

The Church Community In Action

Text : **Matt. 4: 18-22 , Eph. 4: 11-16**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Our last lesson demonstrated that the church that Jesus built is a community.

1. This community is not something one can go to but is a “called out” people.
 - a. Not a building
 - b. Not an assembly
2. This means that :
 - a. All saved people are part of the church. (*Added by God ... Acts 2: 41, I Cor 12:18*)
 - b. Thus, we are the church every day of the week, not just when we are assembled.
3. Therefore, church attendance can’t be the only standard of faithfulness.

B. Being “called out” (i.e., *churched* or *separated*) must affect our everyday lives.

1. Though Christians are separated out from other people, we still live among them.
2. When we are separated out, we are given a different citizenship. (*aliens on earth*)
 - a. The new citizenship requires a complete transfer of loyalty. (*No dual citizenships*)
 - b. There are responsibilities that go with the new citizenship. (*ambassadors*)
3. Being citizens of an eternal kingdom requires that we practice a different culture.
 - a. Though we live among the people of this world, we live by a different standard.
 - b. We realize that we are just passing through this world on the way home.
 – (*The Christian is a missionary on earth; he must never “go native”, conform. Rm 12*)

C. As we pass through this world, our eternal King requires that we perform certain tasks for Him each and every day.

1. **Daily**, we must express our love and devotion to Him and to His.
2. **Daily**, we must strive to reconcile those who are estranged from Him.
3. **Daily**, we must encourage our fellow travelers and help them grow stronger.

With this lesson we want to expand upon the relationship that our Eternal King requires the citizens of His kingdom to maintain with one another.

I. Jesus makes it very clear that a loving relationship between citizens is essential.

- A. **John 13: 34–35** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
1. By this we see that the love that exists between those who are called by Jesus is :
 - a. a way of life that did not exist before Jesus. “**A new commandment**”
 - b. patterned after the love that motivated Jesus to die for us. “**as I have loved you**”
 - c. special and unique only to fellow citizens. “**love one another**”
 - d. so special it is readily observed by and impresses outsiders. “**all men will know**”
 2. **We are unique**; there is no other kingdom on earth that requires this of its citizens.

B. This special love is the external proof of the Christian’s relationship with God.

1. **I John 4: 7–12** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. **8** The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. **9** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.
2. Since God IS love ... those who do not love do not have God. (w/o God in the world)
3. The special love manifests itself in special treatment of each other.
 - a. **Gal. 6: 10**– do good to all...especially to those who are of the household of the faith.
 - b. **Rom. 12: 10**– Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

C. This is what makes us a light in a world of darkness. (**Matt. 5: 14-16**)

1. We seek to lead pure lives, but it is this love which contrasts us with the world.
2. Light and darkness is the most extreme contrast possible.
 - a. A world without light is a fearful place. (*Remember Egypt ... Exodus 10:21ff*)
 - b. Even one light can be seen in darkness and will attract those seeking ...
3. God’s called out people (*Christians*) are to make the world a less scary place.

II. Christians are to mend broken people, especially each other.

A. Word studies are a valuable tool in bible study.

1. Some things are lost in translation.
 - a. Languages do not perfectly correlate to each other.
 - b. Translators interpret as they translate. (*Thus, topical studies are also important.*)
2. Shades of meaning can be clarified by a closer examination of some words.

B. Our texts present a perfect opportunity for a word study on the word “mending”.

1. **Matt. 4: 21** – ...James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother,
in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets;...
2. The word “mending” is the verb form of the word “*katartizo*.”
 - a. It means : to fit, to equip, to mend, to repair
 - b. This same usage is found in Mark 1: 19.
3. Mending nets was one of the most common activities of the fishermen of that day.
 - a. One could not be a fisherman without using nets. (*Modern tackle did not yet exist.*)
 - b. The nets were made of natural materials. (*There were no synthetic fibers.*)
 - c. Mending their nets was a daily task which often took hours.
4. **THEREFORE**, *one would expect a “fisher of men” to also do maintenance.*

Note : In secular use, “*katartizo*” is used to describe the setting of broken bones.

Compare the same word elsewhere in the New Testament.

1. This exact same word is used in reference to those who are called out as Christians.
 - a. **Heb. 13: 20-21** Now the God of peace, ... , even Jesus our Lord, 21 equip you
in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which
is pleasing in His sight, ...
 - b. Just as the fishermen’s net had to be prepared to fish, so the Christian must also be.
2. The word “equipping” is the noun form of the word “*katartizo*.” (“*katartizmo*”)
 - a. **Eph. 4: 12** – for the equipping of the saints for the work of service,
to the building up of the body of Christ;
 - b. Every ministry in the church has one function – *prepare each other to serve better.*
3. **THEREFORE**, every day, every member must be an active participant in
the mending of the lives of every other member. (*O.T-Hebrews traveled as strangers.*)
 - a. This process is to continue until every citizen of the kingdom is like their King.
 - b. Said transition is our ultimate goal, but it will never be fully attained. **Rom. 7:14f**
 - c. **THEREFORE**, *the development of the kingdom remains a condition of citizenship.*

III. This mutual maturing is central to the culture of the kingdom of God.

A. No one can escape responsibility for his brethren.

1. Cain tried to denounce responsibility for his brother.
 - a. **Gen. 4: 9 – Am I my brother's keeper?**
 - b. God held Cain responsible for the evil committed against Abel.
2. Today, those who try to go the way of Cain will likewise be held accountable.

