**Commitment to the Body of Christ**

Q: What is your place in the Christian family we call the Merced Christian Church?

Tonight I want to talk about an aspect of lordship of Christ, which is commitment/devotion to his Body—the Church.

Ephesians 5:25-32 v. 25 Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.

v. 27 He wants to present the Church as a radiant bride.

Jesus, similarly, wants us to give up our selves for the church.

He want us to help to make the church radiant.

Question (pause for a while…) Have you been doing this?

Two definitions of “church” used in the Bible.

1. Church with a capital C. This is the thing that Jesus died for. It is an abstract/esoteric thing that exists, composed of all those who are saved. When you are baptized into Christ, you are clothed with Christ, and you become part of the Church he died for. Every real Christian is part of the Church (capital C), by definition.

2. A church. A local body of believers which submit to a local leadership, which fellowship together, and which, working together, put the one another passages into effect and which serve as the city on a hill to which those who are looking for God will be attracted. People who are drawn to Jesus’ church are drawn to the church (little c) We, as a body, are the visible church (small c). When you are baptized into Christ, you become part of the Church, but you also are expected, by God, to be part of a church (small c).

Q: How can we love the Church and give ourselves up for her?

Q: How can we help Christ to present the Church as radiant?

Answer: By loving, and giving ourselves up for the local church, so that the local church we are members of will be presented to God as a radiant church.

My point: Right now, I am concerned that our church needs a little buffing in order to have the “shine” that God wants and that Paul envisioned.

I believe that over the past few months (with some notable exceptions… Amen) our group has become more selfish and more concerned about our own little world and less concerned with the body of Christ.

How do I know?

1. From listening to people’s conversations… We are talking about our work, our vacation, our….

2. Commitment to attendance at every Bible talk, worship and midweek is definitely down.

Maybe as a very young church we may have left the honeymoon stage.

I do NOT want to see devotion to God’s church go down on my watch!!!!

I am going to use a classic scriptures here!

Hebrews 10:22-25

a. What God has done for us: Cleansed of a guilty conscience and our sins washed away.

Great!

b. What God wants from us: Spur one another on.

Keep meeting together.

So, who have you called this week? Who have you encouraged? Who have you spurred on? Who have you had discipling time with?

Now, let’s talk about meeting together.

Here in Merced we are developing some bad habits.

Family in town, a family reunion, work (requested but not absolutely required), etc. We miss midweek, Bible talk or Sunday worship.

We have an anniversary, a family vacation, so we go away for the weekend.

Can I suggest: Come back for Sunday and do not leave until Friday.

How often to I miss church? Defined as not attending an ICOC service on Sunday) Less than 1/year. (I am not counting coming on-line).

How often to I miss midweek? 1-2/year.

I plan our family trips around midweek.

Sick kid? We went to church!

In San Diego, we had midweek every week, and I missed less than 2/year.

How often do I miss Bible talk? 4-5/year (but this is because I am teaching for another church somewhere)

How often have I missed church due to being sick? 1/42 years, but I was deathly ill in the hospital.

How often have I missed midweek due to being sick? 1/42 years, but I was so sick I could not walk.

Some of us have a headache, our back is sore, we are tired, and we miss midweek.

Some of us have a long, hard day, and we miss Bible talk.

Some of us have a last-minute family member come into town and we miss church.

If they schedule a family reunion, event, etc. that conflicts with church, tell them “Sorry, but you know that I go to church.” They will adjust to you if they love you. But you said that you love Jesus WAY more than you love your wife, your children, you grandmother.

God can’t use you if you are not here!

Heb 10:25 And by the way, when you show up, make sure you encourage one another—even if you do not see the Day approaching.

Notice what he talks about next—falling away. This is VERY important.

Hebrews 3:12-13

We need to get back to daily encouragement.

Q: What is the definition of daily? “as long as it is called today.”

I NEED ENCOURAGEMENT IN ORDER TO NOT SIN. So do you. Call people daily. I mean every day. I do NOT mean send a text. NOT A TEXT!!!! A phone call or an actual visit. Our of town? Make a phone call. Busy? Make a phone call and ask how it is going.

Look what he talks about immediately after—falling away.

Matthew 6:31-33 Seek first his kingdom. Has this scripture been taken out of context and misused by our fellowship? Yes, it has. The Kingdom of God is much bigger than the church. Seeking the kingdom is seeking the kingship of God. It is seeking eternal life for yourself and for others.

But… It includes putting the needs of the family before your own as well.

Where are your priorities? Who do you pray for? How often to you invite people to church? Whose needs have you met lately? Who that we do not see here tonight are you going to call?

1 John 3:1, 16-18, 4:7-12

3:1 God’s love has been lavished on us. How? He made us part of his family.

3:16-18 Therefore, we need to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If you lay down your life for your sister, that includes coming to church, midweek and Bible talk!!!! It includes a phone call!

v. 17 It includes being aware of needs and taking care of them.

v. 18 It includes action, not words.

4:7-12 If you do not love the family, then you do not love God.

Q: Do you love the family of God? How does this show in your life?

v. 12 This is how God’s love is made complete in us—by our practical, daily love for the family that God put you in when you were baptized into Christ.