

The Church – God’s Family

Text : **I Timothy 3: 14-15 ; Matthew 12: 46-50**

INTRODUCTION :

A. What is your concept of what the church should be ?

1. All of us who are Christian have a vision of what the church should be.
 - a. Those visions vary as many ways as there are Christians.
 - b. **ILL.** *A wise old preacher once told a couple who visited the congregation seeking the perfect church, “If you ever find a perfect church, don’t go there.” “Why?”, they asked. He replied, “Because it wouldn’t be perfect anymore if you did.” The church is made up of people and all people are imperfect.*
2. With regard to the church, we’re most often seeking the wrong thing.
 - a. We shouldn’t be seeking our vision for the church, but rather God’s vision for HIS church.
 - *b. Our challenge is to look into God’s word and allow it to form our thinking and then allow that newly sanctified thinking to change and to direct our lives.

B. This is the objective of the current series of lesson we are studying.

By examining the church from perspective of the figures God’s word uses to describe God’s church we are seeking God’s vision for His church.

1. From the very word “*ekklesia*” we learned that :
 - a. God’s church is a select group of people.
 - b. They are called to form a community separated from the world.
 - c. Being a people that lives separated requires that they live a different lifestyle.
2. From the church being pictured as a “*body*” we learned that :
 - a. The many members from a host of differing backgrounds form one cohesive unit.
 - b. The wide variety of differing parts is both desirable and necessary.
 - c. God placed each member in the church so all are of equal importance.
3. Next week we will see that the church is the temple where God dwells.

C. But first we will see that the church is God’s family on earth and in Heaven.

1. By reason of creation all men are God’s children.
2. The church is God’s family both by rebirth and by adoption.
3. God’s family is eternal.
4. We have responsibilities to our eternal family.

I. All mankind belongs to God.

A. All life has its origin from God.

1. **Gen. 2: 7** ... The breath that gives life comes from God. (Cf. – **Gen. 7: 15-22**)
2. **Isa. 42:5** – Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it And spirit to those who walk in it,

B. All life belongs to God. All mankind belongs to God.

1. **Psalms 24: 1** – ... The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.
2. Cf. – **Psa. 50: 9-12** I shall take no young bull out of your house Nor male goats out of your folds. **10** For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. **11** I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine. **12** If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

C. Satan came into the garden and wooed man away from God.

1. Man became as an unfaithful spouse ... listening to the seductive words of Satan.
2. Satan offers pleasures which appeal to the flesh and the flesh seeks to satisfy its lust.
3. When man walks toward the flesh, he is walking away from God.

D. The mission of Jesus on the earth was to reach out to those lost children.

1. **Luke 19: 10** – For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.
2. It is an urgent mission because :
 - a. Multitudes must be reached, the laborers are few & man's days on the earth are few
 - b. The earth and all flesh is temporary.
I John 2: 17 – The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.
3. It is God's will that NOT ONE of His children be lost, but they must choose to return.
I Tim. 2: 3-4 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **4** who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

II. Christians are those who have been “called” back into the family of God.

A. The “*ekklesia*” has not only been called out of the world, but called to God.

1. **I Cor. 1: 9** – God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Into commonness - purpose*)

2. Just as it was Christ's work to reconcile lost people to God, it is now our assignment.

II Cor. 5: 17-20 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. **18** Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, **19** namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. **20** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

B. Those who have been reconciled to God are said to have been “born again.”

1. **I Pet. 1: 22-23** Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, **23** for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.
2. God calls us into a relationship which is so close it is a totally new life.

C. Those who are called out of the world and reconciled to God are adopted into His family circle.

1. **Rom. 8: 12-18** So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — **13** for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **14** For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. **15** For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received **a spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” **16** The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are **children of God**, **17** and if children, heirs also, **heirs of God** and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.
2. It is so close it is described by the intimate familial term “Abba”, i.e., dad.

D. Jesus is does not hesitate to recognize us as His brothers and sister.

Heb. 2: 11 – For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Note : “*Sanctify*” means to remove from profane use, cleanse and set aside for holy use.

E. Those in the spiritual family of Jesus take precedence over His physical family.

1. Remember our text : **Matt. 12: 46-50**
2. When Jesus told us that our earthly family could not be above Him (**Mt. 10: 37**), He was saying do as I do. (*To draw closer to God is to draw further from the world.*)

III. The spiritual family is eternal, but the earthly family is only temporary.

A. The family unit serves a very valuable purpose on the earth.

1. Families are formed by the mutual commitment of two people.
 - a. They cannot be based upon physical attraction.
 - b. Many today mistake physical desire for love.

