**WHY CHURCH?**

**Message by Craig Minke**

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**ABOUT 6000 YEARS AGO**

A hand holding a planet

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* The earth was in chaos, mankind as we know it did not exist.
* Jesus (God) created the world.
* Man was created and the creation was good, It got even better when God created WOMAN. (from Adam’s rib)
* Soon after he was created mankind made some very poor choices and sin entered the world.
* Even way back in **Gen 3:15**. We have our first prophecy of Jesus who would crush the heal of Satan.
* Then after about 4000 years Jesus came to earth, he came as a PHYSICAL HUMAN BABY. – YET HE WAS ALSO THE LONG AWAITED MESSIAH
* For over 4000 years people PROPHESIED, prophets, kings, men talked about this event.

**ABOUT 2000 YEARS AGO**

* FINALLY about 2000 years ago JESUS CAME TO EARTH WHERE HE WAS FULLY HUMAN AND YET FULLY GOD.
* He spent more than30 years on PLANET EARTH
  + Jesus experienced PAIN, SUFFERING, REJECTION
  + The world saw Him as a illegitimate child born out of wedlock
  + He experienced life as you and I have experienced it, YET HE WAS WITHOUT SIN.
* Then in the last 3 YEARS he called 12 men to be his DISCIPLES and he mentored them.
* Hours, Days, Months, Nights he worked with these individuals.
* At about age 33 he was arrested and condemned to death by a illegal court
* His death fit God’s master plan from the beginning from Genesis.
* In laying down his life JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS FOR ALL MANKIND AND PAID THE PENALTY FOR SIN
* His shedding of BLOOD ON THE CROSS PAID THE PENALTY FOR OUR SIN
* FINALLY THE BARRIER BETWEEN GOD AND MAN WAS NO MORE.

A person with long hair

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**AFTER 3 DAYS**

* Jesus rose from the grave, the grave could not hold him.
* He appeared to many after his resurrection
* The disciples soon realized they needed help that only God could give.
* He instructed his followers to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from on high.
* We celebrated that event last Sunday in PENTECOST.
* The Bible seems to indicate that at that time there were about 120 followers of Christ.

**PENTECOST CAME**

* Pentecost finally arrived
* God’s Holy Spirit was poured out upon his followers.
* The world would NEVER BE THE SAME.
* Now men who cowered in fear stood up to bolding proclaim the GOSPEL EVEN IF IT MEANT DYING

**ACTS 2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

* It is like everything culmunated to that time
* Jesus’ 30 plus years on earth
* His mentoring 12 disciples who were as human as you and me
* His dying on the cross
* His resurrection
* His commissioning of the 12 disciples and the sending of them into the world

**PENTECOST**

* Then on Pentecost the church began
* Now 3000 people were added to the body in one day. God’s HOLY SPIRIT WAS AT WORK.
* The church begins in around 33 AD.
* Although “church” has come to mean a building or organization, the original Greek word for church was EKKLESIA and it meant
  + A gathering,
  + An assembly
  + It was the basis for our word “CONGREGATION”
* That is what God designed the church to be - A GROUP OF PEOPLE.
* The idea of church as a building would have been foreign to them since they met in homes.

**QUESTION: “WHY DID GOD CREATE THE CHURCH”**

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* Why Church?
* What is the purpose of the church?
* That is the title of my message today
* I want to open this up to all of you.
* We’ve briefly reviewed the events leading up to the birth of the church
* SO WHY CHURCH??
* I will have Job come up here to translate this question for our Swahili members. (INTERACTIVE SEGMENT)

**THERE ARE A FEW THINGS BEING A PART OF CHURCH ALLOWS US TO DO WHICH WE CAN’T DO ON OUR OWN IN THE SAME WAY**

1. **CHURCH PROVIDES US**

**WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT WITH GOD.**

**IN OUR MISSION**

**THIS IS OUR LOVE TO GOD**

**OR OUR HOPE AVENUE**

1. **Corporate Praise & Worship**

* Anthropologists have noted that the history of mankind shows we have an innate need to worship and connect with God
* Now when we talk about worship there are 2 types of worship, PERSONAL and CORPORATE.
* At church we worship as we gather.
* Some have said I can worship God wherever I am, at home etc.
* If you have 200 people worshipping alone in Stanley Park, it is quite different from 200 people gathered and singing praised to God at church
* The Holy Spirit speaks through and inspires music, the scriptures, prayers and the messages.

