

March 6, 2011

Born Again Series - Discipleship

Matthew 16:13-19 – “Do I have to go to church?”

INTRO...

Some of you may have heard about the mother who couldn't get her son to go to church...

- *A mother woke her son up on Sunday morning and told him he needed to get ready to go to church. The son replied to his mother that he didn't want to go to church this morning. She told him nonsense he should get up and go to church. "But mom" he replied, "Everybody hates me, the sermons are boring and none of my friends ever come." His mother replied, "Now, son...! First, everybody doesn't hate you, only a couple of bullies and you just have to stand up to them. Second, the sermons mean a lot to many people. If you listened to them, you'd be surprised at how good they are in helping people. Third, you have lots of friends at church. They are always having you over to their house. And finally, you have to go, you're the pastor!!"*

At one time or another, we have all been like this pastor and didn't want to go to church...

- ...AND...as a result...for one reason or another...and at various times in our lives...I am sure we have asked the question...
 - **“Do I have to go to church?”**...well we are going to answer that question this morning...

In fact...let me settle that question for you once and for all...

Q: Do I have to go to church?...here is the answer...listen...**NO!**...you don't...

- ...BUT...I would be compelled to ask another question... *“Why wouldn't you want to?”*...

Let me suggest to you that people don't want to go to church...because they don't know what church is supposed to be...

- ...OR...they have had some very bad or weird experience with churches they have attended...

A lot of people go to church for a lot of different reasons...most...would say...to learn more about God...and being a Christian...

- ...BUT...many...perhaps even most...after going are no further along in their understanding about God...than when they went...

Q: Why is that the case?

- ...BECAUSE...sadly...it has been my observation and experience...that it is because many of the pastors...and leaders of churches today...
 - ...don't seem to have a clear understanding of what church is supposed to look like either...
 - ...AND...you are going to have a very difficult time convincing people of what church is...if you are not even sure yourself...

NOW...rather than tell you a bunch of experiences and stories about what church isn't supposed to be...

- ...I want to spend some time looking at what it IS supposed to be...

Yes...most would agree...church is to be place where you learn about God and what it means to be a Christian...

- ...AND...we have already established that the best source for doing so...that is...for understanding...
 - ...such things...is to look at what the bible says...which we know to be the Word of God...

It is important to understand...that the church...is **not** about...NOR was it ever intended to be about the buildings...

- ...the building or buildings...and all of the programs that are held within the facility that we have come to know as 'the church'...

When the religious authorities brought Jesus before the Sanhedrin...the highest ruling council of the Jews...

- ...they were accusing Jesus saying...

Mark 14:58 (NKJV) — 58 “We heard Him [...Jesus...] say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another **made without hands** [...a reference to His body...].’ ”

In the book of Acts...we read of an account where Paul was presenting the truths about Jesus to a bunch of philosophers...

Acts 17:22–25 (NKJV) — 22 ...Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; **23** for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: **24** God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, **does not dwell in temples made with hands.** **25** Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

God does not dwell in temples or building made with hands...He dwells in heaven...

- ...and through Jesus...in the hearts of men and women like you and me...

The very first mention of ‘church’ in the bible is found in **our text** this morning...

LET’S LOOK AT IT TOGETHER...

I love this account here...it so important in understanding what the church is...

Matthew 16:13–19 (NKJV) — 13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” **14** So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” **15** He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” **16** Simon Peter answered and said, “You are **the Christ, the Son of the living God.**” **17** Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. **18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. **19** And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Q: What was Jesus saying?

- ...He was saying...that on this statement of faith...that I am the Christ...the Son of the Living God...
 - ...the Messiah...the one whom the prophets foretold would come to take away the sins of the world..
 - ...on this statement of faith...that you have made Peter...I will build

my church...a living and breathing body of people...who agree in this statement you have just made...

AND...notice one **very important** distinction here...one that many people tend to forget...

Q: Whose church is it?...Jesus said, "*I will build **My church**...*"

It is His church...not mine and not yours...it is Jesus' church...and in fact whenever we foolishly think...

