



Reaching our Neighbors Pt 4_The Intentional Church Revisited!

April 26, 2020

Happy 23rd Anniversary CRCC!!!

Text: Matthew 16:13-18

Matthew 16:13-20 (KJV) *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, **Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?** **14** And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. **15** He saith unto them, **But whom say ye that I am?** **16** And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. **17** And Jesus answered and said unto him, **Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18** And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Last week, we looked at “The Commission of Jesus” from all four gospels. There is no question that all who would follow Jesus MUST, “Go therefore, and teach all nations,” “**Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,**” proclaim “repentance and remission of sins in His name among all nations,” and make sure that out of our love for Him, we “feed” His sheep!

What a great honor and privilege...to be used of God to communicate the Good News! As Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest truly *is* plenteous, but the labourers *are* few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” (Matt 9:37-38)

Now, beginning in the Book of Acts, we see the tremendous role the church played in obeying the Great Commission of Jesus. After our LORD’s Ascension, the Holy Spirit fell upon the church in power! People were astonished at what was going on! The apostle Peter stood up to preach in that Spirit-led moment. He preached the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the coming of the Holy Ghost; he preached, using figurative language, the shifting of the heavens and earth as the old covenant passed away and a new one took its place; and he preached unto the Jesus the Christ, the LORD and Savior of the world, whom they rejected and crucified but risen from the dead!. And 3000 souls came to faith in Jesus.

The Church was born! We read of its so-called “primitive” beauty at the end of Acts 2, beauty we are STILL trying to emulate!

Acts 2:42-47 (KJV) *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. **43** And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. **44** And all that believed were together, and had all things common; **45** And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. **46** And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, **47** Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

From that time until now, the God’s redemptive plan has flowed through His church. When people ask...

1. Why should you care about the church?
2. Why should you connect in covenant to the local church?
3. Why should you devote so much of your time, talent and treasure to the church?
4. Can't you just listen to sermons online, sing a few songs at home, and call it a day?

We believe that the Kingdom flows through the church! Yes through family as well, but the church is made up of families, and God calls us to come together for His glory!

Looking at our Text:

- In Matthew 16:18 we read the first use of the Greek word *ekklēsia* in the NT, which is translated *church*. It literally means “a *calling out*.” Thayer says, “(1) a *gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly*.”
- In our Text, we see both the **nature** of the church (“called out”, which includes separate, holy living apart from the world) and **mission** of the church (to advance on and push back the kingdom of darkness), which includes preaching the Gospel, making disciples, battling devils, and upholding and making great the Name of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God!
- Many metaphors are used in the NT to describe the LORD's church:
 1. A Body (Christ's)
 2. A Building
 3. An Army (because it has soldiers)
 4. A House (of prayer) and God's Household
 5. A Spiritual House
 6. A Kingdom of Kings and Priests
 7. A Light in the world
 8. A City on a Hill
 9. A group of fishers of men
 10. A beautiful Bride adorned for her husband (a Holy City, the New Jerusalem!)

Some truths concerning the Church:

1. Jesus is the Rock or Cornerstone of the church. (v18)
 - **Eph 2:19-20 (KJV)** *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*
 - The church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, who preached the “Rock” of Christ!
 - So it's not the pastor, buildings, vision statements, etc.; it's Christ! How can you be committed to Christ and not His Body?
2. Jesus builds and is still building the church! (v18)
 - What is Christ building? The Church! He is building His CHURCH! Please think through the connection between church and family...
 - Fathers and mothers disciple their children and godly singles walk in righteousness...as we all steward our money, preach the gospel, make disciples, use our gifts, etc...the Church is built...and she is built POWERFULLY!
3. By extension then, Jesus anchors, gives purpose to, grows, and prospers us through the church!

- This mindset smacks hard against American individualism, but it is still true. **God made us to be interdependent...self-governors to be sure, but also a part of a Body of Believers.**
- In the New Testament, from Acts onward, you were either a baptized part of a local body or you were not a Christian. The two went together.
- In the New Testament, to be removed from a local body was to be excommunicated and “delivered to Satan.” (1 Corinthians 5)

Upon this Rock?

1. Verse 18 has been subject to lots of controversy for centuries.
2. Some say that Peter (Petros) is the rock (petra); others (including me) believe that Christ is the Rock upon which the church is built.
 - **1Co 10:4** *And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*
 - **1Co 3:11** *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
3. I'd like to quickly put forward another view. Geographically, Christ was in Caesarea Philippi, which stood at the foot of Mount Hermon in the region of Bashan. To make a very long story short, this region was a center of the pagan worship of Baal (and later Pan), associated with the realm of the dead (hades), and according to Scripture and Jewish tradition, was the place where fallen angels descended in their rebellion against God, took human wives, and produced the Nephilim (giants, Gen 6:1-4, Josh 12:4-5).
4. In this view, the first century Jewish mind would understand that Christ was, in affect, declaring open war on “the gates of hell” right on the devil’s doorstep! It would be like saying, “On this “rock” where Satan now rules, I’ll build my church!”
5. Christ IS the ROCK upon which the church is built, but the implications here are staggering. The church is literally at war, battling active principalities and powers for the souls of men!