1. **Part of worship is our GIVING - OFFERINGS**
2. **Part of worship is COMMUNION**

**What was the New Testament Church Doing?**

**ACTS 2:47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

* And, when we fail to worship of God, there is something missing in our lives.
* That’s why there are people living all around us who have money, have health, have fancy lifestyles, but are still searching for something to fill their emptiness.

**ACTS 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer**

**Note also how the New Testament church worshipped**

* Praised God as it says in verse 47
* They devoted themselves to the scriptures
* Breaking of Bread (Communion)
* Corporate Prayer

1. **CHURCH PROVIDES DISCIPLESHIP**

**IN OUR MISSION**

**THIS IS OUR LOVING EACH OTHER**

**OR OUR FAITH AVENUE**

1. **Under the umbrella of discipleship church provides COMMUNITY**

* The church offers us community
* We all need a friend, a shoulder to cry on, an ear to listen and a sympathetic heart.
* The church community provides love and care during difficult times.
* This is where our life groups come in, yet many do not see the value or the importance of small groups.

A group of people sitting in a room

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* As a pastor it is impossible for me to be in touch with all of you as you experience life (both the good and the bad)
* But small groups provide and opportunity for us to fellowship with one another, discuss the word of God, pray for one another.
* Close friendships are build in small groups, as we share and discuss our challenges and trials in life.
* In our Tuesday night prayer meetings we average between 15-20 people every Tuesday night. Many of you have been prayed for in your lives whether is a health issue, unemployment, financial issue, spiritual guidance, protection, marriages, family situations,
* Miracles do happen from the prayers SENT UP IN OUR PRAYER MEETING.
* And this is why we are putting so much emphasis of small group Bible studies (LIFE GROUPS) the last number of years.
  + This is part of our mission LOVING ONE ANTHER
  + This is part of our FAITH AVENUE – OF DISCIPLESHIP.
  + If you are not in a small group YOU ARE MISSING OUT.

1. **Church provides FELLOWSHIP**
   * Fellowship is more than casual conversation, potluck dinners and having fun together.
   * New Testament fellowship is sharing life together, the pain, disappointments and frustrations of life as well as the joys, successes and laughter of life, all in the context of faith in Jesus.
   * We need fellowship to survive and be enriched.
   * STUDIES: have found that babies in orphanages who are not held or given individual attention shrivel up and die and the ones which did survive are developmentally impaired.
   * We need fellowship to grow spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally.
   * We are a product of the environment we grow up in.
   * HOW do we learn and grow and to become mature?
   * We do so through communities that challenge us in loving and caring relationships.



**Life without relationships is meaningless but life lived in the midst of relationships is rich and meaningful.**

* It is in these relationships that we learn to love.
* Left to our own devices we would either stay to ourselves and focus only on us or we would connect with people just like us, with similar beliefs, opinions, personalities and interests to our own.
* In the body of Christ we have all types of people, some may push our buttons, some bring us joy, some may cause us to get upset.
* Don’t leave the church when you are differences and troubles with other. WORK THROUGH THOSE DIFFERNCES AND CONFLICTS – THAT IS WHEN WE BEGIN TO GROW.
* It takes work to live in harmony in the body.
* The church is meant to be a community of love and thus becomes the classroom to learn to love others as Christ loved, even the unlovable.
* IT IS THIS LOVE THAT defines the church and set us apart from every other organization in our community.
* Jesus said, “Your love for one other will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”
* We live in a world where people seem to talk less, people live in their own worlds, (how often do you see people sitting in a restaurant and texting others while they are unsure of talking to those who are with them)
* In todays world we have the greatest communication tools but never in the history of mankind have people been more lonely.
* That’s why when God created the Church, He created it to be a family where real fellowship and community is experienced, where the members can count on one another for support and encouragement and love. That’s why God wants us to be a church that grows warmer through fellowship.
* It in life group, small groups, prayer groups that we get back to the New Testament church model

