

Radical Restoration

A Radical Redefinition of the Church – Part 1

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Ephesians 1:19-23

If you have your Bibles, let me invite you to open with me to Ephesians 1. Ephesians 1. What I want us to do over the next two weeks is to take a look at what I want to call “a radical redefinition of the church.” As a part of this whole series of radical restoration, becoming the church that God has intended for us to be, I want us to look at what the church is; what it means to be a part of the church; what it means to be a member of the church.

I think these are some areas that we are going to look at in Scripture that are sorely needed in our church culture today. What is the church, and what is the church all about. So, we are going to do that this morning and next week. This morning will be a little more focused on the universal church as a whole, and then next week, we will dive even more specifically into a definition of the local church. However, what is the church, and why is the church important? That’s what I want us to dive into.

I want us to use Ephesians 1 as a text to begin our study of what the church is about. Ephesians 1, and I want to start reading at verse 22. We are going to focus this morning on verses 22 and 23. This is Paul, and he’s writing to a specific local church, specific local believers in a certain area, and he says this in verse 22, “[And] God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything and every way.”

Three Reminders for the Church ...

I want us to dive right in this morning, and I want to show you a few reminders for the church that I believe spring from this text; reminders that maybe we know in our heads, but somewhere along the way, with our caked on culture, we have missed out on completely, functionally in the church today. Three reminders for the church.

We comprise the body of Christ.

Number one: As the church, we comprise the body of Christ. As the church, we comprise the body of Christ. Now, obviously, right here in the end of verse 22, it says, “*God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body...*” So, that’s how Paul begins to describe the church in the book of Ephesians.

What I want you to do is I want you to see how this is a theme that comes up over and over and over again in this book that he has written. Look at Ephesians 2:16. If you’ve got a pencil or pen, you can circle this in your Bible. I want to show you each of the times when Paul mentions the fact that the church is the body of Christ. Look at Ephesians 2:16. We’ll kind of start at the end of verse 15, just to get the context. It says, “*His purpose was to*

create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross..." So, there it is, a picture of the body.

Now look over in Ephesians 3:6. Paul is speaking to them, and he says, *"This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one..."* Here is it; circle it, *"...body and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus."* Now, look in Ephesians 4, look in verse 4. You can circle it here. *"There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."* We are one body.

Ephesians 4, go on down to verse 11. *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..."* Down in verse 16, *"From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."* Verse 25, come to the very end. It says, *"We are all members of one body."* Ephesians 5, let me show you two times there. In verse 23, it says, *"The husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."* Verse 30, *"We are all members of his body."* Over and over again, Paul is making a pretty clear point here, the church is the body of Christ.

In fact, if you take a right and go two books over to the right, and come to the book of Colossians, look at Colossians 1. I want you to see how Paul continues this theme. There are a lot of parallels. I wish we had time this morning to go into all the parallels between Colossians and Ephesians when it's talking about the church. Maybe we can do that sometime, but I want you to look in verse 18. This is talking about Christ and His supremacy in all creation, and it says, *"He is the head of the body, the church..."* There it is again. He's picking up on that theme.

Look down in verse 24. Paul says, *"[Now] I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his..."* What? This is the audience participation part of our program. *"...for the sake of his body, the church."* Okay, over and over again, we see Paul saying, *"The church is the body of Christ."* That's what the New Testament teaches. 1 Corinthians 12:27, he says it to them, *"We are all members of one body."* So, the church...the New Testament is teaching us pretty clearly the church is the body of Christ.

However, somewhere along the way, we missed that. We completely miss that. In fact, the way...the way that we grow up in our society is we look at the church as one of two things. We either see the church predominantly as either a building or a business, or an institution. Those are the two ways that we look at a church, most often. Either the church is a building, or it's a business or institution, and I want you to think about those two options with me for a second this morning.

If the church is a building...and that's how we often look at it. *"I'm going to go to church this morning."* *"Where do you go to church?"* That's the question we ask people in a church culture like Birmingham. *"Where do you go to church?"* It's a place that you go. We worship at the church. It's about going to a certain place to do church, but if the church is a building, then that means we are consumers. If the church is a building, then we are consumers. If the church is a place that we go to, then we are consumers. The church becomes a vendor of religious goods and services, and we go and we pick out what works best for us.

