

Spring College Retreat Messages

March 25-27, 2022

Topic: The Church

I. God's eternal purpose—"I will build My church" (Fri PM)

- a. Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 3:10-11
- b. Jesus led His disciples away to a high mountain where He told them one of the most influential and consequential messages concerning His purpose—He said to them "I will build My church." Even though the disciples didn't know what that meant (how could they? There was no church in existence yet), this purpose compelled them to seek, be with, and find the Lord in richer and richer ways. Eventually, Paul would testify that God's display of His riches through the church is according to His eternal purpose. The church is not an add on for God. The building of the church is the main goal of God. When we are with Him in a mountain, we can see this in clarity.

II. The church is a family (Sat AM)

- a. Ephesians 2:19, 21-22
- b. We can't see church as equal to college Christian meetings. It is so much more. Church is full of dads, moms, uncles, aunts, grandpas and grandmas, toddlers and babies. Even annoying junior highers! This is a family. It is the household of God, of which we are members. Just like you can be so comfortable in your house because it is your family's house, you can be comfortable in the church. It is a place to grow, to eat, to hang out, to be included and to be a part. The church is not an army, a school, a hospital. It is a family where you can be a part of God's people.

III. Christ is building and we are building (Sat AM)

- a. Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15
- b. Jesus declared to the disciples "I will build my church." This is God's great design. We must see that we can be a part of God's building by building ourselves. That is why Paul describes the body as building itself up in love (Ephesians 4:16). We have to realize that we have building work to do. We each must take heed how we build. We can build with wood, hay, straw or with gold, silver, precious stones. This is a life of imparting eternal, spiritual experiences into other people. We must learn to do this on campus with our friends. This will continue in the church throughout our whole life. Eventually, we will age out of college meetings. However, we will never age out of building with gold, silver and precious stones. We have to learn how important it is to sit down with someone and open their experiences to God so that real building can be done. We should know about a 'pathway,' like baptism, the Bible, prayer, gospel, service, consecration. Don't be limited to this but have an idea of a pathway.

IV. The church is the body of Christ (Sat PM)

- a. Ephesians 4:16; Romans 12:1-8

- b. The deepest relationship you will ever have is that as a fellow member of the body of Christ. Paul in Romans says “we are members one of another.” Other relationships you may have are unions with body and soul (personality). This would make a great football team. The relationship in the body of Christ is body and soul AND spirit. This makes them deeper than any other connection. In the body we have gifts that are extremely common but extremely powerful. These are prophecy, service, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading and showing mercy. These are according to the grace given us. If we exercise these we will see how surpassingly awesome the body is. As an introduction to this, Paul begs people to present their bodies to God as one living sacrifice. This way they are not conformed to the world but transformed to live for the will of God. We will know it when we test it.

V. The local churches, a church in the city expressing the one Body (Sun AM)

- a. Revelation 1:11; 2:1; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Romans 14:1-3; 15:6; Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 3:15
- b. In the New Testament there is one church in one city. This is what all Christians are, we just want to say what we are and live it out as the church in the city. The church in the city must be inclusive, possess the authority of the Spirit, and be able to define the truth (and sin). The church as such, is a vessel in which all of God’s riches can be contained. They should all be added to the church in the city. What our view is that we are here, in the city, to be inclusive of all the Christians. We welcome them, not with the thought of judging their opinions. If Christ has welcomed them, then we welcome them. We have no special name, if we were a restaurant, we would refer to ourselves as “food.” We have no special teaching; you do not have to believe a certain set of things to join in our “membership agreement.” Our goal is to live out Zinzendorf’s slogan, In essential things unity, in non-essentials liberty in all things charity (or love).

VI. The churches as lampstands shining to the world (Sun AM)

- a. Revelation 1:20; 2:4-5; Luke 10:30-37; 15:11-32
- b. The church’s purpose is to reach the world, not to merely make the members happy. This is why the church is called a lampstand, not a roman bath (or spa). The lampstand is the shining of the spirit (oil) as the lamps burn to illuminate the golden (Fathers) shape of the stand (the Son). The only threat to take away the lampstand is when love disappears. Thus, the lampstand is the shining out of the Lord’s love. This means church can never be an institution that is only concerned for its own survival. This is the religious systems that Jesus met when He was with the Jews. Instead, the church as a lampstand is an Inn where the beat-up man is brought by the Samaritan. It is the Father’s house where the prodigal son returned.