

Going Deeper - Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide

The Future of the Church

October 25, 2020



What exactly is God's plan for the future of His church? This is the question we begin to explore in Bill's current teaching series, The Future of the Church. We learn we must capture the heart of God, within the people of God, for the sake of the world. But, how?

In order to know where we are to go, we should first look at our history. The early church bloomed and blossomed, all the while being highly illegal and with Christians being unmercifully persecuted. Then, something changed. In 313 AD, the ruler of Rome, Constantine the Great, made Christianity legal and began to institutionalize it. For the first time, God's Church was given legitimacy within the state and even started to receive funding. The Church has never been the same since then. The pressure has never quite been on Christians to move and be bold like it was for those very early Christians. Some would argue, this is when the Church began to be institutionally paralyzed.

See, the Church is God's Church. It's Jesus' bride. Jesus loves the Church and we get to participate in His mission. Unfortunately, the church of today is more often a refuge from the world, rather than a refuge for the world. This is not God's intent. We know this to be true from how and where Jesus announced the creation of the church. In the book of Matthew, we learn that Jesus took his disciples to Ceasarea Philippi. This area was a well known pagan god alter. It was a very evil place where human sacrifices were offered. It was also believed that demons entered and exited this world freely here. It was here, in this evil place that Jesus asked the disciples two questions:

Who do the people say I am?

Who do YOU say I am?

After Peter responded that Jesus was the one true Messiah, Jesus declared, "On this rock, I will build my Church and the gates of hades will not overcome." The Church does not have a mission, the mission of God has a church. We cannot move powerfully forward unless we regain the missional momentum from the past. Jesus designed the church to adapt, to be agile, and to be fearless. It seems that the church does amazing things when under pressure, but much like a "lukewarm Christian," is easily pacified when things are easy. Let's not be pacified, but be bold as Jesus intended it!

Action Items for the week:

We've learned from James that prayer is a very powerful tool we have. Let's use that powerful tool and pray this now: "God, what is your heart for creation and how do we allow that to be in us and then released through us?"

The Church is God's creation to help fuel Christians in the spiritual warfare we all face. It is a place to be bold. Knowing this, what can and what will you do differently in church and outside of church? How has your perspective been changed? - Joe Pattee