

Radiant Church, August 9, 2020
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We Believe God Sends

The Church is the community of all believers, for all time.

All men and women who have been, are or will be believers in Jesus Christ

Ephesians 5:25 *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

The Church is all the people Jesus died for to redeem

Not just those who lived during or after Christ, but those who lived before Christ too

Anyone who looked to God for their salvation, regardless of what time period

Jesus promised that He would build His Church, by calling people to Himself

Matthew 16:15-19 *He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

Peter ("petros") masculine noun

Peter proclaimed Jesus's identity and role as promised Messiah, as deity

Rock ("petra") feminine noun

Jesus is saying He would build His church on the foundation of Himself

"Gates of hell" in a Jewish person's mind, meant death

Jesus's work to build His church would not be halted by His own death

"Keys" were a sign of delegated authority, held by trusted servants for the advantage of the Master

"Bind and Loose" meaning, the Church was to do the continuing work of the Savior. The church on earth reflects the authority of heaven

There is the visible church, and the invisible church

2 Timothy 2:19 says, "The Lord knows who are His."

The invisible/universal Church is the Church as the Lord sees it

All of whom are saved and redeemed

The visible/local Church is the Church as Christians see it

Some of whom are saved and redeemed, others who do not believe or obey

The local Church is an expression of the universal Church

Jesus Christ is the Head of His Church:

Colossians 1:18 *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*

Writer Megan Hill says it this way, “Not only does Christ fill the church, but the church is the fullness of Christ...Christ cannot be a head without a body; he cannot be a king without a kingdom; he cannot be a mediator without his people; he cannot be a redeemer without his church. The Father validated the work of Christ by raising him from the dead, seating him on the throne, and giving him a body. The church is the irrefutable evidence of Christ’s complete and effective atonement for his people.

“Christ is not the powerless head of a terminally ill body...Christ will make his whole body holy just as he is holy.”

What makes a church a church? 2 major functions

Correctly preaching the Word of God (centering on salvation by faith alone)

Administering the sacraments (baptism, and communion)

Baptism is like admitting entrance into the community of faith, the church

Communion is like recognizing the continuing good standing of the members

The local Church is something to be joined. Other Christian organizations, para-church entities should encourage its participants to join a local church. Thus these other organizations are not a church

Two more distinctions:

A true church pursues **purity**: freedom from wrong doctrine and practice, instead being conformed to God’s revealed will for the church

Ephesians 5:26-27 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

A true church pursues **unity**: freedom from divisions among true Christians

John 17:21 *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one even as we are one*

Unity does not mean being identical to each other, or that any one church must be identical to every other church. But it does mean support and cooperation, between believers, and between churches for the common good and for Kingdom advancement.

Jesus does not see or regard Christians as separate from the Church

There is no Biblical example of a Christian not connected to a local church

And Jesus does not see or regard churches who constantly disagree with or are separate from other churches

Megan Hill goes on to say, “Belonging to the church will always increase our obligations and decrease our independence. And this is good.”

“The church is not a manmade society that we can participate in—or opt out of—according to our own level of comfort. The PTA, the neighborhood association, or the library booster club do not obligate us to personal sacrifice when things get tough. Family does. Because God’s people are our family, we will hold our own preferences and priorities loosely. We will open our hearts and our doors; we will pull up another chair to the dinner table and add another name to our prayer list. We will give them our groceries and furniture and smiles. We will share their grief and trials and disappointments. We will look for ways to show love. As a result, we will expect to have less money and less free time than we would have on our own. We will expect to have added sorrow. We will also expect to have great joy.”

What does the church do?

The church is supposed to minister to God, each other, and to the world

We minister to God by worshipping Him

Colossians 3:16 *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

We minister to each other by nurturing and building each other up in our faith

Colossians 1:28 *Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.*

Ephesians 4:11-13 *And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

All of us are priests. Believer-priests. The only High Priest we answer to is Jesus

It is the saints, the believer-priests who do the work of the ministry

Participants, not audience. Elders and Deacons serve as coaches

We minister to the world by proclaiming the gospel, the good news of Jesus, and making disciples

Matthew 28:19 *God therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

We also minister to the world through acts of mercy

Galatians 2:10 *Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.*

James 1:27 *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

How is the church supposed to do all this?

When Jesus promised to build His church, He also promised He would do it through giving His followers the power to do it

The Holy Spirit indwells each believer, as the presence of Jesus in us

And the Holy Spirit gives necessary gifts, spiritual gifts, to be utilized for the building up of the church, and for the mission of the Kingdom to go forward

1 Corinthians 12:11 *All these [gifts] are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.*

3 thoughts on this:

The Holy Spirit will give what is necessary to each local church

Some make a distinction between natural ability and spiritual gifts

But the NT writers make no such distinction

No one person is given all the gifts. This means we are mutually dependent

Apart from the church, spiritual gifts are not even necessary, they're useless

Spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of others, the church

Spiritual gifts build up the church, and also give a visual of what is to come, and also to fulfill the Kingdom mission Christ commanded His church to fulfill

How do we define the Church for ourselves? By the identities Jesus has given us

By classical definition: The local church is a community of regenerated believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord. In obedience to Scripture they organize under qualified leadership, gather regularly for preaching and worship, observe the Biblical sacraments of baptism and communion, are unified by the Spirit, are disciplined for holiness, and scatter for fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission as missionaries to the world for God's glory and their joy.

Radiant Church is a Family of Servant Missionaries Learning to Be and Make Disciples of Jesus Christ.