- ...that it is our church...we must call to mind what the apostle Paul told the church leaders in Ephesus...as he was leaving them...

Acts 20:28 (NKJV) — 28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd **the church of God** [...the people who have professed Jesus as Lord...] which He [...Jesus...] purchased **with His own blood**.

Jesus knew...when He said this to Peter...that He would be willingly laying down His life...for the world...

- ...in order that all of those who made professions of faith in Jesus...would be born again...
 - ...born into the family of God...and as His children...thereby become **His church**...

TURN WITH ME...Acts 2:37...

And we will read of the birth of the church...in respect to when it really began to take off...

- ...AND...as we look at these verses...notice the clear absence of any building or specific programs...
 - ...but rather...just a bunch of regular people...sinners who needed a savior...who got saved...
 - ...who became Christians and are just being the church...

As Peter is preaching his very first sermon...it tells us...

Acts 2:37–47 (NKJV) — 37 Now when they [...the people...] heard this [...the gospel message of Jesus being the Christ...the Messiah...], they were cut to the heart [...they

were convicted of their sin...], and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” [...“How do we get this issue of sin dealt with?”...] **38** Then Peter said to them, “Repent [...turn away from your sin...surrender to Jesus...], and let every one of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. **39** For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” **40** And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” **41** Then **those who gladly** [...there was a gladness and a joy to what they heard...*those who gladly*...] **received his word** were baptized; and that day about **three thousand souls were added to them** [...notice...not three more buildings were added to the campus...3,000 people were added to the previous 120 (**Acts 1:15**)...]. **42** And they continued [...the church, the people continued...] steadfastly in the **apostles’ doctrine and fellowship**, in the **breaking of bread**, and in **prayers**. **43** Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. **44** Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, **45** and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. **46** So **continuing daily** [...not just on Sunday...] with one accord [...likeminded...] in the temple, and breaking bread from **house to house** [...not from building to building or campus to campus...house to house...], they ate their food with **gladness** and simplicity of heart, **47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And **the Lord** added to the church [...to the body of people who were now following Jesus...who had become Christians...] the Lord added...daily those who were being saved.

From this point forward...as more and more people got saved...the church grew bigger...

- ...success in any church...should be based...NOT on size...or programs or facilities...
 - ...BUT...rather how committed the people are...to walking in the ways of Jesus...that is what being a Christian is all about...

Q: What was the early church devoted to?

- ...it says...*the apostle’s teaching*...that is the study of God’s word...*fellowship* ...that is hanging out together...encouraging one another...helping one another...
 - ...*breaking of bread*...that is taking communion...which we will talk about in a moment...and eating meals together...
 - ...AND...*prayers*...corporate times of praying together...like last Wednesday...

Every part of our church life...which is hanging out with people who are likeminded in the things of God...in Jesus Christ...

- ...who have made that profession of faith that Jesus is the Christ...the Son of the living God...
 - ...should have each of these four things...*bible study...fellowship*
...communion and eating meals...and praying together...
 - ...as a regular...daily part of their church lives...

AND SO...from this point forward...whenever you think about the church...or read about the church in the bible...

- ...think about it as this group of people...who gather together to worship and learn and grow in their understanding...
 - ...of all of the things that Jesus said...and did...and what it means to be Christians...followers of Him...

The church isn't the building...the church is the people...a living organism rather than just a pile of bricks and wood and cement...

Greg Laurie...

- *"The church is full of imperfect people following a perfect God. The church is not a museum for saints, it is a hospital for sinners"*

The church is full of all kinds of people...in different stages of their Christian walks...

- ...there are 1 year olds...and 10 year olds...and 50 and 60 year olds...and we are all one big family...defined by who we believe Jesus is...

Just last night...

Matthew 12:46–50 (NKJV) — **46** While He [...Jesus...] was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. **47** Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” **48** But He [...Jesus...] answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” **49** And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! **50** For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

- ...in other words...this is my family...this is my church...whoever does the will of My Father in heaven...

Never forget...that the church is much bigger...than the local church body you are a part of...

