

“A Drink at Joel’s Place!”

Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:16-21)

Intro. – Anyone know what the #1 network show on TV was in the ’90 – ’91 season? It was “Cheers” – a sitcom based around the happenings of a bar... Listen to the words of the theme song:

“Where Everybody Knows Your Name”

Making your way in the world today takes everything you’ve got.

Taking a break from all your worries sure would help a lot.

Wouldn’t you like to get away?

Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name.

And they’re always glad you came.

You want to go where you can see our troubles are all the same.

You want to be where everybody knows your name.

You want to go where people know people are all the same.

You want to go where everybody knows your name.

Such brings me to the question of the hour. How much finer is the fellowship of the Church to that of say two friends fishing/golfing? How much better is the sense of enjoyment amongst the saints to that of say a country club? Can the average person really find more compassion, understanding and acceptance at the Church than they can find at the local bar? Some will protest that such comparisons are “out of line,” but, the fact remains John Q. Pagan automatically makes such comparisons. Thus, the real question of the hour is this – what does John Q. Pagan find in a bar that he fails to find in a lukewarm church?

I want to use the prophet Joel who prophesied the coming of our Lord’s Church. Acts 2 is simply the fulfillment of that prophesy – the beginning of Christ’s Church. So, a drink at Joel’s place respectfully refers to the Lord’s Church.

Purpose: to better become the church our Lord intended His Son’s Body to be

I JOEL’S PLACE GIVES ENJOYMENT

- John Pagan gets *enjoyment* at a bar – something certainly lacking in lukewarm churches (note: saying this from observations, not experience!). And in anticipation of the response “The Church wasn’t put into the world to have fun!” – I beg to differ:
 - A. Chief Characteristic of Early Christians
 - 1. New Testament word often used to describe the saints of the First Century:
 - a. same word we get our word *hilarious*
 - b. used concerning the giving of tithes and offerings (note: gathering of tithes/offerings considered a low ebb in worship assembly today...). Imagine the joy when something really exciting happens during this time...!
 - 2. It did in the First Century Church – *joy* was not only vocalized it was lived!
 - 3. The early saints, though under most adverse circumstances most of the time, but when they gathered for worship, their joy was in the Lord. Illustrations of this abound in Scripture!
 - B. Chief Characteristic of God
 - 1. Several laugh-lines in Sermon on the Mount
 - 2. Lord often used exaggeration for emphasis – e.g. strain a gnat but swallow a camel... easier camel
 - 3. Look at some of the animals AND people He has created...
 - C. Chief Characteristic of His Today
 - 1. God played a “cosmic trick” on Satan and death almost 2,000 years ago.
 - 2. Satan laughed when Christ went to the Cross, but then wept when he discovered why Jesus went!
 - 3. As a result, His people rejoice in Him:

- a. Galatian 5 records *the Fruit of the Spirit* and one of that fruit is *joy!*
- b. 1 John 5:3 “*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.*”
- c. our best friends... best experiences must be in the church!
4. What does an outsider “observe” when they worship here with us?
 - a. Illus. – One time Charles Spurgeon was emphasizing to his class the importance of making the facial expression harmonize with the speech: “When you speak of heaven, let your face light up, let it be irradiated with a heavenly gleam, let your eyes shine with reflected glory. But when you speak of hell – well, then your ordinary face will do.”
 - b. Illus. – ever visit a church and get a “cold reception”?...
5. We’re given the opportunity to show the right kind of enjoyment in the Lord’s church. If we don’t John Pagan will most likely return to the bar and get the wrong kind of enjoyment!

