

“I Will Build My Church – Part 6”
“Why Join a Church”
Mark 8:27-29; Matthew 16:13-20
(Preached at Trinity, November 22, 2011)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. For several Wednesday night sermons I've directed your attention to **Matt. 16:18**
Matthew 16:18 NAU - "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."
We've seen the identify of the "Rock" – Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus alone is the bedrock upon which the church is built. It is upon this foundation that the church stands invincible and victorious until the end – "the gates of Hades will not overpower it."
2. Our primary focus in **Verse 18** has been upon the Church of Christ.
I will build My church
We've looked at several aspects of the topic – the definition of the church, the nature of the church, the purpose and function of the church. And we've looked at the government of the church.
3. Tonight I want to address one final aspect of this subject, but perhaps the most important. Why should I join a church? Why do we need the church?
 - A. We shouldn't just join a church because it seems right. We have to be persuaded from Scripture that it is right.
 - B. The problem is there are no proof texts that say, "Thou shalt join a church." Or "Membership in a local church is essential." Because of this some claim that since there are no such proof texts having our name on a church membership roll is simply a human tradition.
 - C. So is church membership Biblical? Is it the will of Christ for every believer to belong to a local church? Just because there are no proof texts to support church membership doesn't mean it isn't Biblical, no more than to say in the absence of proof texts the Trinity is unbiblical. Why should I join a church?
- I. Because the New Testament puts a high value on the local church
 1. Read these words again
Matthew 16:18 KJV - "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
 2. Many of the Epistles were written to local churches
Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians,
 3. In Revelation 2-3 we find Jesus as being in the midst of His churches, watching over them, admonishing them, blessing them.
 4. It's hard to imagine such importance placed upon the church and it not be a major part of a Christian's life

II. Because of the unique relationship created when we are saved

1. We become one with Christ – united with Him
Romans 6:3-5 NAU - "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,"
2. Those united with Christ become united with one another
Romans 12:4-5 NAU - "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
3. The intensity of this union only finds its fullness in the context of a body, of a community of faith.
1 Corinthians 12:20 NAU - "But now there are many members, but one body."
1 Corinthians 12:25-26 NAU - "so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it."
 We do not have such intimate oneness with every Christian in general. We cannot have such an intimate connection with every Christian in Baton Rouge.

III. Because every Christian is to be accountable to a local church

1. The admonitions of Matthew 18 and 1 Cor. 5 would make no sense apart from the local church
Matthew 18:17-18 NAS - "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. ¹⁸ "Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."
1 Corinthians 5:12-13 NAU - " For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? ¹³ But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES."
2. God has given the church great authority
Matthew 16:18-19 NAU - "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. ¹⁹ "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."
3. Every church is under the oversight of particular pastors
Acts 20:28 NAS - "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

4. Every Christian must be accountable to particular pastors
Hebrews 13:17 KJV - "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you."
 Such commands can only make sense within the context of a particular church

IV. The local church is the primary context for discipleship

1. Look at the Great Commission
Matthew 28:19-20 NAS - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
2. The pastoral ministry was given to the local church. **Ephesians 4:8-16**
 - a. The pastoral care is given to the church for its edification
Ephesians 4:13-15 NAU - "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,"
 - b. The pastoral epistles provide instruction for the sake of pastors shepherding God's people
1 Timothy 4:6 KJV - "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained."
1 Timothy 4:11 KJV - "These things command and teach."
1 Timothy 4:13 NAU - "Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading *of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching."
2 Timothy 4:2 NAS - "preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."
 - c. It is through the church that each Christian receives the benefit of pastoral care.
3. The local church has been entrusted with the protection of Biblical truth
1 Timothy 3:15 NAS - "*I write* so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth."
4. The growth of a Christian separated from the ministry of the local church will be stunted

- V. Because the local church is the place where the sacraments are administered
1. Baptism and the Lord's supper are church ordinances administered by the pastors
 2. They are elements of Biblical worship
 3. The ordinances are means of grace and commands of Christ – A Christians cannot partake of these blessings apart from the local church
- VI. Because we are blessed with spiritual gifts to be exercised in the context of a local church
- Romans 12:4 NAS** - " For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,"
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 NAS** - "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.⁵ And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶ And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. ⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
- 1 Corinthians 12:17-18 NAS** - "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired."
1. Each local church is a particular body with each member taking his place in that body for the work of Christ.
1 Corinthians 12:12-14 NAU - " For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many."
 2. Apart from the church the Christian is left void of the power
- VII. Because the church is the Bride of Christ
1. You answer, But doesn't that refer to the universal church
 2. Remember, the distinctions blur as we read the NT
 3. The church is the most glorious institution upon the face of the earth. Should we not labor for her prosperity?

Conclusion:

1. God places each member within the body so that the church might be equipped to conduct its work. Each part is essential.
1 Corinthians 12:18-20 – "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? ²⁰ But now *are they* many members, yet but one body."
2. Every Christian should see himself or herself as "sent" by God to his or her particular church. That church is his place of ministry. He labors for the advancement of that particular church as the body labors together for the Kingdom of our Lord. He is responsible to and for that particular church.
3. One more important point as we consider the local church. A particular local church is but a small part of the Kingdom of Christ.

- A. While we must be a member of a local church we must not forget we are a part of a larger Kingdom. While it is true that we belong to the Christians with whom we regularly meet as a church, we are also a part of Christians throughout the world. We are fellow-citizens with all of God's people. We must not fail to recognize this connection. We are not in competition with one another or with other churches. We are all involved in the same work.
- B. While it is true that some Christians become sinfully individualistic, it is also true that churches can become sinfully individualistic. We should seek communion with other churches and pray for the well-being of one another.