

Remnant Life Church
January 14, 2024
Who Is This Church?
Acts 2:1-12, 42-47

“Who is this Church?”

The title of my sermon this morning may seem a bit odd

- After all, would it not make more sense to say, “What is this church?”
- It might, if church were a thing
 - But church is not an inanimate object; it is living, breathing, and active – because church is people
 - The first church in **Acts 2** had nothing to do with a building – it had everything to do with the people whose lives had been changed by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- And the same is true for us today

I thought it might be a good idea on our first Sunday together of 2024, to talk about church

- The church as a whole
- And the church that is Remnant Life
- Some of you may be hearing things you already heard before, but for many of you this will be the first time you are hearing about the inner workings of RLC

READ - Acts 2:1-12, 42-47

The church is one of the few visible forms of corporate relationship between believers

- IOW – it is a way we demonstrate our commitment to the lifestyle of being a Christian
 - By way of a definition - It occupies our lives in such a way that we set time aside to come together with others who embrace the same beliefs
- Now, the Bible utilizes a number of images to describe the church
 - It is called...
 - The people of God or God’s people (**Phil 1:1; 2 Cor 6:16**)
 - The body of Christ (**I Cor 12:27; Eph 1:22-23**)
 - The temple of the Holy Spirit (**I Cor 6:19; Rom 8:9-10**)
- Each of those descriptions helps contribute to our understanding of the church because it is at once familiar to us and yet, has been and continues to be, just as misunderstood.
 - For many, the church is the first, if not only, encounter they will have with Christianity
 - The great late 19th-century Swiss theologian Karl Barth stated that one of the many ways the church witnesses to Jesus Christ is simply by its existence.
- Much of the confusion regarding church is due to the broad and multiple usage of the word
 - We use the word church to describe an architectural structure
 - We then will refer to a particular body of believers – this is Remnant Life Church
 - There are entire denominations that are referred to by that same name – the Methodist Church

- We even use it to describe an activity such as, “Yes, I do attend church.”
- Then, we must answer the question of what is the basic nature of the church.
 - What about the gathering of these like-minded people that makes it a church?
 - How are we different from the Kiwanis, the Shriners, the local American Legion, or any other social group that shares a common interest?
- One possible explanation for this lack of clarity and understanding is that of all fundamental church doctrines, the church itself has, by far, received the least amount of direct and complete attention.
 - One of the true stumbling blocks and contributors to the problem, is the lack of emphasis regarding the importance and even structure of the relationship of churches to one another
 - Not only do denominations hold tightly to their particular, often exclusionary doctrinal beliefs, but churches within those same groups are more and more finding themselves at theological odds with little understanding or guidance on achieving and maintaining unity
 - Satan loves division, and two of his primary targets are the family and the church
- This very point brings me to the start of Remnant Life and why we are who we are
 - Born out of a small Bible study
 - At the same time I was offered the opportunity to become senior pastor of an established denominational church
 - We had been attending for 5 years; volunteer assoc. pastor
 - God used that time to accomplish two things
 - First, allow me to begin preaching again
 - Also to confirm His call in my life
 - Teaching adult SS class
 - Number of those attending
- From the beginning, we knew that we would be a non-denominational gathering
 - Notice I did not say anti but non
 - There is a difference in those two distinctions
 - The first is against the ways and, many times, doctrines of the denominational church
 - The other recognizes its value but chooses to operate without the structures and regulations that are inherent within each group
 - This is not to say that we are unstructured
 - We operate with a full level of leadership
 - BOD
 - Elders
 - Personal accountability
 - The primary reason we did this was because of who God told us we would be
 - RLC would be a church of healing
 - It would be a church of love and belonging

- It would be a simple church that would desire to do a few things very well rather than a great many things in an average way
- One other firm element that lies at the core of RLC is our dedication to the Word of God and our commitment to what it teaches, regardless of what our culture is trying to dictate
 - There was a time, not that long ago – certainly within my lifetime – when the church was thought of as being distinctive and separate from the world
 - It was seen as standing guard over it with the intent and desire to transform it
 - And that transformation would be through the presenting of the Gospel – the good news of salvation
 - The sole purpose of the church was salvation and a reuniting of the lost to their Creator through the person of Jesus Christ
 - The church of 2024, however, often presents a very different function and purpose
 - Today, the goal of many churches has become less about conviction of sin and much more about ensuring people feel good about themselves and their lives
 - We no longer preach conviction; we preach acceptance and tolerance
 - And it is these two words that have replaced the Words of God and have now been set at the altar as the primary focus of many churches
 - Fewer and fewer preach against the activities of sin but instead focus on the love of God that they interpret as meaning all things are acceptable, even blatant sin, because God loves everyone regardless of how they choose to live their lives
 - Not only that, but you can also never say anything that might make someone uncomfortable or suggest they are wrong
 - Make no mistake, God does love everyone because God is love!
 - But he is also God of justice and righteousness
- Remnant Life has and will continue to welcome every and anyone who wishes to attend without exception
 - But that acceptance does not mean that sin is ignored or no longer addressed
 - What is it that determines what is sin and what is not?
 - Is it our Culture? A pastor? Church leadership? – NO
 - It is now and will always be the Word of God

Let me share with you the role and function of this church:

1. Evangelism
 - a. Jesus' last words were to proclaim not a suggestion, but a command
 - i. **Matt 28:19** – *Go and make disciples of all nations*
 - ii. Luke records Jesus' words that again proclaim that same command in **Acts 1:8** - *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

- b. What must be understood, however, is that evangelism does not require travel or relocation to be effective; IOW, it is not “out there,” nor is it the sole responsibility of pastors, missionaries, and seminary graduates
 - i. You are called to evangelize in your workplace, your school, the grocery store, the gym, everywhere you go
 - ii. We must also recognize that the commission is all-inclusive
 1. The Good News of Jesus Christ is for everyone
 - iii. And it is best accomplished through the living demonstration of God’s love
 1. And that demonstration must be modeled by the church
 2. **John 13:35** - *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*

2. Edification

- a. Very simply means to build each other up, to encourage, to love in spite of our differences
- b. But edification is very difficult if you are trying to change someone
 - i. Make them a better person
 - ii. Change their thinking and actions
 - iii. Convince them that they are wrong and you are right
 1. NONE of these things will edify anyone
 - iv. The Holy Spirit is the One who brings change
 1. Our job is to love and pray for one another
 2. IOW - edify
- c. We edify one another in several ways
 - i. Fellowship
 - ii. Instruction or teaching
 - iii. Demonstrating the fruits of the spirit with one another (**Gal 5:22-23**)

3. Worship

- a. While edification focuses on each other
- b. Worship focuses on the Lord
 - i. But worship should be more than a Sunday event
 - ii. It must become a lifestyle that permeates every aspect and function of our lives

In these first three functions of the church

- We focus first on God through worship
- We then focus on ourselves through edification and teaching
- We then focus on others, specifically the lost, through evangelism

What can we do at RLC to help reverse that trend?

- Unconditionally love the people around us
 - Invite people you know to come to church
 - Live, don’t just talk, your faith
 - How we act

- What we say
- Controlling our emotions
- How we spend our time and our money

The church is not a building it is people; it is YOU!

- We are the church
 - And we are the church 7 days a week
 - What kind of church do people see when they observe you and your life?
 - And through the actions of your life, what would they see about this church?
- Closing Illustration:
 - My Dad's office in NYC
 - Sitting at an open diner on a street corner
 - Homeless man getting ready to reach around the counter and take some food
 - The owner told him if he wanted a hand-out, the church was down the street
 - My Dad thought, "No, the church is not down the street...it is sitting right here."