- ...AND...though there may be various ways that these bodies of people express themselves...
 - ...through worship and prayer and music...what makes them Jesus’ church...is that they are all in agreement about the truth of who Jesus is...

The most important thing that every church is to be about is the Lordship of Jesus Christ...

- ...learning about the things He taught...including the four things that we just read about in the Book of Acts...

ALONG WITH...three other things that **every** church should incorporate...

- ...AND...that is COMMUNION...BAPTISM...and TITHING...

Communion and baptism should be a part of every church...because Jesus commanded that we partake of communion...

- ...and that we should baptize...AND...not only did Jesus command that we do these things...
 - ...BUT...we clearly see...that the early church leaders...in the New Testament...taught on these things...
 - ...AND...practiced communion and baptism...as well...

FIRST...**Communion**...

TURN WITH ME...Matthew 26:26...

On the evening prior to the crucifixion of Jesus...He had just celebrated what is known as the Passover meal with them...

- ...He broke bread with them...AND...incorporated another type of breaking bread which we have come to know as communion...

Matthew 26:26–28 (NKJV) — **26** And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” **27** Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. **28** For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

No longer needing a high priest...as in the case of the Old Covenant...Jesus...our High

Priest...instituted what we call...*the Lord's Supper...or...the Lord's Table...*He instituted communion...

- ...intended to be a reminder of His body...nailed to the cross...and His blood shed on the cross...
 - ...the **new covenant**...superseding the Old Covenant...which we talked about briefly last week...
 - ...coming before God through the high priest...once a year...going into the most holy place...

Jesus said...as often as you take communion...as often as you break the bread and drink the cup...

- ...I want you to do it in remembrance of Me...of what I accomplished for you on the cross...
 - ...AND...how you are able to have an intimate relationship with God the Father...because of my death on the cross...

TURN WITH ME...1 Corinthians 11:23...

AND...we read of the apostle Paul...telling us how we are to partake of communion as Jesus' church...

1 Corinthians 11:23–29 (NKJV) — 23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread [...he is telling them about the night we just read about in Matthew...]; **24** and when He [...Jesus...] had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” **25** In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” [...then Paul goes on to explain...] **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the **Lord's death till He comes** [...reflect on what His death accomplished for you...]. **27** Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. **28** But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For he who eats and drinks in an **unworthy manner** eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

This is a very important...and often neglected part of taking communion...of participating in the Lord's supper...

- ...AND THAT...is that we are to take some time and...*examine ourselves*...in other words...search our hearts to see if there is anything in our lives we need to

confess...

- ...any sin that we might need to confess and ask forgiveness for...

Failure to do so...Paul says...*brings judgment unto himself, not discerning the Lord's body...*

- ...in other words...don't take communion in a casual manner...without first searching your heart...
 - ...otherwise you may as well say... *"No big deal...Jesus death on the cross didn't do that much for me."*...

Taking communion should always be preceded with a time of reflection...preparing our heart...

- ...thanking the Lord for what He accomplished for us...and how thankful we are to have been forgiven of our sins...

Communion is NOT for 'unbeliever's but for 'believer's'...it is only intended for people who understand what communion represents...

- ...communion is something we should partake of on a regular basis...as a reminder of what Jesus did for us...

SECOND...**Baptism...**

Jesus commanded that we be baptized...it is part of what we know as the Great Commission...

- ...the final instructions Jesus gave to the apostles before ascending into heaven to sit at the right hand of the throne of God...

Matthew 28:18–20 (NKJV) — **18** And Jesus came and spoke to them [...to the apostles...], saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit**, **20** teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

We read earlier...Peter's words...when the people were convicted of their sin...

Acts 2:38 (NKJV) — **38** Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and **let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to understand...that baptism does not save us...only Jesus can save us...

- ...and as we have learned...that salvation comes by a profession of faith in His name and all that he accomplished on the cross for us...

Jesus said...

Matthew 10:32 (NKJV) — 32 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.

Baptism is a public profession of our faith and trust in Jesus Christ...the simplest way to understand baptism is this...