Just like we saw on that video, but maybe even more smaller practical ways, we treat the church like a marketplace of ideas, like a supermarket. We are picking out the best tomatoes that we can find in the supermarket. We are trying to find the biggest bargain we can for our money. We go, and we start looking for churches, and we find, "Which is going to work best for me? What product is going to be best for me and my family?" So, we shop around for churches. That's how we look at church when we are looking for a church. We are consumers or maybe even a step deeper, not like we are going to the supermarket, almost like we are sitting as a judge on American Idol, and we are sitting back looking for what fits our preferences best when we look at the church. We sit there, and sometimes we walk away, and we say, "Wow, you were on fire. That was awesome. That sermon, the music, it was incredible."

Other times, we walk away, and what do we say? "Well, I didn't like the song selection very much this time. It wasn't the preachers 'A' game. It just wasn't...you just didn't really bring it all to the table. You could have done a little better, maybe next week, try to come back, we'll let you come back, and you come back next week and we will try to do better." We look at the church like judges on American Idol, trying to figure out what our best preferences are. Or, maybe we just we create this term called "attenders" where I'll come, and I'll sit, but I'm not going to make really any commitment to the church. I don't know if it's because we are afraid or maybe we think, "Well, I don't want to risk it. What if something happens in the church that I don't like, then I would have to pull out." So, we look at church as consumers.

If the church is a building, then we are consumers. If the church is a business or an institution, then we are competitors. If the church is an institution, then we are competitors, and we talk about all the time, how the staff operates the church, like a business. There are some guys, somewhere in some dark room that are leading the church. When we give our money, we give our money to the business, that's what the church is about. When we talk about the church we go, "Well, our church does this, or our church does that." We begin to have this competition going on with hundreds of churches in Birmingham. "Our church does this. Does your church do that? Well, if my church doesn't do this, then I'm going to go start a new one." We just go start new churches so we can have a church that meets what we want and what competes best with the people around us.

However, it's not just outside the church. This creeps inside the church, and inside the church, you have a picture of people that are jockeying for position trying to gain control. Trying to decipher how we are going to do this best and trying to control what goes on in the church, and we become competitors inside the church, and we get so engrossed in how we operate, and the programs we provide, that somewhere along the way, we miss completely out on focusing on the lost people around us, much less the people who are starving in Sudan or the billions of people who haven't heard the name of Jesus. Those are a side note because we are competing with each other to have the best church.

If the church is a building, then we are consumers, if the church is a business or an institution, then we are competitors. Those are the two ways we most often grow up thinking of the church, and I want you to see this morning that they are blatantly wrong. They are biblically deficient. The church is not a building, and the church is not a business or institution, but if the church is a body, then that means we are not consumers; we are not competitors; we are a community of faith, and that's the picture that Paul is giving us here.

The church is not about us being consumers or competitors. That's not what the picture of the New Testament church is about. We are a community of faith that comes together to worship Christ, to obey His mission together. That's what they had missed out on. If you

come back Ephesians 1, they had missed out completely there in the church. You see, there had become a lot of division between the Jew and the Gentiles in the church. The Jews were the chosen people of God in the Old Testament. They were the people God had poured out His grace and His love on. Now the Gentiles were coming into the faith, and a lot of the Gentiles kind of felt left out, and there was a real division between the Jews and the Gentiles, and there was this whole consumerism or competition had crept into the church. I want you to look at Ephesians 1. I want you to look at verse 3 and how Paul starts this letter. I want to show you something, it gives us insight to what it means to be the community of faith in the church.

I want you to look at how he starts, by praising God and talking about the blessings we have in Christ. I just want you to hear this, let this word really just speak to your heart. Listen to what it says,

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he had freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Isn't this rich?

