

Ekklesia: *We Are Birthed and Built by Jesus not by Man*

5/22/22

I. Introduction: Social Media video of what movie moment do you wish you could relive for the first time? (the shock, the emotional connection, tears, the surprise ending, laughing as if you saw it for the first time)

A. Movies

1. Avengers Endgame, Star Wars Episode 5 (Luke, I am Your Father), Sixth Sense, Lord of the Rings: Fellowship or The Two Towers
2. Napoleon Dynamite
3. For the romantics: A Walk to Remember

B. Got to see Disneyland for the first time again through my daughter.

C. Do you remember the first time when you were saved?

1. When you first realized you were set free
2. The peace you felt when the burden was lifted
3. The excitement you had to follow Jesus, turn away from the world and follow Him.
4. The passion to tell the people around you about the love of Jesus.

D. This is how we became the church. Though sometimes we can forget how it all began. Remember with me from last week, Pastor Derek defined for us the church in the context of our series:

Definition of the Church (Ekklesia):

The church is the community of Christ's people which He calls into being in and around Himself, who live by faith in God's Word, in loving relationship with one another, and as empowered witnesses for the Gospel to the unbelieving world.

II. Study

A. Our identity in Christ is the most important thing about the church. We cannot be the church without the proper beginning and foundation. We are birthed and built by Jesus. The church is not built by man. As Pastor Derek shared with us last week, the church is more than the building, it's more than Sunday's, WE ARE THE CHURCH.

1. How do we become the community of Christ's people?

1. You must be Born Again to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (John 3:3)

We become the community of Christ's people through a rebirth.

A. In John 3, early in the ministry of Jesus, a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus visited Jesus in the middle of the night in secret to get to know this teacher (or what they called a rabbi) a little better.

Being a Pharisee, Nicodemus was familiar with strictly following spiritual disciplines and devoting his life to following God. This was the obligation of the Pharisee; they precisely kept the law of Moses.

But Nicodemus recognized that Jesus seemed to live in a way that was different than the rest of the Pharisees and yet the signs He performed could only be done by one who had walked with God. Jesus' response to Nicodemus turned his world upside down.

Read John 3:1-21

- a. Forgotten phrase in the church, back in the day this is what it was called when you became a Christian. "I'm born again." And I think we should still use it.
- b. Born Again: It's a New way to be human. Nicodemus was a disciple of the wrong rabbi (teacher) and needed a new way of living; he needed to be reborn or as Jesus put it, "born again." He needed a new way of living to enter the kingdom of heaven. He needed a new voice, new actions, new disciplines, and a new heart. It was a new way to be human.
- c. Spiritual Birth – The Spirit of God was the source of New Creation; in Genesis and throughout the OT. New life and new creation came from the Spirit of God. Jesus is reminding Nicodemus of this, you must be born again through the Spirit and become a new creation.

- d. Nicodemus and the rest of the Pharisees, who studied Scripture more than any other person, missed this. They missed what the Old Testament prophets were saying about a new birth that cleanses and renews.
 - i. There was an eschatological cleansing and renewal promised by the OT prophets. But the Pharisees had missed it.
- e. We can miss it in the same way:
 - i. No need to be born again, everybody can enter the kingdom.
 - ii. Trying to cleanse ourselves, get right before we go to God.
 - iii. We are born again first, God transforms us.
- f. Jesus continues to paint the picture for Nicodemus that to be born again, to become a new disciple, He needed to believe and follow a new teacher, the living God.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

New life begins with following a new master, Jesus the Christ. Eternal life is received through Discipleship to Him which is what Nicodemus was always after in his pursuit of obeying the law. Discipleship to Jesus starts by being born again, a new birth to live in a new way.

B. Discipleship is a term that has also been forgotten or at least it has strayed away from its intended meaning and purpose.

Remember what a disciple is...

A. Contrary to common belief, the term “disciple” did not have its original origins in the New Testament, nor was it a practice created by Christian culture. Discipleship was a common Jewish religious practice, especially by the time of Jesus. Because of the dispersion of the Jews after the destruction of the first temple being exiled in Babylon, synagogues became the center of Jewish community culture, and rabbis or “teachers” took the role of interpreting the Torah and teaching the Jews how to keep it.

Upon listening to the rabbi under a specific synagogue, if a student took to their teaching and wanted to further their education, they could approach the rabbi and request to be their disciple. Once accepted, they followed their rabbi in close relationship with them; "...hearing, observing, and imitating" them as much as possible.

1. We have a little disciple: Ella imitating Nikki and I

2. Discipleship was a common way of life, but one of the differences with Jesus as a rabbi, is He went out and chose His disciples.

B. What the church has forgotten is that we are born again as a new disciple. To be a Christian is to be a disciple of Jesus; to follow after Jesus and to learn how to live like Him. Becoming a disciple is what salvation is all about. This is what the four gospels are all about. They contain more than just the beautiful accounts of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, but at the very heart of them, they teach us how to become like Jesus and live like Him; they teach us to be His disciples and to make disciples.

