

Remnant Life Church

May 1, 2022

Where is the Church?

Philippians 2:1-4

As we move further into the decades of the 2020's, the church finds itself in a growing position of non-influence and fading relevance

- In the last 75 years the church in our society has gone from being a leader to almost an afterthought
 - When I was a boy in the 60's there was no such thing as sports on Sunday aside from the professionals
 - Today kid's leagues are in full swing throughout the entire weekend including not only Sundays but Sunday mornings – a time that used to be untouchable
 - There was a time in the not-so-distant past that you did not go shopping on Sunday for the simple reason that stores were not open
 - And I mean none of them!
 - If you had a big meal planned for that afternoon you had better have gone to the grocery store on Saturday
 - The lone exceptions were gas stations and just a handful of restaurants
 - 60 years ago, no one was doing yard work on a Sunday
 - Everyone knew that Sunday was a day of rest – because God said so!
 - And besides, Sundays were the days you went to spend time with family or close friends
 - Growing up, after church, my mother would take my 2 brothers and me – almost every single Sunday – from Claymont, Del up 95, across the Walt Whitman bridge into Camden NJ to 609 Williams St – a 45-minute drive then - and spend the afternoon with my grandparents.
 - Now that was not always easy for us
 - We lived in a neighborhood with a lot of kids our age and Sunday afternoons (after everyone got home from their respective churches) were for playing football in the street or baseball in the nearby field
 - But it was Sunday, and that is what you did
 - I still can't work in my yard on a Sunday – no matter how long the grass is
 - 60 years ago the church was a guiding light for the family and the community
 - Wedding and funerals took place in a church – period.
 - The pastor was a trusted and respected friend and spiritual guide
 - They were not perfect, but they were genuine in their care for you and not trying become famous or rich
 - Answers to questions were biblically based and not according to the most common answer found in a Google search
 - And 60 years ago, important decisions, meetings, and gatherings started with and sometimes even ended with a prayer
 - From government caucuses to educational committees, to sporting events
 - Today the best we can hope for is a moment of silence

- The Bible was holy, the Ten Commandments our moral bedrock, and God was not only real, but He sent Jesus to show us how to love one another and to die for our sins

Today, the church is only one more activity to choose from on already too crowded weekend agenda

And the influence of the church in the lives of the general population has nearly evaporated – and the numbers prove that to be true

- According to the Barna group, the most widely accepted tracker of religious trends within the culture
 - 75% of all Christians have experienced a serious season of doubt in their faith
 - Only 50% of those surveyed considered themselves “Bible users”
 - Among those who call themselves practicing Christians, 41% believe that whatever is right for your life or works best for you is the only truth you can know
 - Only 36% of those polled believe that the church has their best interest at heart
 - Over the past two decades there are traditional beliefs that are becoming less common
 - Only slightly more than half those surveyed believe that God is the perfect, all-powerful creator of the universe
 - Less than 35% believe the Bible is totally accurate in all its teachings and without error
 - Only a quarter believe satan is real with the majority believing he is only a symbol of evil
 - 66% believe that when Jesus lived on earth, he was only human and committed sins just like the rest of us
 - And 73% of people believe that if you live a good life and do enough good things for others, you will earn a place in heaven
 - Regarding whether moral truth is absolute or relative, 65% believe that it is relative, or they have never considered the question
 - And the percentage of those who attended church in the last 6 months has reached a new low of just over 50%

The question must be then asked, what has led to this gross decline in the church’s effectiveness to influence culture and the general population?

- Well-known ministers who have had great very public moral failures have certainly contributed – Swaggart, Baker, Tilton, and Roberts to name just a few
- I believe that denominational splits do not instill confidence in the mission of the church to those on the outside looking in
- A rigid adherence to centuries old styles of music and worship have made it difficult for many to relate to the real message of God’s love
- But first and foremost, what has been the greatest contributor to the decline of church influence in our culture today is the behavior of Christians – of those in the church
 - We are the reason
 - If we can’t get along with each other what reason would someone want to be a part of that?

This was the message Paul began to focus on with the Philippian church beginning in the second chapter

READ – **Philippians 2:1-4** (Roxanne Crawford)

What we are talking about this morning, when you get right down to it, is living as a true Christian versus acting as a true Christian

- What is the difference between those two?
- Should not others be able to tell if you are living your Christianity or simply going through the motions?
- Living your faith as a Christian versus acting within your faith as a Christian
- Can others tell the difference?
 - I would think that it would be something we should all want
 - But many don't present the components of being a true follower of Christ

The story is told of a city boy about 10 or 11 years old who had never been on a farm before and he asked the farmer: "Mister, why doesn't this cow have any horns?" The farmer cocked his head for a moment, then began in a patient tone, "Well, cattle can do a powerful lot of damage with their horns. Sometimes we keep 'em trimmed down with a hacksaw. Other times we can fix up the young'uns by puttin' a couple drops of acid where their horns would grow in. Still, there are other breeds of cattle that never do grow horns. But the reason this cow don't have no horns, is..... 'cause it's a horse."

Now how does anyone not know the difference between a cow and horse

We can pose a similar question this morning – how would anyone know the difference between a Christian who lives his/her faith and one who simply goes through the motions?

- They shouldn't look anything alike
- Yet, many come and go out of church doors every week with no change to who they are or how they live outside of the Sunday service
- And we have such wonderful, time-tested excuses as to why we don't change
 - The first one is I can't change
 - Something happened to me in my past and I just can't get beyond it
 - This is just the way my temperament is
 - I come from a family of very emotional people
 - The rules of the Bible and how we are to live are antiquated and need to be updated to reflect the culture or the society
 - And it is this last one that has, sadly, become the hallmark for much of the church of the 21st century

Paul writes they the people should be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose, and doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

It is these four elements of Christian living that are going to provide the way for the church to become relevant in our society again

- I believe that it is possible
- But it is going to take Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, to be willing to give of themselves in every way for it to happen