

The Covenantal Life: Being the Church

Week 11 - The Church in the World

John 17:6-23

- Tending to the internal, covenantal unity of the local church does not mean the local church is an end in itself
 - The church is inherently missional - if it is not actively working, it is not functioning as a church
 - Jesus specifically prays that we would not be taken out of the world (John 17:15)
 - We must avoid “escapist” theology - God has us here for a purpose
 - The purpose of our unity and sanctification as a church is not ultimately for its own sake - it is so the world may know and believe in Jesus (John 17:21, 23)
 - Matt. 28:18-20 - the mission to go, make disciples, baptize, and teach must be the foundational motivation for everything we do as a church
- Our mission to the world begins with separation from the world - we must be distinct (17:6, 14)
 - 2 Cor. 6:14-18 - we must avoid partnership, covenant with the unbelieving world
 - We are to live as a distinct nation (Ph. 3:20) under another King (Acts 17:17), and so in that sense are sojourners and exiles (1 Pet. 2:11, Heb. 11:13)
 - The world should perceive the church as a distinct society
 - Not to the point of being total separatists (1 Cor. 5:9-10, 10:27-28, John 17:15)
- Remaining in this world, we are to be an example to the world
 - Matt. 5:13-16 - parallels Israel’s national commission to show the blessing of serving Yahweh by living out His commands (Deut. 4:6-8)
 - The world witnessing the church’s manner of life should cause them to glorify our Father
 - The life of the church should be objectively attractive, not by imitating the world, but by living as God intended man to life
 - The local church should be a society marked by genuine fellowship, love, self-giving, truth, peace, integrity, encouragement
 - Cannot be a facade - the world should be able to scrutinize the church and see that it is legitimate, not an act
 - The local church should be a preview of community in the new creation - centered around God and oriented toward one another
- Tempting to stop at separation and being an example - if we stop here, we miss the heart of our mission
 - The church is not merely a light in the world, but is called to bring light to the world

- The church exists to minister the gospel to the world
 - 2 Cor. 5:18-21 - we're not citizens in hiding but militant ambassadors proclaiming the rule of our King
 - Rom. 10:14-17 - the church is sent to ensure people hear the good news
- The local church specifically is responsible to evangelize
 - Acts 13:1-3 - the local church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas as missionaries
 - Personal evangelism and certain organizations have their place, but the local church should be the center of outreach
 - Evangelism, not merely by individuals but by the church as the church, should be an ordinary and is a necessary function of every local church
- This work of the church is not in vain - the local church is Christ's instrument to conquer the world
 - Jesus promised to be with His people - did not send them on a suicide mission
 - Similar to the commission given to Joshua and Israel (Josh. 1:5, 6:2)
 - The nations are in the hand of the Son (Ps. 2:7-8)
 - We respond to this in faith, like the Israelites under Joshua, going into them to conquer by the gospel, and trusting God has given them to us
 - Eph. 1:21-23, 1 Cor. 3:21-22 - all things belong to the church in Christ
 - Even without knowing exactly how Christ's victory will be manifested, we are still called to labor under Him
 - Therefore, we should plan for victory and act as though Christ really is subduing all His enemies
 - The church must equip the saints to apply the gospel to everything they do
 - The Holy Spirit is with every true local church
 - He is in us - how can we assume our mission will fail?
 - The local church is humble in appearance, and it is through its humble and faithful work that Christ has chosen to conquer this world - we must be the church