

SUNDAY 3/3/24 WHERE IS THE CHURCH?

CARE GROUP: CONFERENCE:

SERMON INTRO:

- It was a great opportunity to get away and look back..consider...evaluate...
- To consider the state of the church in America.
- To look at what we do & how we do it:

- My life, as an individual is a microcosm, a part or piece a reflection of BFC.
- BFC is a microcosm, a part or piece, a reflection of what the church universal is.
- The Church universal is a microcosm, a part or piece, a reflection of Who and what God and His glory is.
- These all are, by the eternal purpose of God, destined to be like Christ for He is the brightness of God.
 - Heb. 1:3a; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, He is the Head of the body, the Church.
- Now regarding my thoughts on the state of conditions in the church in America I would like to echo what Amos said in chapter 7 and verse 14;
 - Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, *I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:*
 - But we all should be able to discern the hour we live in.
- In recent years the church has changed, in fact it is reported that the **Largest and Fastest Religious Shift in America Is Well Underway**
- **Some 40 million American adults once went to church but have stopped going, mostly in the last quarter-century.**
- **"More people have left the church in the last 25 years than all the new people who became Christians from the First Great Awakening, Second Great Awakening and Billy Graham crusades combined," Davis and Graham write.**
- **And beyond this is the worldliness and compromise that has taken place in the church due to the adultery of numbers.**
- **Where is the line of demarcation, the walls of separation from the worldly culture.**
- **The church is to be a safe haven for the redeemed from the world, a fortress against sin and worldliness.**
- **We are to be of a different kingdom, citizens not of this world but of heaven.**
- **The church has tried so hard to win the world it has become the world, and you cannot win the world with the world.**
- **The gospel has become a thing of convenience. the message has become humanistic, man centered, pleasing the soul and flesh, lop-sided, culture driven preaching; grace, grace, grace, love, love, love. (I am not saying to unloving, but be in balance, preach the whole counsel of God.)**
- **John the Baptist did not lose his head for preaching God's love or grace, Jesus was not crucified for preaching grace, Paul and the early disciples**

were not martyred because they preached a man centered gospel, they challenged their culture to repent, flee from the wrath to come...

- Our Bibles clearly state;
 - Rom. 12:2; And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
 - James 4: 4, Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.
- Spurgeon said, "I believe the reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence in and over the church."
- When the world is comfortable in the church, something is wrong.
- A generation ago a theologian said, "when the church is just one more product, or like one more food type on a menu to chose and buy at will and whim, then marketing, programs, entertainment, not sound theology, will become the driving force in its life.
- 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among *them*. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." ¹⁷ Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." ¹⁸ "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."

NOW WHAT ABOUT BETHEL FELLOWSHIP CHURCH?

Bethel Fellowship Church exists by the grace of God, for the **GLORY OF GOD**, to **PROMOTE PASSINATE GODLINESS WITHIN** its members, and to **EXTEND THE LOVE OF CHRIST** to those within its reach, through the power of the Spirit.

We could say the church exists for 3 primary reasons;

- 1) The glorification of God.
- 2) The edification of the saints.
- 3) The evangelism of the lost.

These 3 reasons could be summed up with just 3 words; 1) upward, 2) inward, 3) outward.

Of these 3 points, number 1, "for the glory of God, is of the greatest importance.

#2 and #3 are points of progress in achieving #1

God's Glory:

- **What is God's Glory? John Piper defines it like this; the glory of God is the manifest beauty of his holiness; it is the infinite beauty and greatness of His manifold perfections.**
- **Charles Bridges from his book "the Christian Ministry;" says it like this;**
 - **The church is the mirror, that reflects the whole effulgence, shining or radiance, of the Divine character. It is the grand scene, in which the perfections of Jehovah are displayed to the universes. the revelations made to the Church, the successive grand events in her history, and above all, the manifestations of the "Glory of God" in the Person of Jesus Christ furnish even to the heavenly intelligence's fresh subjects of adoring contemplation. Eph. 3:10**
- **Eph. 1:21, the church is His body**
- **Eph. 2:22 The church is the dwelling place of God.**
- **Eph. 3:21**
- **When we understand that the local church exists by God and for God we see that God's glory, not the needs of the saved or the unsaved are meant to be the ultimate determining factor for all that the church does. God's glory is primary and all ministry must press towards this end**

PASSIONATE GODLINESS WITHIN:

- **Godliness is the quality or practice of conforming to the Character of God, to reflect the nature of the Kingdom of God in the course of everyday life.**
- **It is a God centered life, it grows not through the pursuit of a process, but through the presence of a person, the person of Jesus Christ.**
- **Being conformed to His image.**
 - **2 Peter 1:3-4; as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the ^[c]corruption *that is* in the world through lust.**

EXTENDING THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO THOSE WITHIN OUR REACH.

THE CHURCH IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD!

- **The church is not just a hope for the world, it is its only real hope!**
- **If we are saved, we are part of God's plan for the church, part of the mission, part of His enterprise in this world.**
- **We do much, we work hard to please the Lord. But I do have some concerns and thoughts.**
- **Are we all pulling the rope in the same direction, from the same end?**