So what is the Church? Our view:

The (local) Church is a group of born-again, Spirit-filled, baptized believers in Jesus Christ who gather on the Lord’s Day for biblical worship and who are committed to obeying Scripture and personal holiness. It is led by specific elders and deacons and, collectively, is passionate about covenant love one to another, advancing the Gospel, making disciples, and being a light in the midst of the culture.

The corporate nature of the church is important!

It is the power of the Spirit among us, the comfort and strengthening from the commanded one-anothering that we do, the preaching of the Word and the building up of our faith from that Word, plus the corporate prayers of the Body that strengthen us to fight this battle!

Truly reaching our neighbors, truly seeing revival and reformation, truly making an impact cannot be done purely individually; it is to be done by the church of Jesus Christ.

What if?

This is why we must be determined (as Christ was) and **INTENTIONAL** about building up God’s Kingdom and God’s church. What would our church look like if we all put our hands to the plow? What might Christ do through us if our priorities shifted and His mission and mandates became our focus?

What might God do if...

1. We passionately invited people to church every week?
2. We had consistent and fun times of hospitality with a view towards sharing the Gospel?
3. We studied and believed in our distinctives to ease people's transition into our church? (CRCC, let's admit that people will have questions about us. Are you ready to answer those questions? If not, come see me. I'd be honored to help!)
4. We arrived prayed up and passionate for worship on Sundays?
5. We joyfully participated in CRCC ministries seeing them as they are...opportunities to reflect the glory of Christ and to build up of His Kingdom?

The Intentional Church Revisited

Intentional with your Children

1. Pray for and with them!
2. Model a godly life!
3. Preach the Gospel in your home and Disciple them! Use good tools like family worship and take advantage of teachable moments throughout the day!
4. Help them build a biblical worldview (education) and get hard questions answered (apologetics). Read at home!
5. Bring them to church and serve alongside them!

Intentional with Relatives and Friends

1. With relatives and friends, communication is both easier AND harder when it comes to spiritual things.
2. Thankfully, these relationships can normally tolerate being a bit more direct (with love).
3. Press in! Start Gospel conversations. Ask for prayer requests and if they will let you, pray with them!
4. Be there during times of difficulty.
5. Go get them and bring them to church!

Intentional with your Neighbors

1. This is similar to strangers above. Maybe add a dinner invite or an offer to assist an elderly neighbor with a household chore?
2. Consider giving simple, inexpensive, Gospel-related gifts during holidays (A box of homemade cookies with a tract or dvd sermon or handwritten Scripture?)
3. Be gracious during times of tragedy and offer prayers and support. (What a time to "check on folks! NOBODY is getting angry at a "check" right now!)
4. Invite them to church!

Intentional with Strangers

1. We are all so busy and distracted. Often we are also wary of strangers (and sometimes rightfully so). But what if we were simply more aware that those around us might be lost and facing a fearful judgment and eternal hell?
2. What can we do?
 - Pray for people as you walk by, sit beside, and interact with them.
 - Pray that we might enter into more polite but intentional conversations and plant Gospel seeds.
 - Pray to become more comfortable testing if the door is open to share the Gospel. "Do you go to church?" "Would you consider yourself a good person?"

- If nothing else, most will respond ok to: “It’s been nice talking with you. Would you mind if I prayed for you and your family?”
- 3. It’s old school, but tracts can still be used to “leave the Gospel” with someone as well.
- 4. Your local church flyer/contact cards are good too!

Intentional on Social Media

1. This is huge area for evangelism! People who may not talk with you will read what you post!
2. Realize testimonies can be lost here and conduct yourself accordingly!
3. Use email/text/Facebook/Instagram, etc. to send tracts, sermons, Scriptures, and prayers.
4. Use the same to answer questions about faith and tough issues with friends, family, and internet family. LOL
5. Support your church!

Intentional with the Prideful

1. One evangelistic principle we observe in Scripture is this: “Law to the proud, Grace to the humble.”
2. We will all face prideful hearts as we increase our INTENTIONALITY as a congregation. The prideful heart is rarely ready for grace.
3. The tool in Scripture to “break up the fallow ground (Jer 4:3; Hos 10:12)” is the Law of God:

1Ti 1:8-11 (KJV) *But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; 9 Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; 11 According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*

4. Satan has worked HARD to remove this tool from the Christian’s tool belt. But with compassion, setting people before an uncompromising standard (God’s Law) and warning men of judgment and the wrath to come is the biblical prescription for the hard heart that men cry out for grace!
5. Often, a pulpit that declares the whole counsel of God can aid with this, whether it’s one on the street corner or in the local church...so bring them!

Intentional with Hurting

1. When people are already broken, shower them with the love of Jesus.
2. Pray with them. Declare Him as the healer of hearts, the binder up of the wounded, and the deliverer of the captive.
3. As you are led, attempt to connect them with those who can help or provide encouragement: a pastor, a Christian counselor, a Care Group, etc.
4. Allow you church family to love on them as well!

As we all walk through the current COVID-19 crisis, may the Lord help us rise up and see that the harvest is indeed plenteous. May we *intentionally* look to the left and right, the front and back, and see those who need Jesus and reach out to them. May the Lord bless our efforts and may He alone and receive the glory.

In Jesus Name.

Amen