He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything on conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Now, in that passage we see, God has...He has adopted us as sons and daughters. He has chosen us. He has predestined us. Now, at this point we start to debate immediately, "What do you mean, 'predestined,' preacher? Did He predestine us? What does that mean? Does that mean He chose me and not other people?" We start this debate about predestination. "Am I elected? Who's elected?" We have this debate about who is chosen and who is in and who's out.

That's not the point of what Paul is saying here. He is talking about the blessings we have in Christ, but I want you to notice a theme that runs throughout the verses we just read. I want you to look in verse 3. It says, "*God has blessed who in the heavenly realms...*" It says He has blessed us. Verse 4, "*He chose...*" Who? "...us." In verse 5, He predestined us. In verse six, "*He has freely given us in the One he loves...*" in verse 7, "*In him, we have redemption.*" Verse 9, "*He made known to us the mystery of the gospel...*" In verse 11, "*In him we were also chosen,*" verse 12, "*in order that we might be for the praise of his glory.*"

Now, I want you to notice something very interesting in verse 13. "*And you...*" Did you notice that? Circle the word "you" there in your Bible. It's different. It changes the entire way He is referring to them. For twelve verses, it talks about how we have been blessed by God, how we have been chosen to receive His grace, how we have been recipients of His mercy. Then, in verse 13, He says, "*And you also were included in him...*"

Now remember the context, Jews and Gentiles alike, right? Who do you think the “we” is referring to in the first twelve verses? Paul, a Jewish man, talking about how the people of God, the people of Israel, had been chosen by God, predestined by God, anointed by Him, adopted by Him, blessed by Him in abundant ways, and then Paul gets to the end and says, “And guess what, guys, now you are in on it too. You are a part of this thing.” What you see is, in the middle of division, Paul coming on the scene, and he says, “Together, we are one body under Christ.”

“Well, thanks for the history lesson, David, but what does that have to do with us today?” I can’t help but to think even in this room on this morning, there are some of you who are feeling like Gentiles in a sense. Almost like second class Christians because of what’s happened in your past, because you have divorce in your past, or you have some pretty dark sins in your past, and you haven’t been a Christian as long as everybody else has, and you’ve got some problems that are going on in your life right now that nobody else in this room really had. You are struggling with some things that nobody else, everybody else in this room is too good to struggle with, and you feel like you are a second class Christian. I want you to know this morning, based on the authority of the Word of God and the blood of Christ, you are not second class. You are a part of the family, the body of Christ. All of us in this room is a part of a community of faith. Now, that changes our perspective on what the church is about. Not a building or a business or institution, but a body of believers, a community of faith coming together.

What I would like to do is I would like to see the day when our terminology at The Church at Brook Hills is completely changed, and we stop talking about going to church, and we stop talking about the goods and services we had met that day. We stop talking like the church is a building or a business, and I pray for the day when we start talking like the church is a body. You say, “Well, Dave, haven’t you been around long enough here in the south to know that just won’t happen. This is the way we talk about church.” God help us to change the way we talk about church to come in line with His Word. We comprise the body of Christ, so let’s act like it.

We possess the authority of Christ.

Not only do we comprise the body of Christ, but we possess the authority of Christ. Now, here is where it really gets good. I want you to look at the context of this passage that we just read. We read verses 22 and 23, but if you look back up in verse 15, Paul is praying a prayer for the believers there, and he says, “*I heard about your faith in the Lord and your love for all the saints. I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.*” In verse 17, he tells us what he is praying for. He gives us a list of things.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [Now listen to this.] and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Then, he begins to talk about that power, and from verse 19 all the way down to verse 23, he describes the power of Christ, and I want you to catch it. It says, “*That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead, seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*” Then, we come to the verses we talked about, “*God placed all things*

under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way."

So what we see is Paul showing us a few truths. First of all, Christ has all power. He communicates that to them. He says, "You've got to see that your Savior has all power." He describes this throughout this passage. If you look at the numerous times the word "all" is mentioned, in verse 21, it says, "*He is far above all rule and authority.*" There is the first time we see it, and then look down in verse 22. "*God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.*" Then, it says the church is the body, the fullness of Him who fulfills all things in all ways. That literally means, "everything in every way." Christ has all power.

