

Title: A Called Out Assembly

Theme: The Church of God

Focal Scripture: Ephesians 3:15

Date: August 12, 2012

Place: DCOG

Big Idea: God's people are called "The Church."

Resource: "The Church of God as Revealed in Scripture"

Dr. Arlo Newell writes, "The Church is a New Testament institution. The word church is used more than one hundred times in the New Testament...The first recorded use of the word is in Matthew 16:18."

Matthew 16:18

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.

"During Christ's earthly ministry he prepared for the Church, and from the Day of Pentecost we find in actual existence a body of people who had been called out of sin and united in Christ. These believers were called 'Christians' and steadfastly followed the teaching of Christ and his apostles."

Acts 11:26b

... So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

What do you think of when we mention the church?

- ✚ The place where we gather for worship
- ✚ The building
- ✚ A facility for performing a wide range of ministries
- ✚ A location, such as 1129 Mercer Ave.

Does that stir your heart or move you to a strong point of commitment?

How did their understanding of the Church move those early Christians in the book of Acts?

- ✠ They shared everything
- ✠ They sold their “stuff” and shared it with the people who had a need.
- ✠ They daily met for corporate worship
- ✠ Their worship displayed a unified spirit
- ✠ They ate common meals together
- ✠ They shared an attitude of praise for God
- ✠ Everyone respected them and granted them the benefit of the doubt.

(Acts 2:44-47)

What did that mean to those who lived around them?

Newell again writes, “This divine demonstration of commitment turned the world upside down.”

* It is no different today. When the Church rises up as the body of Christ, they stir the pot.

- ✠ Abortion
- ✠ Civil-rights
- ✠ Gay marriage
- ✠ Abstinence

* If we look back at the history of our country we will see the impact that the church has had.

- ✠ 150 years ago slavery became illegal in America
- ✠ 100 years ago opium, laudanum and morphine use was pervasive

- ✠ 100 years ago Sears and Roebuck catalog sold heroine and syringes through the mail
- ✠ 50 years ago theological liberalism dominated the religious landscape

* Notice the people who publicly state they are born-again Christians (now for some of these you may question but this is their position).

The President of the United States, the attorney general, the national security adviser, governors of many states, members of Congress, senators, CEOs of our largest corporations, university professors, bestselling authors like John Grisham and on the list goes.

“A Steady Christian Influence” by Leith Anderson

- ✠ Three-quarters of Americans describe themselves as Christians
- ✠ Churches where the Bible is taught and holiness is lived are multiplying and flourishing.

The Church still has impact in our world!

I. So what is the Church?

A. A variety of figures are shown to us in the New Testament.

- ✠ It is a flock (John 10) all of one fold, following the Shepherd.
- ✠ It is the family of God.

Ephesians 3:15

From whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

- ✠ Made up with all who are born-again.
- ✠ Comprised of those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life.
- ✠ It is a building made of living stones

1 Tim. 3:15

If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

1 Peter 2:5

You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

- ✠ A dwelling place of God's Spirit

Ephesians 2:22

And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

- ✠ She is the bride of Christ

Ephes. 5:25-27

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Rev. 21:9b

... "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

B. The Church is founded upon a rock.

Ephesians 2:20

Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

- ✠ Ultimately upon Jesus Christ himself.
- ✠ Not upon some person, dogma, creed, or and individual's personal idea or belief.

1 Corinthians 3:11

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

C. The Church is the body of Christ.

- ✠ It is only natural the Jesus should be the head of his own body.

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

- ✠ As the head, Christ was concerned about the name his bride would bear.

John 17:11b

... Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one.

- ✠ The family of God is not without a name; it bears the Father's name.

1 Corinthians 1:2a

To the church of God in Corinth...

1 Corinthians 10:32

... or the church of God--

1 Corinthians 11:22b

... do you despise the church of God...

1 Corinthians 15:9

... persecuted the church of God.

Galatians 1:13

... I persecuted the church of God ...

1 Timothy 3:5

... how can he take care of God's church?

✠ The Bible gives us a name for the Church

Acts 20:28

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

D. The Church is a called-out assembly.

- ✠ God establishes the rules
- ✠ The Bible, God's Word, establishes our rule of faith
- ✠ No human creed is adequate
- ✠ A holy God, who inspires a Holy Bible, expects a holy people.
- ✠ The entrance into the church is not through baptism, nor through penance, but through Jesus Christ.
- ✠ No person can make you a member
- ✠ We cannot join the Church
- ✠ We must be added to the Church by the Lord
- ✠ He adds only the saved
- ✠ He adds all the saved

Newell puts it this way, “Hence the members of the Church are all the saved people, all who have been born again.”

Conclusion: If I am part of a called out assembly then what becomes my responsibility? What is it that I need to enjoy the blessing of the Church?

- ✠ Consistent participation in a local fellowship
- ✠ Essential to maintain a healthy spiritual life

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

* In his book *Letters to My Children*, Daniel Taylor responds to a series of questions from his young children. At one point his son Matthew asks, "Church is getting boring. Why do we have to go to church?"

Here's part of Taylor's reply: “Think about it. If a friend of yours called and said that a famous athlete or singer was going to be at his house, and asked if you wanted to come over, wouldn't you go? And wouldn't you be excited? Of course! And so would I.

Well, church is the place where God will be, every time you go. Of course he is with you whether you're in church or not, but he can be there in a special way when many believers gather to celebrate him together.

"Sounds great," I hear you saying, "but then how come you fell asleep so much? If God is really there, I mean *really* there, then how come we aren't bug-eyed and breathless most all the time?"

That's a very good question. I wish I had a very good answer. Part of it is that God knows we can't take very much of him. It's like when you hold Fluffs, our hamster. If you squeezed very hard, Fluffs would be on his way to hamster

heaven. You have to hold him gently, talk to him quietly. Well, God has to be sort of like that with us.

Truthfully, though, the biggest reason might be that we don't want very much of God. We want God to stay in his cage like Fluffs does. We are afraid of losing control of our own lives. We just want him to help us a little here, and forgive us a little there, and let us handle the rest. And so we try to make church a safe place where we can get a little bit of God but not too much.

We don't like surprises, not even from God, so we make our churches places where surprises aren't likely to happen. We ask God to come, but only if he will be polite. And therefore, little kids and adult kids often fall asleep—even if they keep their eyes open.

And yet, at the very same time, church is a wonderful place. God has chosen it, "sorry-ness" and all, to be the place where he will meet his people, the place from which he will send his people to all parts of the world to preach the good news about him.

If you are one of the “called out” are you ready to make a regular joining of the assembly a regular practice?