Gen** (Ps 78:7-8): Encounters with Jesus, strong mental health, boldness & belonging
3. **Israel & Persecuted Church** (Lk 21:13): Faith, fortitude & wisdom “to not waste the opportunity to share the Gospel”
4. **Heart of Prayer** (Ps 27:4): Every generation to find Jesus & learn to bring their needs to Him in prayer
5. **Church Renewal**: Directors for India and other new countries & many global disciple makers