

The Significance of the Church

見沼 MJCF May 5, 2024

Ephesians 1:17-23

Several years ago, there was a preacher who found a place called “Church of God Grill” in a restaurant listing.

The peculiar name aroused his curiosity and he [called] the number. A man answered with a cheery, “Hello! Church of God Grill!” The preacher asked how that restaurant had been given such an unusual name, and the man said: “Well, we had a little mission down here, and we started selling chicken dinners after church on Sunday to help pay the bills. Well, people liked the chicken, and we did such a good business, that eventually we cut back on the church service. After a while we just closed down the church altogether and kept on serving chicken dinners. We kept the name we started with, and that’s Church of God Grill.”

Now, that’s a church that has forgotten its original purpose! It’s sometimes easy to get into our regular routines at church, and then forget some of the most important things.

As a church, what do we offer the world? Many churches may be able to begin listing a number of different activities they do, such as having a ministry to help the homeless, or counselling programs for people with addictions. Yet, a lot of the things that are done by churches are activities that non-Christian organizations could also be doing. These are good and important, but what’s unique about the church? What is it that makes the church meaningful today? There are some people who feel like the church is no longer relevant in society. Some people even think that they can be Christians without being a part of a church. Yet, the church was started by Jesus Christ.

When we accept the invitation to follow Jesus Christ, we become representatives of God’s kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. We become members of the world-wide church as well as a local church. Part of our role is to worship and give glory to God. The church is where we spend time in prayer, in thanksgiving, confession, and worship. We learn from each other as the Spirit works among us. As we grow in our relationship with Christ, those around us will notice something beyond the ordinary. How do we see ourselves? What impression do others have of us? Do they even know if we are followers of Jesus? We may be small, but we actually have quite an awesome role. The church represents the kingdom of God, the almighty Creator of the universe!

Paul’s prayer starting in Ephesians 1:17 gives us a look into the amazing power of God in Christ, and the awesome role of the church. Imagine! A big part of this prayer is about us, Minuma church!

“I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

Wow! Paul prays a lot about God’s power. We place our hope in the promises of God as we read in the Bible. God is good. God loves us so much that he came to us in Jesus Christ. Having hope means that even though we may see lots of bad things happening in the world, we trust God that this is not the end. God rules far above it all and is still ultimately in control. God is able to strengthen us to do God’s will. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.” (Is.40:31) God is the source of our strength. Although we may often feel weak, we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. We are imperfect. We are often tempted away from following God’s perfect will. It’s easy

to focus mainly on pleasing ourselves rather than living the way we were created – to share God’s love. In Galatians 2 verses 19 to 20, Paul says, “...I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Going back to Paul’s prayer for the church, notice that the church participates with Christ who is the head of all things, “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named.” I used to read this passage as just including the church as one of the “all things” that Christ rules over, but it’s really a partnership with Christ! Christ is the head and we are his body. Working with Christ, we also have been given authority! We benefit from our close relationship with Christ, but was also have a mission to share the wisdom of Christ with the world. We are unique because we reflect God’s glory through the presence of Christ in us. The Spirit of Christ then helps us to see where he is at work in others all around us. What an awesome purpose! I’d like to read Paul’s prayer one more time.

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Amazing! Let’s pray.

Loving God, we confess that we easily forget your greatness. We are small, and it’s easy to think that we are insignificant. But, you have done great things through your Son Jesus, and through him, we have been able to join your family, becoming sons and daughters in your spiritual kingdom. Help us to trust in your great power, knowing that you are sustaining us. Grant us the courage to stand firm in faith. Show us ways in which we can share your goodness, that others may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.