

Why Church? – Sunday August 12th 2012.

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near..” Hebrews 10:23-25

Beloved in the Lord,

From time to time people say to me: “I don’t need to go to Church, because I can pray to God in my garden just as well.” If I follow up this statement asking them if in fact they do pray at home in the garden, there is usually an awkward response indicating that not really would be the truthful answer. We should pray at home in the garden, we should pray when we go for a walk or ride in the car or sit on the train. We should pray at work and rest. This does not however eliminate the need for Church. Worship services are an important part of our Christian life.

Today I would like to consider the question: “Why Church?” Why is it important to attend worship services? Obviously it is not possible to fully answer this question in one short sermon, but I will attempt to give a brief overview of the main issues involved.

The first and simplest answer to “why church?” is because it is instituted by God. We read in Matthew’s Gospel: ***“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He *said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. “ (Mt.16:13-18)***

Did you notice that Jesus used the phrase “My Church”!? The word translated Church is Ecclesia which means the “Chosen ones or called out ones.” The Church is comprised of those who are called out of the world to follow and to serve Jesus. The Church is God’s institution and built upon the Rock – The Lord Jesus Christ, The Son of God. Jesus told Peter that the revelation that he had received was not from men, but from God the Father.

There are things that are revealed to us only in the supernatural realm. Worship services are a place where we receive Divine revelation, for Jesus Himself is present there.

“Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.” Matthew 18:19-20

Do you see what promise is given to those who gather together in Jesus name? He promises to be there! By not attending Church services you are denying yourself the opportunity to receive something from the Presence of The Lord Jesus Christ. There are certain revelations, certain things that God gives only to those who have come together for worship in Jesus name. Jesus put such a great importance on the Church that He promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. Rulers, tyrants, Kings, Princes, Communists, Atheists and all sorts have tried to destroy the Church, discredit it, but since the inception of it, it has stood the test of time in various forms. The Church has survived the most horrific persecution. If God places such a high importance on the Church, how can we dare to be so flippant about it? The Church is God's institution and He is zealous for her.

The next point to consider is that The Church is Christ's body. We read in 1. Corinthians 12:27-30: ***"Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. ²⁸ And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹ All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? ³⁰ All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"***

You see Paul is teaching us that The Church is Christ's body, and that all Christians are members. Each member has gifts, has talents given by God. When we stay away from fellowship, when we are absent from services, then the body is not complete and we limp along. (Please note I am not speaking of those who are physically not able to attend). God has so ordered things that we actually need one another. We are not able to do all things ourselves. Every person has a place, has a role to play and when we are humble and serve in God's love in His ordained positions, then the Church functions well.

That is why our foundation text is exhorting us not to be missing from Church. Let's look at it again:

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.."

It is important that we meet regularly to encourage one another, to strengthen one another, to stimulate each other to love and good deeds. If we make it a habit to stay away, then we make ourselves easy prey for the devil. It is much easier for him to trick us and to lead us astray. When we stick together it is much harder for him to trip us up.

One of the main functions of the Church is to uphold the Truth. The truth is The Word of God. If you are missing from services, then you are missing opportunities to learn God's Word and grow in Him. A person who is not well versed in the Truth is easily duped. God

has given us the Church to support and help us in our walk with Him. The Church is our spiritual family. We have brothers and sisters in the Lord who love us. The Church should be a place where we come joyfully to serve the Lord and one another in faith and love.

The Early Church was strong because Christians were united. We read in Acts 2:44-47:

“And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;⁴⁵ and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.⁴⁶ Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

The Early Church was powerful because the Christians were together! It grew rapidly in power and numbers. They supported one another, prayed for one another, provided for one another. They met regularly, even daily where possible. They prayed, worshiped, shared communion and ate together. It is no surprise that Satan worked day and night and still does to wreck fellowships and divide Christians.

In comparison to the Early Church, today's Church by and large is weak, mainly because it is so divided and segmented. People no longer seem to understand the concept that all Christians irrespective of race, denomination, language, tradition etc, are equal. We are to love one another.

It is sad that at the first sign of trouble, at the first disagreement we are so ready to split off or go away. So many cease to come over some trivial matter. Satan rubs his hands with glee. We need to toughen up. We have to stop being so precious and sensitive. The enemy is outside not within. We need to understand that in any family, in any group of people there will be diversity of opinions, there will be disagreements at times. We can overcome these if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus. We need to always remember that we are serving a higher cause.

Listen again to our text: ***“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;²⁴ and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near..”***

Let us hold fast. With God's help let us make a commitment not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but let us work on being united in Christ's love. Let us stimulate one another to love and good deeds. **Amen.**

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.