

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH IS JESUS BUILDING? Matthew 16:18 *"I will build my church."*

The motor cyclist roared into the service station and stopped on the opposite side of the gasoline pump that I was using. He was dirty, tattooed, the leather jacket had seen some rough times and chains dangled from his waist. I was on my way to the church office and was in a business suit. I smiled at him for I had previously had 6 motor cycles and enjoy riding them. I think he smiled back at me – I couldn't see clearly through his beard. I witnessed to him and invited him to church. More later.

Did you ever ask yourself, "What kind of church does Jesus want?" We often hear people express themselves about the kind of church they want - a certain type of preaching, a certain style of music, where to meet, when to meet, what programs to have etc.

However, it is Jesus' church and He is building it! So, what kind of church is Jesus building? I believe it would shock many assemblies of believers today if they really understood the makeup of the kind of church Jesus has! There are many so-called "churches" but I am speaking of the church that Jesus owns.

It would stun some to find out that healthy churches are made up of unhealthy people! Some would be surprised to know that perfect churches are made up of imperfect people! It would really shake up some people if they faced the fact that there are no church members anywhere who walk on water! To think otherwise is to misunderstand the nature and mission of the church.

To see why this is true, let us take a quick journey through the New Testament and look at several different kinds of people who help make up the kind of church that Jesus is building.

THE CHURCH THAT JESUS IS BUILDING IS FOR BROKEN PEOPLE

Luke 4:16-18 "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the **poor**; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Notice that Jesus said He came to minister to the brokenhearted, captives, blind and oppressed. The greatest cover-up is not some great crime that has yet to be solved, but it is what happens every Sunday morning in the average church service when those gathered put on airs and act as though they have been perfect all their lives. Peter says that they are "blind, and cannot see afar off, and have forgotten that they were purged from their old sins.' (II Peter 1:9) Jesus said of the church at Laodicea, "thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. 3:17)

Picture a hospital emergency room filled with people. All of them saw the billboard on the highway inviting them to come; some saw the newspaper ads inviting them; some who were absent last week received a telephone call asking them to be sure and come this week. Now they are assembled in the emergency room expecting the Doctor to address them soon.

When you look around there are no crutches, no walkers or wheel chairs. It is a nice, quiet, sterile atmosphere – nice music and comfortable seats. Then the Doctor comes in, stands up front and tells you how good you are, how healthy you are and urges you to stay that way! And then he receives donations to keep the emergency room nice and clean and pay the utilities. He then urges everyone to come back next week!

In some ways that is how out of place the broken and downtrodden feel in the typical church service. But if and when they discover that they are with other people who are in various stages of brokenness and/or healing they feel right at home. Broken people are more at home in a church of people who admit their humanness. They can identify with the one who prayed, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13). And if we don’t keep reminding one another of this the church will seem like a hospital emergency room that isn’t needed.

All of us know the “Humpty Dumpty” fairy tale and how Humpty had a great fall and was broken. Also, we have heard the “Jack and Jill” tale, how Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after.

I’ve got bad news and good news, folks. We’re all Humpty Dumpties and Jacks & Jills!! That’s the bad news. The good news is that God specializes in putting Humpty Dumpties together again and patching up Jacks and Jills. That is why the church that Jesus is building is comprised of those who have been or are being mended by the Great Physician.

THE CHURCH THAT JESUS IS BUILDING IS FOR HELPLESS PEOPLE

Once Jesus was a dinner guest and He said to the host, “When you give a dinner or a supper do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed....” (Luke 14:12-14)

Then Jesus told of a host who invited outsiders but they did not come: “Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ (Luke 14:21) Sounds like a Rescue Mission to me! Have you ever been to a Rescue Mission? There you will be among derelicts – abandoned people. I have preached in Rescue Missions including the world famous Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. I appreciate what those missions are doing. The sights and the smells are not what you would see or sense in a regular Sunday morning church service. The street people are not dressed in their “Sunday-go-to meeting” finery.

Now, buckle your seat belts! What I am going to say now will be met with consternation and

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strong opposition by some: If the church was what it really ought to be, according to what Jesus said in the above Scriptures, there would not be needed as many Rescue Missions as presently exist, but every church would be a Rescue Mission! We sing with great gusto on Sunday: “Rescuing the perishing, Care for the dying, Snatch them in pity from sin and the Grave; Weep o’er the erring one, lift up the fallen, Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save” – but do it down at the Rescue Mission, not here in our nice auditorium where those we consider untouchable sinners might come in contact with unblemished saints!

One of these days I want to ask the Apostle Paul why he did not start Rescue Missions that kept homeless, hungry and hurting people at arms length from the churches that he started. Hmm – I wonder what he would say. And I think I know what Jesus would say about the way we American churches segregate Rescue Mission sinners from Sunday morning church sinners. I think I know for He has already told us in Luke 4 and 14.

THE CHURCH THAT JESUS IS BUILDING IS MADE UP OF WASHED PEOPLE

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

I hope no one sits in the congregation of the righteous on Sunday and surveys the crowd thinking, “I wonder who here was a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, homosexual or sodomite, thief, covetous, drunkard, reviler or extortioner before they were saved. Why? “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 6:23) You can be sure that all who are children of God through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ have been washed in the blood of the Lamb of God. (Rev. 7:14)

Hallelujah! There is hope and help for broken, helpless sinners. Notice the words that the Holy Spirit uses to communicate the thoroughness of God’s salvation: “washed”, “sanctified”, “justified”. God doesn’t do a half-way job – “he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him...”

God’s view of the church is: “washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Furthermore, He sees it as “a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” (Eph.5:25-27)

Conclusion

Many would not be comfortable in Jesus’ church but remember, Jesus said, “I am not come to call the righteous, (self-righteous) but sinners to repentance.” (Matt. 9:13) The story about the Prodigal Son is not a story about a lost sinner but a sinning son. He said, “Father, I have sinned.” This just underscores the fact that the church that Jesus is building is made up of people who are works in progress – God isn’t through with us yet!

The church that Jesus is building is made up of persons who have experienced the “the washing of regeneration.” (Titus 3:5) The result? We have been born again – “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (II Cor. 5:17) However, we must “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 3:18)

There is nothing worse than someone who has recovered from cancer looking with disfavor on someone whose cancer is not in remission! And so it is with recovering sinners! We must ever be on guard against the lure of the world, the lust of the flesh and the lair of the Devil for the sin nature is yet with us trying to draw us backward.

Now back to the motor cyclist at the service station. He had the look of a typical hard-core biker. In the course of the conversation and after I had given him the Gospel, which he said he believed, I invited him to church. I can't forget his reply. He said, “They won't want me over there in their church. I'm a real mess-up!” I responded, “I too am a mess-up and everyone over at the church is a mess-up, that's why we're there. You have to be a mess-up for Jesus to take you in.”

Has He taken you in? He wants to – but you must first confess that you are a mess-up, biker or not!

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