

July 24, 2016 - Acts 2:38-42 / Ephesians 4:1-12 - The Purpose of the Church *Pt. II*

Introduction:

In the 2016 presidential race “*Make America Great Again*” is Donald Trump’s campaign slogan. How can you argue with that? We all want to live in a great a prosperous country; but how? America’s predominant greatness resides in her foundation of the Judeo/Christian ethic. In 1835, French sociologist and author, Alix de Tocqueville, (*two quail ville*) wrote “Democracy in America.” It was the culmination of his thoughts after touring the United States in 1831. They traveled to America to analyze its prison system, the French author became obsessive about our successful emerging Republic. America was not a world’s super powers at this time.

Never-the-less, Alix saw greatness in America that transcended the traditional definition of greatness based on economic prosperity and/or military might. The authority of his writings unfortunately lies in his fulfilled predictions and warnings about circumstances that would contribute to the demise of America. In “*Political Consequences of the Social State of the Anglo-Americans,*” he wrote of America and I quote: “I sought for the greatness and genius of America in her commodious harbors and her ample rivers – and it was not there; in her fertile fields and boundless forests – and it was not there; in her rich mines and her vast world commerce – and it was not there; in her democratic Congress and her matchless Constitution – and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits aflame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.”

Charles Finney of the Second Great Awakening echoed very similar words and I quote: If our politics become so corrupt that the very foundations of our government are ready to fall away, the pulpit is responsible for it.” Our pulpits have been compromised and Christ Church has been hijacked by the devils crowd.

American churches gave into the philosophy that politics and church matters do not mix and the lie of separation of church and state and so the salt and light that God expected His church to be has been severely diluted by fear of political retribution. As a result, Charle Finney’s and Alix de Tocqueville observations have proven to hold true.

Transition:

Last week we spoke about this disconnect of many from the church. If the church is the source of America’ greatness we need to understate her nature and work on getting people back. We must not only agree to this but stay connected and plug into the two main processes that grow the church. You can contribute to make America great again by helping her with the spiritual and moral aspects that have declined by getting plugged in.

Jesus Himself was the one who ordained and commissioned the church. The church was empowered by the Holy Spirit just as Jesus promise in John 14: 16, 17 and Acts 1:8. The lives of the disciples were completely transformed on the day of Pentecost. The Church exploded as

we read in Acts 2:41---Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls.

II The Purpose define: Matt. 28:19-20

1. The church is a mysterious entity. It is referred to in Scripture as the "Body of Christ." It includes all races -- all nationalities. It embraces the young and the old -- the rich and the poor -- the wise and the unlearned -- the well and the sick. The membership dues for this organization has been provided for all that desire to join its ranks -- namely the shed blood of Christ. -- **II Co. 5:21**. It is inclusive; just what society is screaming about and killing over today. The true church is the combine body of all born again believers. It is made up of all who genuinely confess Jesus to be "the Messiah and the Son of the Living God."

Why does the church exist? What is its ultimate purpose? Jesus Christ, before ascending to the Father, spoke directly to these questions. One day on a mountain in Galilee He spoke in clear and simple language in (**Matt. 28:19-20**). "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Stating it still more simple the disciples of Christ heard Jesus say that day, "Go everywhere and win men to Christ [that is, make Christians], and then baptize them and teach them. What are we teaching them today?"

2. The Book of Acts demonstrates this beyond doubt... Luke's document is a precise record of the disciples' activities and accomplishments as they seriously and systematically carried out Jesus Christ's marching orders. Let's observe for a minute the things that made it appealing from our scripture reading and then we will follow up on last week's text. People who became followers of Christ were immediately identified as "disciples." They were not called Christians until the church was founded in Antioch (Acts 11:26). They cared for one another and assisted the assembly.

The church therefore exists to carry out two foundational functions—**evangelism** (to make disciples) and **edification** (to teach them). By these two functions we can define the purpose of the church is to produce mature believers in Jesus Christ engaging them in local gathered community. So what is the local gathered community?

3. Look at **Revelation 1:11**. This is the local body of believers (Christians) in Jesus Christ. It is vitally important to come together to fulfill its purpose. It is designed to have leaders and teachers. It's amazing what some believe the purpose of the church really is. Because people are not interested in the Word the church puts on an entertainment spectacular. Such events take place like this every week across America. It is like we exist to entertain not interact.

Illustration:

The Rev. James Cooper, rector of the celebrated Episcopal sanctuary at Broadway and Wall St., greeted worshipers one Sunday in some highly unorthodox vestments -- a checker red-

and-white clown suit, red fright wig, rubber nose and large floppy shoes. Then, in what was almost surely the most unusual church service most parishioners ever experienced, he presided at a "Clown Eucharist" that included circus music during the opening procession, a mimed sermon, jugglers and outlandishly dressed ushers blowing soap bubbles at worshippers."

We need...

III The Perfecting of the Saints - Ephesians 4:11-13

1. The apostle Paul amplifies this truth in his letter to the Church at Ephesus. He stressed the perfecting of the saints in verse 12. The word "perfecting" comes from a Greek root word that means "fully grown". The gifted men (leaders) equipped the saints to do the work of the ministry. Again the work includes evangelism and edification. Edification can only be done one with another; the Greek word is "koinonia" it means fellowship. Man was not created to be alone. God said, It is not good for man to be alone. People were made for fellowship therefore we need each other, and we need to faithfully come together to edify one another.

2. Paul's letter to the Romans includes the most extensive "one another" profile. There are seven basic "one another" statements in chapters 12 to 16.

Do we reflect a community of believers who care for one another and one's community?

3. You always hear people say, "Well I don't want to join the church there's too many hypocrites." The local tavern listens to my problems and troubles. The bar is Satan's counterfeit of what Christ wants to give His church. The bar dispenses alcohol rather than the gospel call. It offers escape rather than grace and accepts permissiveness over righteousness but this won't satisfy your soul. The reality is that Satan works hard against the church to provide a counterfeit. We are not providing the nature of the church Jesus wants us to.

But still, the true church is far better than any other organization, association or institution on the face of the earth. It moves toward being like Jesus Christ, because it represents Him in the world, because its life is energized by the Holy Spirit, because it lives under the instruction of the Word of God, because it applies spiritual power mutually through fellowship and service among its members. It therefore is the greatest association, organization, institution in the face of the earth.

Conclusion:

You know the New Testament teaches us to possess a personal faith in Jesus Christ, it says nothing at all about a private faith. We need other believers, and other believers need us (Hebrews 10:24-25). No believer should neglect the church and think that their spiritual walk can be done in isolation. God has ordained that all his children should be united as one body called the church and we should be in fellowship with the saints.

A number of characteristics are required before an institution can be properly called a church. These include such things as Pastors and deacons who oversee the congregation. We will endeavor to examine these principles in the following weeks.