Paul gives us a picture. He kind of gives us a list. He said, "Look at His resurrection; He conquered death. Look at his ascension into heaven, His exaltation, His position at the right hand of the God of the universe, His authority, His dominion, His title over every other ruler in all of history. God has placed all things under His feet."

I want you to think about that with me this morning, for Christ to have all things under His feet. All the rulers of the world are under the feet of Christ. There is not one ruler on the face of this earth today that is not under the authority of Jesus Christ, under the power of Jesus Christ, under His feet. Not one current event that we see on CNN is not under the authority of Christ. The violence we are seeing going on in the West Bank right now, as we pray for believers there, it's all under the feet of Christ.

This last week we were in Indonesia. It's the closest I have ever been to a volcano that was about to erupt, and you could see right when we walked outside the seminary where we were, and you could see just a few miles away in the landscape, this massive volcano, and you could see the smoke coming out of the top, and you could see where the lava had already flowed down parts of the mountain and taken out the trees, and it was good news to know that that volcano was under the feet of Christ and nothing was going to happen to that volcano apart from the authority of Jesus Christ. He's got all rule and all authority over everything.

So we see that Christ has all power, but look at this next truth: The church has the fullness of Christ. That's how the church is described in verses 22 and 23. The church, which is His body, the fullness of Him basically means, literally in the original language of the New Testament, it means it's filled by Him, it's filled with Him, and that word literally means "to fill completely". So, the church has all that Christ has. The fullness of Christ dwells in the church.

Now, you put those two truths together and look what you get. Christ has all power, and the fullness of Christ is in the church...don't miss this. That means that all the authority of Christ in all the universe belongs to who? It belongs to the church. Think about that. If Christ has it all, and we have all of Christ, then we've got it all. All authority, all power, all dominion, everything that is Christ's belongs to us. He's shares it with us.

Think about it. We share in His crucifixion. Over and over again, we died with Christ, right? We share in His resurrection. We don't have to worry about death because one day, when we die, we are going to spend eternity with Christ in heaven. We share in His resurrection. We share in His exaltation.

"What do you mean we are going to be exalted?" Look at Ephesians 2:6. It says, "*God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.*"

Isn't that an incredible truth? Here's the picture. Jesus seated above all the heavenly realms, and we are right there next to Him with a smile on our faces. We have His...we share His resurrection, His crucifixion, His ascension, His exaltation, and His authority. In the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18, it says, "All authority in heaven and in earth has been given to me. Therefore, you go and make disciples because you have my authority in you."

That's the picture He has given us to the church. What an incredible truth here. I want you to look over at 1 Corinthians. Look at 1 Corinthians 3. I want you to look at verse 21. This is another time when the church was divisive, and they were going at each other's throats about different things, and it happens in the church sometimes. I want you to look at what he says. They were having all these debates about different people in the church, about who the greater teacher was, and I want you to look at what verse 21 says.

He comes, and he's talking about, "Don't deceive yourselves; stop your bickering", and he says, "So then, no more boasting about men!" Then, he says these words, *"All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future - all of them are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God."* He's reminding them, "You possess the authority of Christ. Everything that is His belongs to you."

I remember when I was getting married to Heather, December 18, 1999. She's year older than me. I married an older woman, so she had finished up college. I actually was finishing up, and the semester before we got married, I was finishing up and that meant I was a college student living on college income. Eating a lot of Ramen noodles and just kind of making my way, just working as hard as I could at school, and therefore, I didn't have an income coming from anywhere else.

As a result, like many college students, no cash flow whatsoever. All right, no real income, and, as a result, the Ramen noodles. That's the picture for me as I'm preparing to get married. Heather on the other hand, had graduated, and she had gotten a job teaching. That meant that she had cash flow. She had an income coming in. She had money in her bank account.

