

## Serving in the Church

Preached: 11/14/2021, Germantown;

---

Scripture  
Message:

### 1 Corinthians 12:1-14 (NIV) Serving in the Church

Last weekend, I spoke about the importance of the Church in our world. I mentioned that the Church no longer has the influence over people's lives and in our culture that it once did. Many of us regret that our influence in the world has diminished and we long for a time when the Church would once again be respected and would be an agent of positive change in the world. I suggested that in order to move the Church to do that, a good place to start would be to renew our understanding of who or what the Church is? Many people have opinions about what they would like the Church to be. They want to define the Church's nature and purpose based on their desires and what they need. But the New Testament has a lot to say about the Church. And Jesus Himself had an understanding of what the Church should be. So I would propose that we set aside our desire for what we want the Church to be and discover again what God intends for the Church to be.

Last Sunday we looked at the story of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Jesus affirms that Peter is correct in his belief about who Jesus is. He then introduces us to the concept of the Church. He declares that Peter's profession of faith in Jesus is the bedrock upon which Jesus will build the Church. This is the first mention of the Church in the New Testament. What Jesus specifically says about the Church is important. Jesus says, "**On this rock, I will build MY Church.**" The Church belongs to Jesus. It exists for Him. He alone has authority over the Church. He alone determines the ministry and activities of the Church.

After Peter's confession of Christ, Jesus teaches them 2 other important lessons. The text tells us that from that moment on Jesus began to teach that he was headed for Jerusalem and that **he will suffer many things, and he will be killed and 3 days later be raised to life.** Peter protests Jesus prophetic words, declaring "this will never happen to you." But Jesus rebukes him and says that Peter's resistance to the idea of the Messiah suffering had its roots in the enemy - Satan. As we learn throughout the NT, the suffering of Jesus, the cross of Jesus was a part of God's plan of providing salvation for the world. John teaches us that "**on the cross Jesus becomes the atoning sacrifice for our sin.**" (1 John 2:2).

Jesus then goes on and makes a 2<sup>nd</sup> point after Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah. "**If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**" Jesus wants us to understand that becoming a part of His Church requires a cross and sacrifice for us as well. So 2 important points about the Church: 1. When we become a part of Jesus' Church we must understand that it was **necessary for Jesus to suffer on the cross.** To reject the necessity of Jesus' suffering is to align ourselves with his enemy Satan. And 2. When we confess Jesus as Messiah and are brought into HIS Church, **there is a cross for us to bear as well.** We must be willing to sacrifice ourselves for His sake.

I watched a "webinar" (online teaching opportunity) this week. The presenter was Dr. Michael Gorman. Dr. Gorman made an observation that I thought was pretty significant.

***The Cross is the SOURCE of our salvation. And the Cross is the SHAPE of our salvation.***

That is exactly the point that Jesus makes in these two points about the Church. We are made a part of the Church through our confession of Jesus who went to the cross to provide salvation for us. AND when we come into the Church our lives are characterized by a cross of sacrifice that we make for His sake.

**The Cross is the Shape of our Salvation.** Now, I want to talk for a little while about what that looks like, especially as it concerns our life in the Church. When we become a part of the Church, what and how do we sacrifice.

•

There are several answers to that question.

- **Attend: Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**

Gathering with God's people is an important part of our life in the Church. We are strengthened and encouraged by the fellowship we enjoy together. We can Worship together. We can pray together. We can encourage one another through the ministry of the Word. But gathering together requires sacrifice, making a decision to give up something else to be with God's people. For the last year and a half, gathering together has been difficult because of the COVID pandemic. In order to avoid coming in contact with COVID or spreading our germs, many have chosen to avoid large gatherings. For some people that is important and necessary. Some people are especially vulnerable. We have tried to give people the freedom to do what they needed to do to feel safe. But the challenge is always before us to gather with God's people when we have opportunity to do so.

- **Giving:** Giving of our resources to support the ministry of the Church

In order to carry our His mission in the world, the Church needs resources. Those who are a part of the Church must make a decision to sacrifice, in order to give to the Church. I am amazed at how people in this Church family have continued to give and support the Church during this challenging time.

- **Serving Others:** Using our gifts for the Common Good.

In the passage that I read from 1 Corinthians, Paul discusses the subject of Spiritual gifts. What are spiritual gifts? **Spiritual gifts are NOT the Fruit of the Spirit** that Paul writes about in Galatians – Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The fruit of the Spirit refers to our character. It is the character of Jesus that the Spirit produces in our lives. **Gifts of the Spirit are certain abilities that we are given.** Paul writes that there are different kinds of gifts, but they all are given to us by the Holy Spirit. A gift is the ability to perform a service. In the early verses of this Chapter, Paul says that when we make the declaration that Jesus is Lord, we do that by the influence of the Holy Spirit. So each one who professes Jesus (as Peter did) receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. That is an important point. There are not some Christians who have received the Holy Spirit and some who have not received the Spirit. AND when we receive the Holy Spirit, He equips us to serve. Vs. 7 – **“Now to EACH one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”** At the moment of our salvation, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in our lives by producing **an ability that we can use for the COMMON GOOD.** Paul lists some of the gifts that the Spirit gives to believers:

- A message of wisdom
- A message of knowledge
- Faith
- Gifts of healing
- Miraculous Powers
- Prophecy
- Discernment
- Speaking in tongues
- Interpretation of tongues

There are other gifts identified in other locations in the NT. But the point I want to make is that if you are a follower of Jesus, you have been given some ability that you can use for the Common Good, for the sake of others.

Now, in order for your gifts to be used in the Church, you must be willing to sacrifice. You must be willing to give up the notion that the Church exists for your benefit – to take care of your needs. The Church exists to feed you. And you must embrace the idea that God has equipped you with some ability to use to bless others. There does not appear to be a time limit of spiritual gifts. He gives it to you for a while, and then He takes it back and you are off the hook. As long as we have breath in our body, we should be engaged in activities that will benefit others, that will build others up.

So, if we want the Church to regain its position of influence in the world, we must be willing to do our part. We must take up our cross and do our part. Don't wait for others to do it. Become an active participant in His Church.