B. Every Christian is given a DAILY responsibility for every other Christian.

1. **Heb. 3: 12-14** Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. **14** For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,
 - a. This is a direct, explicit, empirical command. (*not a recommendation*)
 - b. Part of faithfulness to Christ is building up His (*our*) brothers and sisters.
 - c. The purpose of the encouragement is to prevent brethren from sinning. (*proactive*)
 2. We are all familiar with the commands to not forsake the assembly, but this command to encourage CANNOT be fulfilled just by attending assemblies.
 - a. It is something that must be done for "**one another**", i.e., for Christians.
 - b. It is something that must be done "**day after day**" so it requires daily contact.
 - c. This is consistent with New Testament examples, remember **Acts 2: 44-47**.
- * Could it be that this is an area where we've allowed American culture to supplant the Christian culture as taught in the scriptures.*

C. Let's look at the passage commonly used to teach the importance of the assembly

1. **Heb. 10: 23-25** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. **24** and let us consider how to incite one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.
 - a. Though this is most often used to refer to the Sunday assembly, *episunagoge* does not necessitate the weekly assembly of the church.
 - b. Some interpret "**the day**" to refer to the approach of Sunday. (*Could be 2nd coming*)
 - c. Brethren had expected Jesus to return in their lifetime so some were drifting away.

2. This is a very clear command.
 - a. Christians are instructed to gather together.
 - b. They are also to encourage each other.
3. The encouragement is to incite other Christians to three things :
 - a. Faithfulness
 - b. More love
 - c. More active service .. deeds

IV. The point is that DAILY encouragement is clearly a part of Christianity.

A. We have allowed our modern culture to replace clear biblical teaching.

1. We have lost the New Testament sense of community. (*Slowly Drift*)
2. Our culture has reduced Christianity to just a part of the life of an adherent.
 - a. The New Testament presents Christianity as a way of life. (*We live crucified.*)
 - b. Jesus required that His followers prioritize His work above all else, even family.

B. Our American culture has defined Christianity as a building centered activity.

1. To many the church is little more than an organization to which they belong.
 - a. They don't view the church significantly different from the denominations.
 - b. Some see no problem with their children leaving the church for a denomination.
One Christian consoled another, "*At least they're still going to church.*"
2. Far too often we view Christianity as a part of our life rather than as being our life.
 - a. Like the rich man in Luke 12, we're filling our barns on earth and going to church.
 - b. We seek to keep our secular life and our religion separate.
3. We have but one life and Jesus bought it for HIS own use.

C. We are the nets that Jesus uses to bring in His harvest of souls.

1. The church is the place where Jesus puts His nets to be mended.
2. Like the fisherman's nets, all of us need mending on a regular basis.
 - a. We cannot always see the tares in each other, especially in the assembly.
 - b. We put on our nice clothes and our "outside face" before going to church.
 - c. We can "*go to church*" with someone for year and never know them. (*masked*)
3. Jesus wants us to be together enough so we can recognize each other's needs.

CONCLUSION :

**A. Though we try to hide our wounds,
ALL of us have need of spiritual reinforcement.**

1. Life in this ungodly world is tough.
2. The church is not a classroom where we come to learn, it's a place to grow & serve.
 - a. We must all learn.
 - b. Bible classes and sermons teach.
 - c. Every member has the ministry of encouragement.

B. Three times a week is not enough for Christians to be together.

1. We need to come together to function as a community of believers.
2. We all share a common struggle :
 - a. We're all called out to be different from the world. *It's hard to be different.*
 - b. We're all striving to be like Christ and we have limited success.
 - c. We're all drawn by the flesh.
3. When we come into the assembly everyone looks so righteous and we feel less so.
 - a. This prevents us from getting what we need out of our time together.
 - b. Time together out of the assembly helps us learn to share our struggles.

C. Only when we have truly developed our love for one another will the world be drawn to the church like a moth to a light.

John 13: 35 – **By this all men will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another.**

INVITATION :

Love for one another flows out of love for God and His Christ.

Lesson Texts :**Matthew 4: 18–22**

18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. **19** And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” **20** Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. **21** Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, **mending** their nets; and He called them. **22** Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

Ephesians 4: 11–16

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, **12** for the **equipping** of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; **13** 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, **16** from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.