So, on December 18, 1999, we stand at the altar, and we join our lives together. Now, on that day, I received some incredible things. Most importantly a beautiful wife, but you know what else I received on that day? Cash flow. One minute no income, the next minute, income. One minute, nothing in my bank account; the next minute, I got money in the account. Simply by uniting my life with her, everything that was hers became mine.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have a much greater truth for you this morning based on God's Word. When you unite your life with Christ, everything that is His...His holiness, His redemption, His mercy...it's all yours. His power, His authority, His grace, it all belongs to you. We possess the authority of Christ.

Are we living like it, though, in our struggles with sin? Does it look like we have the authority of Christ? Whether individually or corporately in the church, the way we struggle with gossip or with bitterness, does it look like we have the authority of Christ? With our power and influence in the culture, does it look like...do people say, "Wow, the church has the authority of the One who has all dominion and all power"? All authority. What belongs to Christ belongs to us.

When we went to Indonesia, these guys were just amazing folks. This seminary...I have told you about the seminary. They are planting churches throughout the country, leading people to Christ. I remember one time, and this was last October when I was in Indonesia, it

reminded me of it this last week. I was talking with a guy and...kind of a short stocky guy...and he was telling me his story, kind of his testimony. He said, "Dave, before I was a Christian, I used to be a fighter. I knew Ninja and Jujitsu and a few other things." He said, "I could take guys out." I said, "I believe you."

He says, "When I became a Christian, God changed my heart." He said, "I remember one day, I was in a village where there were hardly any Christians, if there were any at all, and I was sharing the gospel with somebody in this hut, in the little house, and about that time, the witch doctor from the village, which was very prevalent in a lot of cultures like that, comes to the house, and basically, called the guy out and said he wanted to fight me. The witch doctor knew what I was doing there, and he wanted to have it out with me." So, he said, "I started walking about of the house, and I was about to take this guy down."

Then, he said, "But when I stepped over the threshold of the house," he said, "The Lord told me, 'You don't fight; I'll fight for you.'" So, here is what he did. He pulled up a chair, and he sat down, and he looked at the guy, and he said, "My God will fight for me." In the next minute or two, the witch doctor began to choke, and he said, "David, I couldn't believe my eyes. He fell over dead right in front of me." Now, I don't want you to be too freaked out, okay? Well, you can be freaked out; I was freaked out, all right? He said, "All the villages came to see what had happened, and I told them the story, and all the village said, 'We want to believe in this God', and the whole village came to Christ."

Now...now, I'm not saying this morning that the best thing for us to do from Brook Hills is to go out into Birmingham and pull up some chairs and start pronouncing things on people. That's not the point; please don't try that. Just...just don't, okay? However, I am saying this: There's a church around the world, and there was a church two thousand years ago that believed they had the power of Christ, and as a result, there were thousands saved when they preached. As a result, they saw demons flee when they proclaimed the gospel, and they saw people healed, and they saw people's lives changed; they saw nations reached. They saw churches started, and I believe that power is available to the church today. I want us to be a church that lives like it.

What I had to realize, and I realized it again this last week in Indonesia is that these people, a guy like that...he's surprised if God doesn't show up and do something supernatural. I look at my life, and I look at the way we do church, and we are shocked if God even begins to do something supernatural. I pray that that changes. God, bring us in touch with the supernatural. Your power and your authority, not just so that people will say, "Wow, what amazing things are happening over there," but so people come to Christ; so that the gospel is advanced; so the nations know the goodness of God. That's what He wants to do, and He's given His authority to do it. Let's start living like we've got this authority. We possess the authority of Christ, the fullness of Him who fills all things in all ways.

We display the glory of Christ.

All right, we comprise the body of Christ; we possess the authority of Christ. Isn't this a good text? The Lord is good, isn't He? I want you to come to the last part, and I want you to see this reminder. We not only comprise the body of Christ and possess the authority of Christ, but we display the glory of Christ. We display His glory.

Now, we know...before I show this in Ephesians 1, we know that the mission of God is to make His glory and His salvation and His ways known in all nations. When He sent Christ, His salvation, we know that the mission of God is to make the glory of Christ known in all nations. What we see in this passage, we've already seen, Christ is exalted, is seated at the right hand of the Father. So, if God wants to make the glory of Christ known throughout the

world, but Christ is seated at His right hand, then how is He going to make the glory of Christ known?