II JOEL’S PLACE GIVES FELLOWSHIP

- “fellowship” = $\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\alpha\upsilon\iota\alpha$ = partnership/aid &/or relief... first Christians continues steadfastly in this:
 - A. To the Hurting
 - note: bars boast they offer “aid &/or relief” to the hurting...
 - 1. One great evangelistic tool that spiritual blisters are *soothed* (not made) at church thru His people..
 - 2. An army of hurting people are seeking relief and/or aid... Seeking wrong kind at a bar...
 - 3. Church must give the right kind of “fellowship” = the balm in Gilead... church is not a hospital; instead, the church is a landfill takes in garbage and turns it into a garden...
 - B. To the Suspicious
 1. John Pagan has haunting suspicion that if he brings his sins/hurts to the church = frowned upon and gossiped about... surely not?!
 2. Note: most barkeepers are excellent secret keepers... but conversely church folk can be more fittingly called *the rumor mill*...
 3. Is it any wonder people avail themselves to bars rather than Lord’s church simply because there is more acceptance/understanding there with less criticism....
 4. Not suggesting we *wink at sin*... am stating there is room for more understanding/acceptance...
 - Illus. – told a Kentuckian joke in Bloomington, IN... person got bent out of shape... I apologized (privately/publically)... permitted to cause havoc in the church... got to point I couldn’t out of good conscience urge new folk to come and get involved...

III JOEL’S PLAC GIVES ANONYMITY

- barkeep “match mood” with their customers...(remember mood ring craze?)... if customer weeping in his beer...
 - A. To New Christians
 1. Two things often surprise new Christians:
 - a. all “Christians” aren’t as enthusiastic and faithful as new Christians thought would be...
 - b. the deluge of *opportunities* for service often results in newborn asked to drive Mack truck...
 2. Certain sense of “anonymity” must be given to new Christians:
 - a. opportunity to establish friendships... realizing family ties in the family of God...
 - b. opportunity to grow in “the faith”...
 3. Not suggesting new Christians be the same as “any other pew/bar sitter”, but, am suggesting there be areas best fitted to serve... direct and encouraged to serve there...
 - B. To New Members
 1. Same thing can/must be realized for those already immersed believers who identify with us...

2. We must realize new church family ties must not be sacrificed for deluge of service opportunities..
3. Service is a growth process:
 - a. running on a church treadmill builds Christians with legs but no brain or heart.
 - b. we've reversed the process = not legs make heart go, it's the heart that makes the legs go!
 - c. pagan worshippers often offered up newborns as sacrifices... Don't you wonder if the modern local church isn't guilty of the same?

Anonymity in the sense of opportunities for fellowship, grow and service in areas where best suited!!

IV JOEL'S PLACE GIVES THE GOODS

- Illus. – Coke is the “real thing”... when customer come into a bar, don't inform them only thing have to serve is warm milk. If such the case many barflies would stay away the local bar as church members stay away from worship and study!
- a “bar” is always true to its name... Church must be even more so!

A. That Which is Advertised

1. Church of Christ = “of or belonging to Christ”... Saved by GRACE...
2. Christ (our Head and Authority)
 - a. if the only accomplishments the world witnesses in us can be explained in terms of something the world can do with the same expenditure of effort and energy, then the world will never take notice!
 - b. refashioned hearts/minds = demonstration of God's power!

B. That of the Choicest Product

1. Joel prophesied the coming of God's Spirit = beginning of the Church...
2. Resulted in the greatest institution on earth = Body of Christ!
3. Salvation and Lordship (v 21) is that choicest product – Church is/has exactly what world needs!

Conclusion: True story of small town a nightclub/tavern built right on Main street. One of the churches in town so disturbed about this they conducted several “all night prayer meetings,” asking the Lord to burn down that “den of iniquity.” Well, lightning did strike the tavern a short time later and it was completely destroyed by fire. The own, knowing the church people had prayed... sued them for damages. His attorney claimed their prayers had caused the loss. The congregation, on the other hand, hired an attorney and fought the charges. After deliberations the judge gave the following statement: “It is the opinion of this court that wherever the guilt may lie, the tavern keeper is the one who really believes in prayer while the church members do not!”

Can it be, can a bar keep have firmer convictions than do church folk? Can a bar really be more attractive to people and meeting their needs than the Church of our Lord?

Jesus spoke of a drink that if taken one would never thirst again. This is what Joel was speaking of in our text. This is what we have the blessed privilege to invite and urge folk to come and have a drink at Joel's place = the Church of our Lord. Brethren, friends, we have what this ole' world needs! Let's give this *living water* Jesus spoke of – let's urge more to come for a drink at Joel's Place!