1. **Under the discipleship part of the church the church provides opportunities for members DEVELOP, AND SERVE AND USE THEIR GIFTS.**
   * Scripture tells us regarding gifts of the Holy Spirit

**EPH 4:11-13 11So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

* God give his body the church varying gifts
* We all are given at least 1 gift of the Holy Spirit some may have 2-3 gifts
* Some gifts are

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Apostles | Prophecy | Evangelists |
| Pastors | Teachers | Wisdom |
| Discernment | Word of Knowledge | Faith |
| Healings | Miracles | Tongues |
| Interpretation of Tongues | Serving | Exhortation |
| Giving | Leadership | Mercy |
| Helps | Administration |  |

**So WHAT IS THE REASON God has given these gifts?**

* Notice in verse 12 above
* The reason God has given these gifts is to equip his people for works of service in the name of his Son.
* That’s why you are here, **NOT TO BE SERVED** or **NOT TO BE INSPIRED** but to come so that together you might be equipped to make a kingdom impact “
* If you expect me or the leadership team to do all the serving you will be quickly disappointed.
* We will let you down.
* That is not our job
* OUR JOB AS CHURCH LEADERS IS TO (FOUND IN VERSE 12) **12to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature**
  + - God gave you different gifts than me, he gave my wife different gifts than me, if I started worship leading your would wish I had my wifes gift.
    - Many of you have different gifts than me THAT IS GOOD.
* That is why we are like a body, some are the feet, some are the eyes, some are the ears, some are the nose.
* When we each work together in using the gifts God has given us we become a thriving growing body.
* If we are not using are gifts that God has given us the whole body is affected or unhealthy.
* We are either a passive recipient or active participant, in the church the body of Christ.
* The only way we can grow and function is if we discover what our gifts are and use those gifts to serve others and bring God the glory
* Scripture commands us to serve God, and how do we do that BY SERVING ONE ANOTHER.

A picture containing text, weapon, knife, tool

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* The ideal church will be where members learn what their gifts are and where they are using those gifts to serve ONE ANOTHER
* Church provides members the opportunity SERVE to try new things to serve and in so doing many COME TO LEARN THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS.
* So I say VOLUNTEER TO HELP IN SERVE IN DIFFERENT AREAS AND IN SO DOING YOU MAY LEARN OF A SPECIAL GIFT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU.

1. **The New Testament Church Grows Deeper Through Discipleship**

* “Discipleship” is a word that basically means, “to learn to follow Jesus.”
* That is what the church that we read about in Acts 2 was doing which we read earlier.
* It is in the Church that we receive teaching and training for how we can be the people that God has called us to be. (That is Called Discipleship)
* The church provides opportunity for spiritual growth
* Notice

**ACTS 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching…**

* These Christians wanted to grow in their Christian walk.
* They wanted to learn about Jesus so they could become like Jesus
* Now, “devoted” is a word that means “COMMITTED TO” or “DEDICATED TO.”
* These first Christians were committed to learning what it means to be a Jesus follower

A few years ago the CNN did and found that 5 out of six Americans do not believe the church is needed to grow spiritually in a close relationship with God.

This fits into the predominant American attitude which says that faith is a private matter and your relationship to God is an individual endeavor.

**Yet this misses a fundamental fact of life: You and I were created for relationships.**

* Let’s face it … relationships are a big deal to all of us.
* In fact, most problems in our lives are the result of some relationship problem, either with a spouse, a parent, a friend, a child, a coworker, or a boss.
* Why?
* Because relationships are at the center of our lives.
* That’s how we’re wired and created. We were created for relationships.
* We need one another for our mental, emotional and spiritual growth.
* God said in the Garden of Eden, “It is not good for man to be alone*.”*
* *Rick Warren put it this way, “We are created for community, fashioned for fellowship and formed for family, and none of us can fulfill God’s purposes by ourselves.”*
* We were NEVER meant to live this life or be in relationship with God apart from other believers.
* **That is Why church?**
* We need relationships but not just emotional or physical relationships but spiritual relationships as well.

