

The Parish of Wellow

What about the Church?

1 Peter 2:9-10, Ephesians 2:14-22, 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Sermon Passages

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Ephesians 2:19-22

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

12 The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?

18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.

19 If they were all one part, where would the body be?

20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

23 and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty,

24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honour to the parts that lacked it,

25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

2. Sermon Notes

2.1 Introduction - Popular Misconceptions about the Church

- The Church = the building
- The Church = services
- The Church = clergy
- The Church = a particular denomination

2.2 Four analogies or pictures of the Church used in the New Testament

- In the New Testament there are over 100 images or analogies of the church, we are going to concentrate on four of them.
 - i. The Church as the people of God.
 - ii. The Church as being the place where God is present.
 - iii. The Church as 'The family of God.'
 - iv. The Church as the 'the body of Christ'.

2.3 The Church as 'the People of God': 1 Peter 2:9-10

- Peter states that all Christians on the planet are the Church just as much as a small group of Christians meeting in somebody's front room can be called the Church.
- Thus when we talk about St Julian's Church in Wellow we should never really be referring to the building but the group of Christians who meet here. We, the Christians who meet here, are the church.

2.4 The Church is the place where God is present: Ephesians 2:19-22

- There is another popular misconception about church buildings which is that people think that God is present or resident in the buildings.
- Church buildings can unfortunately for some become far more important than the Christians who worship in them.
- In Ephesians chapter 2 verse 22 the Apostle Paul says that Christians are 'being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit'.
- Jesus is the chief cornerstone. He is the one who founded the church and around whom the church is built. The foundations are 'the apostles and prophets' and the result is a holy temple made of 'living stones'.
- In 1 Corinthians 6:19 Paul says, 'Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?' God therefore is present in us the people of God, us the church, not in the buildings.

2.5 The Church as 'the family of God': John 1:12

- When we receive Jesus Christ into our lives, we become children of God.
- This is what gives the church its unity.
- We have God as our Father, Jesus Christ as our Saviour and the Holy Spirit living inside us. We all belong to one family.
- Although brothers and sisters may squabble and fallout or not see each other for long periods of time, they still remain our brothers and sisters.
- Nothing can end that relationship. So the church is one, even though it often appears to be divided.

2.6 The Church as 'the body of Christ': 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

- Paul develops this analogy in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 12, he says 'the body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.'
- Paul then explains two wrong attitudes that can develop in the body, He speaks to those:
 - i. Who feel inferior: Paul says the foot may feel inferior to the hand or the ear inferior to the eye. It is easy to look round the church and feel inferior and therefore not needed. As a result we do nothing.
 - ii. Who feel that they have nothing to offer: God has given gifts to each one of us and therefore each one of us has at least one gift which is absolutely necessary for the proper functioning of the body. Unless each of us plays the part God has designed for us, the church will not be able to function as it should.

2.7 Fellowship with other Christians 'the Church' is vital

- Interestingly there are two things we simply cannot do alone:
 - i. We cannot marry alone
 - ii. We cannot be a Christian alone.
- How many of us have heard people say 'Oh, my faith is a private thing'.
- In each of the analogies or pictures we have just looked at the Bible spells out for us that we need to be in fellowship.
- Christians lose their love for the Lord and their enthusiasm for their faith because they neglect fellowship. They neglect meeting with each other, they neglect fellowship when they come to worship on a Sunday. They think, wrongly, that they can be a Christian all alone.

3. Questions to consider back at home

3.1 What do you consider to be the Church? Have your views changed as a result of this sermon?

3.2 How would you describe the church in Wellow at the moment? Does it function: a) as 'the family of God of God' b) as 'the body of Christ' or c) as 'the people of God'? If not, what do we need to do to change that?

3.3 A good friend of yours is most upset that the new vicar plans to hold a barn dance in her church. According to her vicar the people of God are the church not the buildings. How would you respond?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293