

How to Go to Church

1 Church in 3 Locations

Next week we will start back in Ephesians

Title: *How to Come to Church*

Theme statement: *The gathering of the church is important and requires purposeful participation*

Purpose Statement: *To move the church from passive observation to active engagement*

Ephesians 1:4-5,13

Even before He made the world, God **loved** [you] and **chose** [you] in Christ to be **holy and without fault** in His eyes. God decided in advance to **adopt** [you] into **His own family** through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do and it **gave Him great pleasure**.

When you believed in Christ, God **identified you as His own people**.

The gathering of the church (coming to church) is the fulfilling of **the ancient desire of God**

- Garden, tabernacle (Exodus 25:22; 30:6, 36), revelation
- It is not primarily our desire
 - It is God's desire
 - Made possible by the Cross and fulfilled in the gathering of the church
- It is not primarily about us
 - It is about Him

What we do when we come to church is gather **to, for and around Jesus**

- And so...
- The **blood bought bride** of Jesus
- In **Matthew 16** Jesus calls the church His

Jesus is:

- The head of the church
 - The goal of the church
 - The Chief Shepherd of the church
 - The One who owns the church
 - The One who loves the church
 - The Object of the church's activity (worship, preaching & mission)
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- He is the one who has saved us!!! (juice this)

So then the church is all about Him!

Church is not something that we go to, it is something we are

- If your Christianity exists primarily in going to church then what you have is not Christianity but churchianity

The church exists in 2 modes:

- As the church scattered
 - We are endeavoring to be faithful to Jesus (in every aspect of life)
 - And we are learning to live life on mission with Jesus (where we are right now)
- As the church gathered
 - We are exalting only Jesus
 - We are putting our hope only in Jesus
 - We are giving all our attention to Jesus
 - We are gathering to, for and around Jesus

The Concert Vision

- Cf. Revelation
- I believe that the Lord gave me this vision to **rebuke me** (and Reality)
 - To **(lovingly)** reveal to us that we do not have Him on center stage in our hearts and minds
 - Do we? Do you?
 - The evidence of that is our over **concern with other people**
- 1 Peter 2:4-5

You are coming to **Christ**, who is the living cornerstone of God's temple. He was rejected by people, but He was chosen by God for great honor.
And you are **living stones** that God is building into His spiritual temple.
- **Colossians 3:1-16**
- We have to put Jesus back on center stage right now
 - Isn't He worth it?
 - Isn't that right?
 - What else could this possibly be about?
 - Won't it heal all of our people issues (not to be overly simplistic)
- We are His—He saved to fulfill the ancient desire of God to dwell among us! (and us in unity)

So, maybe we can **approach** our gatherings differently

- Put our hope and expectations in Him
 - Not the sermon or the worship or the fellowship or a person
 - People may let you down, but Jesus will never let you down!
- Do it before we come
 - Come like an expectant, active worshipper (not passively)
- The gathering of the church is not an event
 - It is a holy fulfillment of God's ancient desire made possible by the blood of Christ
 - It is precious and powerful. Holy and glorious.
 - Christ is present!!!

What does that look like? (approaching our gathering differently)

- Prepare your heart and mind
 - Usually do more preparation of our looks than our hearts
- Pray before you come

- Come on time (if we believe Jesus is here)
- Come to give, not just to receive
- Make worship the climax (not the sermon)
 - Prepares your heart to worship, repent, pray
- Practice spiritual disciplines
 - Prayer
 - Communion
 - Postures of praise (carpets)
- Love people
 - Before and after
 - These are your brothers and sisters
 - We are those who together have been rescued from hell and to a Great Lover
 - What binds us together is far greater than anything that might tear us apart

I said, make worship the climax not the sermon

- But the sermon is also worship (I meant the musical set)
- So listen to sermons worshipfully
 - Not as a connoisseur
 - Not anthropocentrically
 - Looking to connect with the person of Christ
 - It is not information about Jesus that delivers you, it is Jesus who delivers you
 - Engaged (always required in worship)
 - Humbly
 - Surrendered
 - Expectantly

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) had these 3 helpful suggestions¹

(PHOTO)

1) We must hear with **FAITH**, believing implicitly that every word of God is true, and shall stand.

2) We must hear with **REVERENCE**, remembering constantly that the Bible is the book of God.

3) We must hear with **PRAYER**, praying for God's blessing before the sermon is preached, praying for God's blessing again when the sermon is over. Here lies the grand defect of the hearing of many. They ask no blessing, and so they have none. The sermon passes through their minds like water through a leaky vessel, and leaves nothing behind.

After the sermon, since it was about Jesus, we want to **respond (to Jesus)**

Nobody should leave church at that time

- Bathroom, yes
- I remember when I used to do that
 - I wish I was at a church that had a response time
 - I wish someone taught me the value of responding

The 2nd Set of Worship

- Worship
 - The glory due His name (not about us)

¹ <http://jcrylequotes.com/2011/04/18/3-simple-rules-for-listening-to-a-sermon/>

- Remember when Pastor Al taught us that the R.O.A.D. to understanding Scripture can be difficult, but the destination is worth it?
- The destination of Biblical Interpretation is Jesus
- The destination of the church gathering is also Jesus
- **Prayer**
 - His presence and availability
 - Psalm 116
- **Repentance**
 - Because though the sermon was about Jesus, it had something to say about us, didn't it
 - Usually, that involves repentance (even if what it said about us was good. (I.e. identity, etc.)
- **Communion**
- **Postures of Praise**