

TRANSFORMED: THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

March 5, 2017 | Pastor Randy Remington

We are on a quest to discover not only learning the bible, but to learn to live out the truth of the scriptures and the Gospel.

Today we won't focus so much on what we are called to do but more about what we are to be. So we will see what it means to be the "church".

"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah." (Matthew 16:13-20)

So what comes to your mind and heart when we say the word "church". The original Greek word gives us tremendous insight:

ἐκκλησία - ekklesia = an assembly or gathering, a congregating.

This is a coming together of people who have chosen to put their faith in Christ. This is a death to life transformation and Jesus brings us into his family...not a religion or institution.

But the definition of Ekklesia began to change and this beautiful gathering of his family began to change to a place, one German word embodied this change:

Kirche = the Lord's House (a gathering place for a people of a certain faith). This was any kind of "faith gathering" and was used in place of "ekklesia". This change ushered in one of the darkest and ugliest time for God's people. The clergy controlled everything, the scriptures were taken from the people, the sermons were in a language they didn't understand. Jesus died for people, as family not a religion, not an institution and not places of religious gatherings. (There is absolutely no connection between these two words) The building could go away but you would still be the church.

"Don't go to Church, BE the Church: Church is a People, not a Place"

Words matter greatly...when we don't understand what the church is, we separate "church" from the rest of our lives. We begin to say things like; "you can't wear that to church" (and similar things that reveal what we think "church" is) Think about this, if you are a "father" or "mother", you're always a father or mother, it's what/who you are.

"Salvation is being saved from something and being brought into something" (Family)

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." (Acts 2:36-41)

The Ekklesia from the beginning is centered on Christ, (not man centered) that's how we stay on track. We don't gather around anything that may be important or popular in our culture...Jesus has to be the center and focus. We see this in the early church, they would be confused concerning how we use the word "church" today. If you asked them if they went to church, they would probably look at you oddly, thinking we are the church so your question doesn't make sense. The first century church had a radical commitment to the "church" ...each other!

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10)

"Devotion is the hallmark of the people of God; it modifies everything else"

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47)

They were devoted;

- To one another in the family
- To the Apostles teaching (Jesus teachings)
- To the mission of Jesus to reach out a lost world

What are you devoted to? Does what you spend your time on reflect your devotion to God, your brothers and sisters and the world

"The emphasis on brotherly love often falls on 'love' rather than on 'brother,' which sometimes leads to a misunderstanding that affection is more important than resolve to do right by others with whom we are substantially related by faith in Christ." Karen Jobes, 1 Peter Commentary (216)

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Randy came to know the commander of the USS Abraham Lincoln out of Everett Washington. He took a tour of that incredible air craft carrier, in which he saw many things that allowed over 5000 people live for long periods of time. The commander said that there was one thing he didn't have on his vessel; "spectators/tourist". Every person belongs on that ship, they all had responsibilities all of them knew they were called to fulfill a mission. This family (cruise) is not a leisure cruise everyone in his Ekklesia belongs and has a purpose and a role to play.

In closing let's consider Five Reasons for 'circles'

1. **Personal encouragement from people we know and love.**
2. **It's where truth and life intersect - Application and growth (discipleship)**
3. **Tenacious and loving encouragement**
4. **Confess Sin and be shown grace**
We all want to be known for something, but what we really need is to be known by someone.
5. **I can gain counsel and prayer for big decisions**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We may all be in different seasons of our life and walk but what comes to you mind and heart when we say the word "church"?
2. Looking at your notes on the bottom of page 1 and the top of page 2 compare the word "church in the original language "Ekklesia" and what it became "Kirche" and what were the implications?
3. So after we understand what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, what does this quote mean to you; "Don't go to Church, BE the Church: Church is a People, not a Place"?
4. A very important thing we see here is that; "Salvation is being saved from something and being brought into something" We understand what we're being saved from but what are we being brought into?
5. In Acts 2:42-47, we see the beginning of the church. The scriptures don't explain all the structure and all the inner-workings but we do see something very important..." Devotion". As you take a look again at Acts again, what were they devoted to? Also what does this quote mean to you, "Devotion is the hallmark of the people of God; it modifies everything else"?
6. Lastly, on page 4 of your notes Randy introduced us to the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier. How was this great vessel like the "Ekklesia" the Church?