

1. We Got to Church—
To Hear the Words of Christ
John 1:1, 14

When I was a boy, we moved into a new town where we lived a couple of blocks from the Methodist Church. My parents took us to church a couple of times, and then they stopped going. They were never again regular church goers until after they divorced. But we were close enough to church that my brothers and I could walk to church. And we did. I went through confirmation in that little church. When I stood before that congregation, I made a commitment to Christ and his church. Christ took me seriously. I've been going to church ever since. There have been many occasions when I asked myself why I was going to church. I listened to a preacher preach the same sermon every Sunday for a year. I've listened to choirs sing that were so bad that our worship experience would have been greatly enhanced by them not singing. I've attended churches that were so cold that no one spoke to me. I've sung hymns that were so out of date in melody and sentiment that they were like fingernails on a chalkboard.

I tried to quit church one time. I discovered there is nothing quite as empty as sitting at home on Sunday morning. I made it three or four weeks. I decided, as bad as church was, it was better than nothing, which is what I found when I didn't go to church.

I look back now and I realize that Christ wouldn't let go of me. When I gave my life to him on Confirmation Sunday in that little South Texas church, he took me at my word. And when I was tempted to stray from the church, he kept pulling me back.

This month, as we are inviting members to leadership positions in the church and as we are moving towards Pony Express Sunday, I want to ask the question, "Why do we support the church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service and our witness? Why do we go to church?"

The answer, in a word, is Christ. Now, we know the Spirit of Christ is always with us. The Spirit of Christ is with everyone. Some people are aware of presence of Christ in their lives. Some people aren't. What's the difference? The church. The Spirit of Christ has been active in the world from the beginning. "In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But it wasn't until the Word was made flesh that people came to know who it was they were wrestling with in their souls.

Christ came in the flesh to make himself known to the world. Those who recognized him and loved him he formed into the church. The church has been the connection between the world and Christ in the flesh ever since Christ ascended into heaven. The Son of God was a man named Jesus, son of Joseph and Mary, who lived in Judea about 2,000 years. He's been gone from this world for about 2,000 years. Yet he is still very much a part of our world—through the church. Paul called the church the Body of Christ. The church is evidence that the Son of God took flesh and came into this world. And Christ is still active in the world through the church.

We come to come to hear Christ's words. Christ is the Word of God. And he came to speak to us the words of God. The disciples heard those words and taught them to the church. The church has been entrusted with preserving the words of Christ and teaching them to the world.

And what wonderful words they are:

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”

“When the father saw his son coming from afar, he was filled with love and ran out and embraced him and kissed him.”

“Inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, you have done it for me.”

“The greatest in the kingdom of heaven is the least and the servant of all.”

I could go on and on. There is such power, and beauty, and insight in the words of Christ. When we hear them, we find ourselves saying, “I know in my heart that’s the truth. I’ve always known it, although I couldn’t have said it myself.”

The gospels tell us that the crowds were amazed that Jesus spoke with power and authority. Now, some people think that speaking with power and authority means speaking loudly. It’s not. Speaking with power and authority is simply proclaiming the truth clearly and accurately. The power and authority of Christ was not the loudness of his voice or his charismatic demeanor. The power and authority of Christ came from his words agreeing with what the Spirit of God had whispers in our hearts.

To this day, when we read Christ words or hear them read, we feel the power and authority of those words. We know in our hearts that these words come to us from out of eternity.

These are the words that enable us to remember what is truly important. They are words that enable to work the straight and narrow way that leads to life.

They are not the words of the world. The world teaches a very different way of living and thinking than Christ. If we are not constantly reminded of Christ’s words, we soon forget and get caught up in a way of living that diminishes our lives.

So, we come to church to be reminded of what is true and what isn’t. We come to church to hear the words of Christ.

As long as I am able, I will be in church. I’ll be in church because the church introduced me to the words of Christ.

I’ll be in church to hear the words of Christ spoken aloud, explained and celebrated.

I’ll be in church because the church continues to teach Christ’s words to new generations and to people throughout the world.

One of the reasons we come to church is because this is the place to hear the words of God from the Word of God.

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