I am glad you asked, because the answer is the church. "The fullness of Him who fills everything in every way", in the original language of the New Testament...don't miss this...it literally means, "we are the means by which Christ fills everything in every way." If God is going to show His glory to the world, the glory of His Son, then He is going to do it through His church. Christ is continually revealing Himself to the nations through His fullness in the church. That's what this passage is teaching us here. Christ is showing His glory throughout Birmingham and all nations, and He's doing it through His church. That's how this whole thing is set up, so that we would display the glory of Christ.

God is going to put the body of His Son on display to show the glory of His Son, don't miss that. Remember, that's why...that's why the church cannot be a building. Walls don't reflect the glory of Christ. That's why the church cannot be a business or an institution, because having a business or institution is not what's going to show a lost and dying world the glory and greatness and majesty of Christ. That's why we have to get a hold of the fact that the church is the body of Christ, because that's how God is going to show His glory, not through walls, not through a business, but through lives that are changed through the grace of Christ. Through a community that loves each other and supports each other and encourages each other, builds each other up, that's how He is going to show His glory.

I want you to look up here on the screen, and I want you to begin to see a picture that we are going to unfold over the next few weeks. I want you to see a picture of the world, and we know that God has blessed us so that He might make His salvation known in all nations, and we know that at the center, Christ has all authority and all power and all dominion. I want you to see Christ in the center of all of this.

Then, I want you to think, how is Christ going to show His glory to the world? On this picture, I want to show you that it is going to happen through one means and that means is the church, and this is what the church is about. We take the glory of Christ, the authority and the dominion of Christ, and we spread it out to the nations. We put Him on display in Birmingham and throughout the world. That is the purpose of the church, to display the glory of Christ.

Now, I know what some of you have been thinking, and you have been thinking it ever since we started this morning. Maybe even if you have been sitting around in this series, you have been thinking, "David, why should I care? Why should I care about the church? Why should I care about restoring the church? Why should I care about how leadership in the church looks like, and why should I care how the church is governed? Why should I even be a member of the church?" Here's the answer: Because you have seen His glory, and you have been radically saved from your sins, and you have received the infinite hope of eternal life in heaven, and because that glory changes your heart and it propels you to say, "I want to make that glory known in all nations, among all peoples."

You say, "Well, can't I do that on my own? I can just come and receive encouragement here, and then go out and do that on my own." We're so individualistic. We think of our faith so much as individuals, and it's not biblical to do that. Sure, every facet of our lives is supposed to reflect the glory of God. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart so you can make the praise of God known. We are making the glory of God known individually, but what this passage is telling us is that the fullness of Christ dwells in the church, and God is going to use the church to make the fullness of His glory known to the nations.

So, that means, if we really want to make the glory of Christ known, then we need to give ourselves to the church and make the church exactly what it needs to be, so that the glory of Christ will be proclaimed through us. This is more important than where your membership is written down on or how many times you get to vote during a year as a church member. This is about the glory of Christ in the community around us, and as a result, this is an infinitely important thing for us to consider. That's why we must care about it.

God is saying to the world, "Look at my church, and you will see my Son." Now, that's huge. "Look at the church, and you will see my Son." God is wrapped up a lot in us. Sometimes I wonder why we are the means by which God is going to make His glory known, because we fall flat on our faces so many times, because we miss the boat, and after being reminded over and over and over again, just like we see the people in the Old Testament, we fall into the same traps they do. However, don't miss it. That's the beauty of this picture, because God in His grace takes the people that don't deserve it and takes the people that are unworthy and takes the people that just can't get it on their own and shows us His strength in our weakness, and He shows His glory and His grace in our difficulties.

As a result of that, He shows the world His glory. "Look at the church, and you will see my Son." What this means is God is going to show His glory in Birmingham, and He's going to do it through the church and not through a renegade, "Lone Ranger" faith that leads us from church to church to church to church, just going from place to place, never giving ourselves committed to the church itself. That's not how He's going to show His glory. He's going to show His glory through a community of faith that possesses the authority of Christ and is surrendered to one purpose of displaying the glory of Christ. That's what He's going to do around the world. That's what He wants to use us to do around the world, when we put the church on display, and people see the glory of Christ.

