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CrossRoads Baptist Church
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Matthew 16: 13-20
Church Series #2

"The Church Was Built on Relationships"

Background:

Caesar was 120 miles north of Jerusalem in the northern part of Palestine. This was mainly a Gentile area instead of a Jewish area.

There, Jesus asked his disciples "who do men say that I am?" They responded with John the Baptist, Jeremiah, or Elijah. All of these are great prophets who the Jews believed must have come back to life through Jesus because there was no other explanation for what Jesus was doing than a great prophet raised back to life.

You will never come to a true decision about who Jesus Christ is by taking a poll or determining public opinion.

So, Jesus pressed. "Who do you say that I am?" This is the final examination with one question – pass or fail.

"You are the Christ, the son of the living God."

Then Jesus told Peter, "Blessed are you, for flesh and blood did not reveal that to you."

Jesus pressed the question because he wanted to know they got it....it's a relationship.

I. The very nature of man is built on relationships.

Genesis 2:18 "It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a helper comparable to him."

II. The very nature of Christianity is built on relationships.

The church is built when Jesus asked His disciples who had been with Him for 2.5 years "Who do you say that I am?"

The bottom line of Christianity is simply having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and relationships with other believers.

We also see this in the Ten Commandments. The first four deal with our relationship with God and the last six with our relationship with others.

Paul said in Galatians 5:14 "The whole law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

No matter who we are or what mistakes we have made, God cares so much for us that He has made everything possible for a sinful man to have a loving relationship with a holy God - all through His Son Jesus Christ.

Is there anyone as a Buddhist that ever says, I have this personal relationship with Buddha?

Is there anyone as a Muslim that ever says, I have this personal relationship with Mohammed?

Is there anyone as a Mormon that ever says, I have this personal relationship with Joseph Smith?

Is there anyone as a Christian Scientistic that ever says, I have this personal relationship with Mary Baker Eddy?

No, - but we do.

We don't follow the teachings of Jesus, we follow Jesus and He lives in us.

This relationship is so strong that not even death (gates of Hades) can overpower the church. Jesus rose to keep His church alive.

But the relationship with Jesus is not private and only personal. Someone to say, "My relationship with God is private." is that it may be accurately reflect their experience, it is not biblical. Our relationship with God is personal, but it was never meant to be private.

Henry Blackaby said in his book "The God-centered Church" (page 7) "Without a love relationship with God and His people, we have not experienced God's salvation."

Man, who is lost and alientanated from God, is now brought near to Him and is no longer self-centered and independent. Salvation has made this person to be interdependent and Christ-centered.

"The sign of a healthy Christian, who has been set free from sin, is interdependence with other believers, and commitment to function within the body of Christ." (page 19)

Your relationship with God does not come through the church; it comes directly from a personal encounter with Him. but it will always reflect itself in a relationship with a local church.

III. The very nature of the church is built on relationships.

The New Testament word for "church" is ekklesia which literally means "called out ones." Ekklesia referred to any assembly (at river bank, in synagogue, in a house, in the Temple) of people who were called together for a particular purpose, and the NT writers applied this term to those called together by God. This word is used 114 times in the NT with 90 of them referring to a local assembly.

The church is never referred to a building - but people - a congregation.

The great English Bible translator William Tyndale wisely sought to avoid the confusion between "Church" and "church" by translating ekklesia as "congregation" instead of "church" so that the reference to people was always preserved.

Deut. 4:10 "Gather the people..." The Septuagint translates the word "gather" with the Greek word ekklesiazo - "to summon an assembly." The verb that is cognate to the NT noun ekklesia.

Acts 7:38 Stephen speaks of the people in Israel in the wilderness as "the congregation (ekklesia) in the wilderness."

Hebrew 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22 "In the midst of the congregation (ekklesia) I will sing praise to You."

Hebrews 12:23 "When we worship we come into the presence of "the general assembly" of the firstborn who are enrolled in Heaven.

W. A. Criswell - "the church will be here Sunday if you want to see them."

We need to correct our terminology - we don't go to church; we are the church.

Jesus said "I will build my church." The church exists at the will of God; not man. The church is a living part of divine creation consisting of men, women, boys and girls.

So, if the church is an assembly - then that means you will be involved in relationships. But not just any relationship and next Sunday I am going to look at this Biblical concept of koinia. A deeper level of relationship - deeper than any other secular relationship.

Jesus in Revelation 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

Jesus is looking for one in the church to open their heart to a new, refreshed, vital, alive relationship with Him and be invited back into His church.