
Sermon Notes

November 8, 2020

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

We Are The Church Together Matthew 16:13-18

Commitment Phobia

- ❖ The fear of making any kind of commitment to other people
 - applies to lifelong as well as short-term commitments
 - affects personal, business and organizational relationships
- ❖ The fear that by making a promise to do one good thing, we will miss out on something even better
 - keeping one's options open
 - commitment to the church is at an all-time low
 - 50% say church attendance is not necessary
 - only 1 in 3 who call themselves "born again" attend church on a semi-regular basis (8.25% of the total US population)
- ❖ Many think they can be a follower of Jesus Christ without being attached to the body of Christ
- ❖ The church of the early 21st century needs to help Christians cultivate an understanding of the church and why every believer should orient his/her life around it

What Is the Church?

- ❖ The church is not an organization or an organizing principle
 - the church is a living organism that is distinctly and exclusively Christian
 - the word *church* is a thoroughly Christian word
- ❖ The church is a **BODY** of people who profess and give evidence that they have been saved by grace alone, for God's glory alone through faith alone in Christ alone
 - a local, loving collection of people who are committed to Christ and committed to one another
 - the church **BELONGS** to Jesus Christ (Matt 16:18)
- ❖ Word pictures that help flesh out our understanding of the unique nature and function of the church
 - the living **BODY** of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)
 - a **TEMPLE** or spiritual house (Eph 2:21, 1 Peter 2:4-5)
 - a **FLOCK** (Acts 20:28)
 - a **FAMILY** (1 Timothy 3:15)
 - "family values"
 - *a pillar and buttress of the truth*
- ❖ These pictures underscore that being part of Jesus' body means participating in a living, functioning, serving, witnessing community

Why Should I JOIN a Church?

- ❖ Like family membership, church membership is not an obscure matter
 - you don't change your family membership day by day, week by week or season by season
 - in the same way, your identity with a church family is meant to be clear and unambiguous
- ❖ The NT makes multiple references to the principle of church membership
 - an official list of people (Acts 2:27)
 - the concept of union (Acts 5:13-14)
 - *join* = glue, cement together, firmly unite
 - *join* = the word describing the physical union that takes place between husband and wife
 - an identifiable assembly (1 Corinthians 14:23)
 - the provision of accountability (Heb 13:17, Matt 18:19)
- ❖ The Christian life is not meant to be lived in isolation
- ❖ Church membership identifies you as a believer (1 Jn 2:19)
 - membership in the local church testifies to your membership in the universal church
 - when you grasp hands with other believers to know and to be known by them, you defeat your selfish, self-seeking tendency to see the Christian life as all about "you"
- ❖ Church membership helps you fulfill Jesus' great commission (Matt 28:19-20)

- ❖ Church membership is for the edification of the rest of the body... to build one another up
- ❖ Church membership is for the glory of God

What Does Church Membership Mean?

- ❖ A commitment to
 - participate regularly in worship, small groups, attendance at the Lord's Table
 - assume a ministry role
 - protect the unity of the church
 - share responsibility for the church
 - follow the leadership as it seeks God's will for the church

Personal Application

1. How do you assess your current level of commitment and connection to the body of Christ?
2. After listening to this message, which Biblical pictures of the church's identity are most meaningful to you at this stage of your growth in Christ?
3. Being part of Jesus' body involves participating as a living, functioning, serving, witnessing member of a local, loving collection of God's people. Does this describe you? Are there any aspects of this that need renewed or increased commitment on your part?
4. Have you joined a church? Why or why not?.