

The Emphasis of The Church
Sunday, May 2, 2021

- * What should The Church of Jesus Christ be emphasizing to the world?
 - * What HAS The Church been emphasizing?
 - * According to what we see, is there a clear understanding of what our PRIORITY should be in The Church?
- I. In our arrogance and pride as The Church of Jesus Christ it seems that we have decided what is best and how we best express The Lord to the world around us!
- A. Let me explain: I love ice cream! In my travels around the world I have felt it was my obligation to try ice cream in every country we visited! In the mountains of Peru, I decided I wanted to try chocolate ice cream made in a mountain village. I ask for chocolate ice cream and when the translator told the lady she replied, "No, no...you will have strawberry!" I said, "No, I prefer chocolate!" She refused to give me chocolate because she said, "You will definitely like the strawberry more!" She never gave me the chocolate ice cream...because "she knew better!"
1. You see, we have in our minds what we are supposed to do as The Church to reach the world!
 2. We need to make sure we provide a "really powerful church assembly" so people will come!
 3. We need to emphasize; age-appropriate ministries, certain styles of worship music, specific volume and length is critical, a "relevant sermon," convenient parking, a well laid out and modern building, and maybe even a coffee bar and of course A-1 childcare!
 4. Is there anything wrong with any of those things? Is it not a good and respectful idea to provide this for people of your congregation?

B. God also has a list of what The Church is to provide!

1. Love for one another!

John 15:12 (NIV)

12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you

2. Outreach and care for those in need!

James 1:27 (NIV)

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

3. We should bear one another's burdens!

Galatians 6:2 (NIV)

2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.

4. Develop disciples of Christ!

Matthew 28:19 (NIV)

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C. Here is THE POINT!

1. Do we get more upset when our church doesn't have our style of worship music...or when our church doesn't have love for one another?
2. Is it more important to us that our church have convenient parking and childcare...or outreach and care for others!
3. What about our having a modern building and coffee bar ...or making disciples of Christ!
4. Yes, of course you can have all of the above, but what

really bothers you when it is missing?

- II. One of the main problems in the Church is that we make up things that are supposedly important to The Lord! For instance...
 - A. The Pharisees became angry because Jesus' followers were not "doing things right!" They were not "observing things" properly!

Mark 7:1-3 (NIV)

1 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus 2 and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders.

- 1. The problem was...God never said that!

Mark 7:4-9 (NIV)

4 When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles. 5 So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?" 6 He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 7 They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.'" 8 You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions." 9 And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"

- 2. Many "Christian traditions" have ADDED to the worship have added to worship and their practice of devotion!
- 3. I love some traditions and certain ways some practice their faith, but let's make sure to keep it in their proper place...tradition...not doctrine!

4. We quickly complain when certain things get changed but we seem to be fine when “widows and orphans” get neglected!
 5. Don't you dare mess with my worship style but I can look over when we don't “bear one another's burdens!”
- B. Church, please don't hear what I am NOT saying! I desire “excellence in ministry!” I want Magnolia to provide for the needs and wants of everyone who calls this home! But let not ANY OF US confuse desires and traditions with God-given mandates of being The Church!

Romans 9:1-5 (NIV)

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption to sonship; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. 5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

1. Paul was truly “all things to all people” but he never allowed that to distract him from his mission!
 2. Do you see Paul's deep passionate desire that people see God for WHO HE IS!
 3. He says, “Yes there is race, custom, law and ways of worship” by my people, but the issue is them and God!
- III. We spend an enormous amount of energy, effort and money trying to engage people and get them to be interested in the things of God!
- A. Please understand I am not speaking negatively about anyone's efforts in reaching people...just like I'm not being negative towards coffee bars, childcare and parking lots!

1. I merely want us to stay focused on what is real, effective and most of all LONG LASTING!
2. When I see The Church of Jesus Christ more engaged in marketing than I do ministry, it grieves me!
3. Nothing wrong with exposing the community to ministry, but if we do not have the ministry of Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit when people do come, is that not "false advertising!"
4. We say we have the answer, but people leave as empty as as when they came!!!
5. We talk a lot about the love of God but do people feel His pure unconditional love while amongst us!

Revelation 5:11-14 (NIV)

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" 13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!" 14 The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

- B. When society encounters The Church of Jesus Christ, they should realize they have just walked into some sacred! Something supernatural! Something bigger than this natural world and what the world offers!

John 13:35 (NIV)

35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Acts 2:44-47 (TPT)

44 All the believers were in fellowship as one body, and they shared with one another whatever they had. 45 Out of generosity they even sold their assets to distribute the proceeds to those who were in need among them. 46 Daily they met together in the temple courts and in one another's homes to celebrate communion. They shared meals together with joyful hearts and tender humility. 47 They were continually filled with praises to God, enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord kept adding to their number daily those who were coming to life.

1. So much of people's problems, challenges and sin come from them simply seeking COMMUNITY! In other words they look for fulfillment in other things when it is only found by living in close community with God and His people!
2. The Church is a community empowered by the very LIFE OF GOD through The Holy Spirit!
3. Isn't THAT what we need to produce, guard and value among us? The genuine community that people seek?

C. DEVOTION is the word that describes the early Church!

1. They were devoted to God and to each other!
2. We are meant to be together! Relying on each other!
3. Life is not designed to be lived alone! We need others!

Ephesians 2:19-22 (J. B. Phillips)

19-22 So you are no longer outsiders or aliens, but fellow-citizens with every other Christian—you belong now to the household of God. Firmly beneath you in the foundation, God's messengers and prophets, the actual foundation-stone being Jesus Christ himself. In him each separate piece of building, properly fitting into its neighbour, grows together into a temple consecrated to God. You are all part of this building in which God himself lives by his spirit.