Dallas Willard in his book *Divine Conspiracy* conveys the church's problem like this,

"...actual discipleship or apprenticeship to Jesus is, in our day, no longer thought of as in any way essential to faith in him. It is regarded as a costly option, a spiritual luxury, or possibly even an evasion. Why bother with discipleship, it is widely thought, or, for that matter, with a conversational relationship with God? Let us get on with what we have to do."

We have degraded the greatest commission (making disciples) as no longer essential to faith, but an extracurricular activity given to those who want to take their walk with Jesus a little deeper.

C. But we must be born again to enter the kingdom of God. That is what discipleship is all about. We are no longer who we once were, we are no longer following who we once followed, we no longer look the way we once looked, or talk the way we used to; everyday we are becoming more and more like Jesus.

1. We are born again to live in a new way. We now have a new way to be human. New life begins with following a new master, Jesus the Christ. Discipleship to Jesus starts by being born again, a new birth to live in a new way.

2. This is often where the story ends for many Christians.

In his book *True Spirituality*, Francis A. Schaeffer put it like this, **“In one way, the new birth is the most important thing in our spiritual lives, because we are not Christians until we have come this way. In another way, however, after one has become Christian, it must be minimized, in that we should not always have our minds only on our new birth. The important thing after being born spiritually is to live.”**

Being the church is more than new birth.

2. You must abide in Jesus to continue to live and grow. (John 15:1-8)

Though being born again is the most important thing for the disciple because it is where we begin, we must move on to even greater things, to live in a new way unto Jesus. Discipleship thus becomes the most important thing to the Christian after one is born again.

When one is born again, the disciple learns a whole new way to being human. Rebirth involves new practices, new speech, and new disciplines. It involves a life completely transformed, no longer looking like the old self, but now looking more and more like who we are following, Jesus. As we spend time with Him, we begin to see the areas that need to be renewed. As we observe what He did, we can imitate His practices and His disciplines to become more like Him.

Read John 15:1-11

- g. We are not an institution. We were not born again to be a religious institution where all you do is receive and learn. It is so much more than that.

- h. We are a living organism
 - i. Need food (the Word)
 - ii. Need water (The Spirit)
 - iii. Need connected to the Vine (Jesus)
 - iv. Need pruning (The Father)- Stripping off the old ways, the old things
 - v. Need to bear fruit (The Church)

- i. Fruit can become rotten if not used, it becomes wasted.
- j. Life with Jesus is the greatest joy we can experience. Being born again was never meant to stay in that state, we are to continue to grow and live with Jesus as new humans.

- k. With all of the chaos in the world, we now have hope to live for something that matters, we have purpose. Our lives aren't meaningless any longer.

- l. That was one of the hardest things about isolation and distancing these last 2 years. The life and growth of the church is contingent on all of these things working together. Food, Water, The Vine, Pruning, and bearing fruit. Without it, we bear fruit that is wasted.
 - i. Need to learn to live in community again and reach our community again.
 - ii. **LV Reach Center**
 - iii. **Awaken Tijuana**

3. You must be built on the rock of Jesus to thrive and to stand firm. (Matthew 16:18)

Remember Pastor Derek touching on this last week. The Church is built on the rock of Jesus. He is our foundation. This is where we can stand firm and thrive.

- m. Not built on man's teaching (not stable)
- n. Not built on politics (not stable)
- o. Not built on being like other churches (close.... But not stable)
- p. Not built on pastors (not stable). I wish I was good at building things. But.... Behind many pictures you may find many holes, and I have now gotten to the place of accepting it.

- q. All of these things are not stable enough foundations to build on. They are unstable and always changing. They all can have elements of Jesus and look like Jesus but are not stable enough.

A. We are not only built on Jesus, but He is the one who builds us.

The common thread through every King who failed Israel in the Old Testament was when they would worship other gods, they wouldn't rid Israel of idolatry, and when they weren't faithful to the covenant.

Through Church history, failure came from when leaders began to trust in their own systems and stray away from the Word of God and began to build by themselves, elevating traditions of man over God.

B. Our failure continues as the church when we build on anything but Jesus. We begin to crumble when anyone but Jesus builds us.

1. Podcast junkie but need to weigh everything on the Word of God.

4. You must live and move under your true identity. (1 Peter 2:1-10)

- r. Pt. 1 of Cross element; rightful identity in Christ, relationship upwards is built and established.
- s. When we operate under our true identity, we become the church.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-10

A. We are living stones being built by Jesus as a spiritual house. Not just to be built but to live, to worship, to tell others about His excellencies and to see others step into His marvelous light as we once did.

B. Our identity starts with being born again, a new life, new creations, a new way to be human; we become disciples of Jesus. As we follow Jesus and imitate His life displayed for us in the Gospels, we become more and more like Him. We must abide in Him and find our source in Him to live and grow. As we do, we begin to bear fruit and operate as the church. Our identity is the most important foundation as the church, without our proper identity, we cannot be the Church.