In Indonesia, many of you know, the city that we were in had an earthquake about a month ago. 7,000 people died, and over 50,000 still in the hospital. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of homes, completely destroyed, wiped out down to rubble, and these Christians...now, Indonesia is the largest Muslim dominated nation in the world, and the Christians are going into these communities, and right after the hurricane, they saturated those communities. They started caring for those people who had died, for the Muslims who had died. They started wrapping their bodies and taking care of them. Do you know what's happened as a result? If you have been to a Muslim dominated country, you know that over the loudspeakers you hear prayers. All throughout the day, they pray their Muslim prayers over the loud speakers, so you are just constantly are listening to these prayers in the background. They took the loud speakers, and they announced to the Muslims in those areas that "the Christians are no longer our enemies; they are our friends. They are helping us out."

Not only that, but in some of these areas, there are some more militant Muslims than other areas, more terrorist prone Muslims, and they came in when the Christians were helping out...the terrorist prone, more militant Muslims came in and started trying to kick the Christians out and said, "You don't need to be here; we are going to take care of this." The other Muslims rose up and kicked the militant Muslims out and said, "The Christians need to be here; they are helping us out." They even have invited...one of the guys we were working with, they even invited him to speak in a mosque and to tell why Christians act the way they do based on their faith. In a mosque preaching! In a mosque! How does that happen? It happens when the church of Christ rises up and takes action and displays the glory of Christ, and I believe it's what God wants to do throughout this community.

If we would show that kind of sacrificial love and show Birmingham what a church looks like, what a community of faith, not a building or a business, but what a church looks like, the glory of Christ would be displayed through us. That's why we've got to care about this, because here's the deal: If we are consumers, and we come, and we pick and we choose what we want from church and complain about this or that that doesn't go our way, and we complain about how we didn't like the songs, and we go out into the community, and we do that, people don't see His glory. If we operate the church like a business, and the staff runs the church, and a few people try to control the church or any kind of picture like that where we are competing with each other, or we just kind of talk about how we jockey for position, and we try to gain leadership through this or that, that doesn't show the glory of Christ. However, when we throw consumerism and competition aside and say, "We are a community of faith; we don't have a mentality that says it's all about us. We don't have a mentality that says, 'We are going to fight for position.' We have a mentality that says, 'We want the glory of Christ to be displayed,'" then things start to happen, and that's the picture we are getting here. I pray that God makes that picture a reality at The Church at Brook Hills. That we would display the glory of Christ, and that's why it's infinitely important that we care about the church.

So What Now?

So, what now? How do we display the glory of Christ in Birmingham and all nations to the world? There are tons of ways that you can answer those questions. I want to encourage you in your life to think through how you can answer that question best in the church.

I want to make a special call to those of you who are in here this morning who, for whatever reason, have not come to the point where you have committed your life to the church and to a local manifestation of believers. We are going to talk more about how that looks next week, but it's been kind of a sideline thing for you, a come and go kind of thing. I want you to see how infinitely important the glory of Christ is.

In our efforts to bring people into the church, I'm convinced, we've begun to devalue what it means to be a member of the church of God. Not that I think it's important for us to make things hard for people to come into the church, or make things difficult, or you go through some legalistic process. That's not...that's not what I want us to do, but at the same time, the glory of Christ in our community is too important for us to take what it means to be a member of a church lightly.

So, I want to invite you this morning, if you have been kind of on the sidelines, to get in on this mission, whether it's here at the church as it manifests itself through Brook Hills or another local church, get in the game and display the glory of Christ for the community of faith.

Second, I want to give...I want to give us an opportunity to display the glory of Christ to the world. I want to show you some pictures up here on the screen. They are, first of all, the rubble that I mentioned just a second ago. If you can imagine a village in Indonesia that is just completely rocks, it's not what that village looked like a month ago. The villages like this were 100% destroyed by an earthquake; every house, every family, complete rocks and rubble everywhere as you walk through it.