Note : *Lust is what one feels for the opposite sex, love is a commitment that supersedes one's feelings.*
2. The commitment is important because the purpose of the family is the produce and to train the next generation.
 - a. Each and every generation remolds the future of the country.
 - b. When parents fail at their commitment to the family they destroy the future.
 - c. Children who are not brought up in a committed relationship will not know how to form a committed relationship.
3. Our country is in peril today because people think the family is about them.
 - a. "I'm not happy in this relationship."
 - b. "I'm not getting what I need from this relationship."
 - c. Their attitude is that life is about me and my personal happiness. **GROW UP !**

B. As important as the earthly family is to society, it will end.

1. Those who are truly committed to each other and honor their commitment are to be admired and to be commended, but death will end the strongest marriage.
2. The wedding vows are only "*Until death do us part.*"
3. Jesus Himself taught us that there will be no marriage in Heaven.
 - a. **Matt. 22: 29-30**
 - b. There will be no need for procreation in Heaven.
 - c. Everyone in Heaven will be members of the same family ... **God's.**

C. Everyone in our spiritual family on earth will be part of our family in Heaven.

1. Death cannot dissolve the relationship between the Christian and God.
 - a. It is a sad thing to bury a loved one, but in Christ we know it's temporary.
 - b. The resurrection is a pillar in our faith. (*w/o it we have nothing .. I Cor. 15: 19*)
 - c. This life launches us into the next. *It's just the starting point of forever.*
2. We must work to strengthen the bonds between us, they must last for eternity.

IV. What does it mean to us to be part of the eternal family of God.

A. We must live up to the glorious name of our family.

1. We were brought up never to dishonor the name of our earthly family.
2. How much more must we strive not to dishonor the name of God.
 - a. **II Thes. 1: 11-12** To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, **12** so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. Compare ... **I Pet. 4: 12-17**

B. Strong spiritual families don't just happen, they are built.

1. Relationships are made strong over time by shared experiences.
(*Absence makes the heart forget. Write her every day and she'll marry postman.*)
2. Mutual love and respect is built by years of consistently positive interaction.
3. The congregation must spend quantity of time ... not just quality time together.

C. Families have to be there for each other through good times and bad.

1. **Rom. 12: 15** – Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
2. **Gal. 6: 2** – Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.
 - a. If we are not actively bearing each other's burdens, we are not fulfilling His law.
 - b. Refusal to allow others to bear your burdens is to refuse to allow others to fulfill it.
3. In the family of God every member should feel loved and accepted.
 - a. No member should feel they have to earn acceptance or that they are not deserving.
 - b. Often the person who needs love most is the one who is most difficult to love.

D. A family is built on unconditional love.

1. NONE of us deserve the love that our brethren are obliged to give us.
2. In all family members occasionally offend each other.
 - a. We have to learn to get over it, get past it and move on.
 - b. **Col. 3: 12-14** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience**; **13** bearing with one another, and **forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. **14** Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

E. Successful families work together to accomplish the objective of the family.

1. Each family member perusing his own interests is destroying the American family.
2. God’s family has an objective which the Father wants ALL Christians to pursue.
He desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. I Tim 2:4
3. Spiritual families who work together to accomplish a common goal grow close.
 - a. This is why building programs pull congregations together.
 - b. It is also why congregations tend to have problems when the building is complete.
** Armies struggle with morale problems during peace times, not during war.*

F. As did Jesus, we must allow ourselves to be drawn to our spiritual family.

CONCLUSION :

A. The family is a perfect metaphor for God’s church.

1. By reason of creation all men are God’s children.
2. The church is God’s family both by rebirth and by adoption.
3. The church is an eternal relationship.
4. The church is a place where we are nurtured and challenged to grow in service.

B. When day is done we go home to our family.

1. When this life is over and the world is no more,
God will call all of His children home and close the door on the rest.
2. On which side of the door will you be standing when the door closes ?

C. Until the night comes, God family is open to all who will come to Him.

INVITATION :

Lesson Texts :

I Timothy 3: 14-15

14 I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; **15** but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will 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.

Matthew 12: 46-50

46 While He was still speaking to the crowds, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. **47** Someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." **48** But Jesus answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" **49** And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! **50** "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."