

“What is a Healthy Church”
Exodus 35:4-35
(Preached at Trinity, July 26, 2009)

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. What is a healthy congregation? This is an important question. It is a question that might entertain many different answers.
Mark Dever wrote a book titled, “The Nine Marks of a Healthy Church.” He has developed an active ministry on this subject – “Nine Marks Ministries.” His nine marks are essential to a healthy church
 - Expository Preaching
 - Biblical Theology
 - The Gospel
 - A Biblical Understanding of Conversion
 - A Biblical Understanding of Evangelism
 - A Biblical Understanding of Church Membership
 - Biblical Church Discipline
 - A Concern for Discipleship and Growth
 - Biblical Church Leadership
2. One might add to this list, “A high view of the importance of prayer.”
3. These marks provide the foundation, the basis of a strong and health church. Without a solid foundation nothing else will stand.
But as we consider the church, a strong foundation is of little value if the people do not have a heart for Christ. True, people with a heart for Christ will want to unite with a church that bears these nine marks, but the nine marks do not necessarily create a passion for Christ.
4. So I go back to my original question. What is a healthy congregation?
What does a healthy church look like?
5. In **Chapter 35** we find a return to a focus on the Tabernacle. The congregation of God had fallen into the sin of idolatry. God had judged them and then restored the covenantal relationship. It was time to begin building the Tabernacle. The work involved the entire congregation. They were prepared to give themselves to the work.
6. The Church of Christ is made up of a congregation of people who have been captivated by His glory. They have given themselves to Him. They have a heart for Christ. As I stated before, a true healthy church must be comprised of a people with a heart for Christ.
7. In our text we find that Israel had committed themselves to the work of God. It manifested itself in two ways; two ways that are consistent with those who have given themselves to Christ.
Those who have given themselves to Christ have dedicated both their material resources and their lives to Him.
8. Tonight I want us to look at these two areas more carefully. Without these no church will be truly healthy.

- I. First, notice they gave of their material resources
- A. **Verses 4-5** – “This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD. . .”
1. **Verses 5-9** describe the items needed
 2. They were costly items. The cost of the Tabernacle is difficult to calculate but it was very expensive.
 - a. There was 1 and a quarter tons of gold. At \$900 an ounce that’s over 36 million dollars.
 - b. In addition there was 4 ½ tons of silver, four tons of brass, yards and yards of fine white linen embroidered blue, purple and scarlet.
 - c. There was the covering of goat hair, rams and badger’s skins.
 - d. There was large amounts of acacia wood
 - e. Precious jewels
 3. God was asking Israel to take from their possessions for the building of the Tabernacle – they gave abundantly.
- B. The Bible has much to say about money. It gives us great warnings against the love of money.
1. Your view of money will say much about your heart.
Luke 12:34 – “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
 2. The love of money has been the downfall of many a man.
1 Timothy 6:10 – “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
 - a. It was Delilah’s love of money that brought her to betray Samson
 - b. It was Judas Iscariot’s love of money that brought him to betray Christ.
 - c. It was Ananias and Sapphira’s love of money that led them to lie concerning their offering – God executed them.
 3. It is the love of money that causes men to rob God by withholding their tithe
- C. The offering being taken up in this passage was a “freewill” offering.
Exodus 35:5 – “Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever *is* of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD”
1. We also saw it back in **Chapter 25**
Exodus 25:2 – “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.”
 2. In other words, God expected His people to be so pleased in being the people of God, so pleased in the worship of God that they would give back to Him abundantly.
 3. Later the principle of the tithes would be established. This would be a command.
Leviticus 27:30 – “And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land, *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD’S: *it is* holy unto the LORD.”
 4. The New Testament affirms the tithe, but it also affirms extra free-will offerings.

5. Paul gave great energy in taking up an offering for the impoverished saints in Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 – “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. ² Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-7 – “But this *I* say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”

1. God looks upon our generosity. He looks upon our heart.
2. Our generosity must be motivated by our love for God and our love for His people. This moves us to extravagance.
3. God stirs His people to give.

Exodus 35:21 – “And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, *and they brought the LORD'S offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation*”

See also Verse 29

4. Stinginess is truly out of character for God’s people.

D. A healthy church will be a giving church

1. Most churches today have financial difficulties because people have a greater love for their own material possessions than they do for Christ and His church.
2. There are churches with 75-100 members that can’t pay their pastor full time.
3. In once sense, God doesn’t need our money. He owns all things. On the other hand God works through the use of means. God could have dropped the Tabernacle from the sky, but God doesn’t usually work this way. The Gospel endeavor requires resources. God uses His people to provide those resources.
4. Israel was basically homeless with no source of income, but they gave abundantly. God had enriched them. It was only fitting that they should devote it to Him. We should not ask, “What must I do for God” but “What may I do for God.”
5. **Verses 21-24** describes their giving

- II. The next thing we see is they gave of their time and energy
- A. God commanded all those gifted and skilled in the work to come forth
Verse 10 – “And every wise hearted among you shall come”
1. The phrase “wise hearted” is very literal – it is referring to those God has equipped for the work.
 2. **Verses 11- 19** describe the great diversity of their work
 3. God equipped the congregation with all that was needed
Exodus 35:21; 27-29 – “And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, *and* they brought the LORD'S offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments.”
 4. **Verses 25-26; 30-35** describe the labors of the craftsmen
 - a. The work tents were set up and the people went to work
 - b. Some were busy weaving, others were busy with needles. Metal workers were busy pounding out the sheets of gold. The silver was melted and poured into molds. The brass was formed into sockets.
Carpenters were busy cutting and shaping the boards of the acacia trees for the boards and poles and the furnishings.
 - c. It must have been a sight as multitudes were moving about with great zeal in doing this important work.
 - d. The words of Nehemiah come to mind:
Nehemiah 4:6 – “So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.” – “Mind” - לֵב {labe} - it refers to the inner man, the heart. It is the same word for heart used in **Verse 5**
- B. There is a slight change under the New Covenant
1. All are expected to give the free-will offerings above the tithe
1 Corinthians 16:2 – “Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him”
 2. The laborers in Israel were limited to those God had equipped for the work.
Exodus 35:35 – “Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, *even* of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.”
 3. The construction of the Tabernacle demanded a large number of people with a great diversity of skills
 4. Who does the work in the church of Christ? Everyone!!
 - a. All are equipped for service – my work is to equip you
Ephesians 4:11-12 – “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”
NAS **Ephesians 4:12** – “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”

- b. There is great diversity in our gifts – but everyone is gifted
See 1 Corinthians 12:4-7
Romans 12:6-8 – “And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷ if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”
- c. All are important
See 1 Corinthians 12:14-18
- 4. There is one work of service that all of us are called and equipped to do
 The work of evangelism.
 - a. Every believer has been indwelt with the Holy Spirit for this work
Acts 1:8 – “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”
 - b. We are all called to work in our Lord’s field to bring in His harvest.

Conclusion:

1. How do you stack up as we look at this passage? Have you given yourself to Christ? Does He own your possessions? Does He own your time, talents, plans?
2. How does our church stack up? Are we a healthy church? Surely we need to continue to give ourselves to achieving and maintaining the Nine Marks as described by Nine Marks ministries. But do we demonstrate ourselves to be a people who have given themselves to the work of Christ.
3. The Israelites were passionate about building the Tabernacle. We must be passionate about building the church.
 A healthy church is a church filled with people passionate for Christ.
 That is a healthy church.