- ...*“Baptism...is an outward expression of an inward transformation”*...it is a wonderful opportunity to profess to others that we love Jesus...
 - ...and want to serve Him all the days of our lives...

Baptism...is a wonderful picture of putting to death our old life and burial (immersion in the water)...and resurrection...

- ...born again into a new life...cleansed from sin...it is a glorious celebration of our salvation...

Every believer in Jesus Christ...everyone who has made a profession of faith in Jesus as Lord...

- ...should be baptized...it is a very important part of every believer’s faith...it is a wonderful expression of love and obedience to the Lord...

LASTLY...**Tithing**...

Tithing refers to the giving of our money to the church...the word ‘tithes’...literally means...*‘a tenth’*...

TURN WITH ME...Malachi 3:8...

The most fascinating thing about tithing...in the Word of God...is that nowhere is it mandated that we must tithe...

- ...in other words...there isn’t anywhere in the bible that says **we have** to give our money to the church...
 - ...which for many people is very good news...*“I need all the money I can*

get these days!”...

BUT...look at the text here...

Malachi 3:8–10 (NKJV) — 8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In **tithes and offerings.** **9** You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. **10** Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And **try Me now in this,**” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it.

This is incredible to me...we don't have to give tithes...BUT...notice that the Lord says to Israel...

- ...AND...I believe He would say to the church today as well... *“Try me now in this...If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.”...*

I believe that the Lord makes tithing...completely voluntary...because he wants to see what is in our hearts...

- ...AND...how much with are trusting Him in all things...money...is a great way to put our faith to the test...

YOUR decision to tithe or not is strictly between you and the Lord...and you should never be pressured to tithe...

- ...BUT...I can tell you from personal experience...that there is a spiritual principle to tithing...
 - ...that you will never understand...until you start tithing...AND...once you do...you will never stop...

ILLUST: When we started the church...

- ...I figured...we don't really need to tithe right now...I am working part time jobs...and spending a lot of time serving the church...and so forth...that was my tithe...

AND...as I was praying one day...I got convicted...and realized that my failure to tithe...was me not trusting the Lord with our finances...

- ...and early on made the decision...that I would faithfully tithe 10% from that point forward...

- ...it is one of the first checks I write...AND...the Lord has blessed us beyond what I would ever have imagined...

In fact...over time...we have begun to give to other ministries and charities above and beyond our tithes and the Lord keeps blessing...

- ...it is so cool...and I encourage you to take God at His word...step out in faith...and try Him in this...just as He says...

AND...one more thing...regarding tithing...do it with a cheerful heart...

2 Corinthians 9:6–7 (NKJV) — 6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **7** So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, **not grudgingly or of necessity**; for God loves a cheerful giver.

God doesn't need your money...nor does He want your money with an 'attitude' attached...

- ...He wants you to give cheerfully recognizing that it ALL comes from Him in the first place...

Take it from me...there is NO better time to start tithing...than right now...

- ...if you think to yourself...I will wait until we are more financially stable...you may find that you will never start...

CONCLUSION...

AND SO...the church...is you and me...men and women who have come together...**like minded...**

- ...in our profession of faith in who Jesus Christ is...and what He accomplished on the cross for us...

We mustn't ever get so caught up in the HOWS of church...and the DOINGS of church...that we miss out on the WHO the church is...

1 Timothy 3:14–15 (NKJV) — 14 [...Paul in writing to Timothy...the pastor of the church at Ephesus...] These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; **15** but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, **which is the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of the truth.

AND...very rarely...ever find a time...when I don't want to come to church...

- ...because the church is my family...my brothers and sister in Christ...full of my dearest friends...

ILLUST: Thinking about how well we all get along...

- ...AND...realized...it is only possible because of the like-mindedness we have in Jesus Christ...

Don't EVER get caught up in the mindset of being a 'Sunday Only' Christian...
incorporate Jesus and body life in **every** part of your life...

- ...recognizing that church is a lifestyle...not some extracurricular activity...it is who we are...

COMMUNION...

WORSHIP...