**The problem is most of us believe that your relationship to Jesus is personal, but it was never meant to be private.**

* Our faith in the same God and Savior connects us to one another.
* Paul uses the analogy of the body to describe this connection when he talks about the body of Christ in our Scripture today.

**I COR 12:12-13 12Just as a body, though ONE, has MANY PARTS, but all its MANY PARTS form ONE body, so it is with Christ. 13For we were all baptized by ONE Spirit so as to form ONE body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.**

* “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.
* Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.”
* The foot cannot say to the eye, I don’t need you and the hand cannot say to the heart I don’t need you.
* We need one another for our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual growth.

**And where is all this connectedness ONENESS and relationship supposed to happen?**

* The church.
* That is a reason for church
* From the beginning, Jesus showed us that our faith is meant to be lived out in community.
* That’s why he chose 12 disciples with whom to share life and as well as faith and service.
* NO ONE CAN DO IT ALONE.
* Chuck Swindoll sums up this aspect of (community, fellowship, serving and using your gifts in the following story.

A flock of birds flying in the sky

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**Church Swindoll writes, It’s those stately geese I find especially impressive. Winging their way to a warmer climate, they often cover thousands of miles before reaching their destination**.

* Have you ever studied why they fly as they do?
* It is fascinating to read what has been discovered about their flight pattern as well as their in-flight habits.
* Four come to mind regarding the geese.

1. **Those in front rotate their leadership.**
   * When one lead goose gets tired, it changes places with one in the wing of the V-formation and another flies point.
2. **When one goose gets sick or wounded, two fall out of formation with it and follow it down to help and protect it.**
   * They stay with the struggler until it’s able to fly again.
3. **The geese in the rear of the formation are the ones who do the honking.**
   * The repeated honks encourage those in front to stay at it.
4. **By flying as they do, the members of the flock create an upward air current for one another**.
   * Each flap of the wings literally creates an uplift for the bird immediately following.
   * One author states that by flying in a V-formation, the whole flock gets 71 percent greater flying range than if each goose flew on its own.
   * When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone.
   * It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front of it.

As I think about all this, ONE LESSON STAND OUT above all others: it is the natural instinct of geese to work together. Whether it’s rotating, flapping, helping, or simply honking, the flock is in it together...which enables them to accomplish what they set out to do.

**3.CHURCH GIVES US THE TOOLS TO**

**EVANGLIZE.**

**IN OUR MISSION**

**THIS IS OUR LOVING OTHERS**

**OR OUR LOVE AVENUE**

1. **GOD CREATED THE CHURCH TO EVANGLIZE OR AS GREG WILLIAMS PUT IT “LIVING AND SHARING THE GOSPEL**

* The New Testament church grew larger through evangelism
* The Bible is very clear: one reason the church exists is to tell people about God’s offer to forgive them because Jesus died to take our punishment.
* The Christians in Acts were apparently telling others about Jesus, because verse 47 says,

**ACTS 2:47… And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.**

**ACTS 2:41 41Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

A picture containing water, outdoor, nature, rock

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* 3000 became believers in one day
* Wouldn’t that be nice.
* Not every church is going to experience daily conversions.
* However, every church should be a church that is reaching out to its community and proclaiming the gospel message in a way that draws people to Jesus.
* And churches that do that will experience conversions, because as the Bible tells us the fields are ripe for harvest

**JN 4:35 35Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.**

A field of wheat

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* Let’s take this scripture to God in prayer asking him to help to live and share the gospel in our lives
* Pray for wisdom to see where he is working and where He wants us to work.
* Lets close in prayer

**CLOSING PRAYER**