Let me show you the next picture of a church in that community right there. They have rebuilt the structure in a couple of days. In the middle of that screen, you will see in a blue

shirt the pastor. This is the pastor we were worshiping with a week ago today. This is the pastor that led in musical worship, and he led songs about joy in Christ. This is the pastor whose house came tumbling down around him and his family.

How he hid...he told the story of how he hid his kids in a cupboard, in a place that was kind of a safe place. The house literally came crashing down around him, and he's leading in worship about the joy of Christ. It's one of two churches. There's another one, the next picture that you see, that has been erected just amidst all the rubble, this is where believers are gathering to worship, proclaim the glory of Christ.

Now, I mentioned hundreds and hundreds and thousands of homes had been destroyed. I want you to look at this next slide. You are going to see a picture of a makeshift temporary house that they are building throughout these communities. These churches are going out and building those homes for Muslims and for others throughout these communities, so they have a place to live while they restore their communities. We asked them...we said, "How much does it cost to build one of those houses?" "Oh, about \$350, \$400. At the most, \$400 to build one of those houses."

We had taken some funds over there. Some people had given, and we gave to begin rebuilding that pastor's house and those two churches that you just saw. However, I wanted to show you this picture this morning, and I want to tell you this morning that we have an opportunity to display the glory of Christ in the world by building some houses for some Indonesians. For \$400, you can erect a house for somebody to live in. I'm not going to invite...I know that not everybody is able to give that kind of money, and I don't want you to invite you, in anyway this morning, that you would give your tithe to this, because this is something that would be over and above. However, when I was over there in October, I had just...my house had just gone under water as a result of Hurricane Katrina, and for the church there in Indonesia, the church where I was serving at the time in New Orleans and the seminary where I was teaching raised about four or five million Rupees.

I came back, and I said, "Man, I raised millions. Unfortunately, that was only about \$400 or \$500, but that was a huge gift from a church that had very little. As we prayed coming back, I wanted to extend to you an opportunity for you this morning to say, "I'm going to build a house in Indonesia and to spread the glory of Christ to the world through that." So, in just a second, we are going to go into a time of prayer and reflecting where you have opportunity at the bottom of that page there to write down anything that you need to do in your life to display the glory of Christ in Birmingham to the world.

I'm going to invite some church leaders to be available here at the front. You don't have to come forward here at Brook Hills, walk down the aisle in order to become a member, but this morning, I would like to give you that opportunity. If this morning, you want to kneel down and say, "I want to be a member of this church," that you could come to one of these church leaders and say, "I am ready to join with this community of faith." I want to give you an opportunity to do that.

Then, at the same time, I want to open up this altar, and if the Lord leads you...if the Lord leads you by His grace to give, if you can give to build a house or two, or whatever it may be, then you take advantage of this opportunity, and you can come and just put that on this altar. Just lay it here, and maybe pray for the family that will live in there to see the glory of Christ, and you can make your way back to your seat.

If you don't have that much, but you would like to give something toward making a house built in Indonesia, then you don't have to put \$350 or \$400 up here. You can do something

different, but I do want us to have a time normally at the beginning of every month, where the church here does a family assistance fund. We are going to do a family assistance fund this morning for homes to be built throughout communities in Indonesia for the glory of Christ. So, will you pray with me?

God, I pray this morning that you would make us at the church at Brook Hills a manifestation of your glory. Lord, we thank you for our position as your body. We thank you for uniting our lives with yours, and we thank you for the power and the authority you have given us in that. God, we pray this morning, you would make us a church with power, make us a church with authority, make us a church that proclaims the glory of Christ, with the power of the Holy Spirit, and we pray that as a result of that, your glory would be made known throughout Birmingham and all nations.

God, I pray that this morning you would raise up men and women that would give themselves to the church, and I pray that you would use our offerings this morning in a special way as we give to make the gospel known in Indonesia through building houses. Lord, we pray, you would do whatever it takes in our lives to make us the church that you have designed us to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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