

What is Church?



Matthew 16:13-20

My little girl is four, and in her little mind, she's been doing church at home, now she's doing house church. Her question is when are we going to real church? In her mind, real church exists in a building on 641. It's the place that has the farm, the place she does and she's her friends. To her, she's knows we're doing this thing I call church, but when are we going to real church.

This brings up a really good question. What exactly is real Church? More simplified, what is the Church? How do we define it? What do we mean when we talk about the Church? Maybe you have that question. What is the Church? What does it mean, biblically? Normally when I have a question, one of the first places I go to is either Google or YouTube. If I want to find out how to do something, I go to YouTube, and if I just want a question answered, I go to Google, so that's where I went. "Google, what is the Church?" Of course, Google gave an answer, which I'm sure was pulled from a dictionary. It says a building used for public Christian worship. According to Google, who knows all, the Church is a building we

come to, to do public worship as Christians. If you've been a believer for a while, you've probably heard that is not what the Church is. The Church is not a building; the Church is a people. Even Google can get the Church wrong. So what exactly is the Church? What is real Church? I think this Covid crisis has taught us some deep things about the Church, some things we knew, but some that we didn't believe. For instance, this Covid crisis has taught us the Church is not a building. The Church is not a place. We've all heard that, we've all felt that, we've all said that, but we've still driven to a building every single Sunday to go to Church. This issue now is you can't drive to Church. For three months, we haven't been able to go to Church, so we've learned deep within our hearts that the Church is not the buildings we go to. We've learned the Church is a people. We've known that, we've talked about that, but the deep reality that Covid has taught us is not only is Church a people, but we need a people. We deeply need a people. As we've been in isolation with just our families watching the livestream, it's not quite been the same experience because we don't just need a livestream; we actually need live people. The livestream has kept us alive but it is not our lifeblood. We actually need flesh and blood people. We need to gather with brothers and sisters to encourage one another, to push each other in our faith, to worship alongside one another. What Covid has taught us is that we might have taken the gathering for granted, but now we long for it. We ache for it. We dream about the day when we can all come to one place as the whole family and worship God together, to love each other, to gather. We long for that day.

In our 2020 Vision series, we've been talking a lot about salvation. Now, we're going to transition to what the Church is. The big reality that hopefully sets into your heart this morning is you were saved for more than Heaven. You were saved to join a people who live out Heaven on earth. There is more than going to Heaven when you die. There is something bigger about salvation. You were saved to join a people who are now empowered to live out Heaven on earth. That is a beautiful picture of what the Church is; a group of people who have been bought with the blood of the Lamb, who are living out the reality of what Heaven is like. The way we love one another is going show the whole world what the Kingdom is like, what our God is like. Let's go to Scripture and hear what the Bible says

about real Church. We're going to Matthew chapter 16 because in it Jesus uses the term, Church. We're going to get Jesus' understanding and definition of the Church. Then, we're going to look throughout the New Testament of what the nature of the Church is.

Scripture

"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." Then He strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ."

In verse 13, Jesus and the disciples are coming into Caesarea Philippi. It's a city with tons of culture. It's named after the guy who founded it, Philip and it's attributed to Caesar. There would have been a temple where people would come and pay homage to, or really worship Caesar. Caesar was seen as really divine, so there was a lot of pagan worship, idolatry, and everyone was saying Caesar is lord. So, Jesus walks into this city where everyone is saying that clearly the one in charge is Caesar, and in that context, Jesus asks who the people say the Son of Man is. He's asking His disciples what the word on the street is of who He is. The reason we know He's talking about Himself is because the Baker Commentary will say

the Son of Man was the most endearing term that Jesus used for Himself. The disciples knew He considered Himself the Son of Man because in the other text of Mark 8 and Luke's gospel, it says who do people say "I" am. In other words, the 'Son of Man' is synonymous with 'who I am' because it was a term Jesus used for Himself. The Son of Man, as Matthew chooses to keep what Jesus said, has all sorts of rich context. Understand we have to go to the Old Testament to get what the Son of Man is. He's the one who's coming from the ancient of days. There is one coming who is the Son of Man, and He is going to be all powerful. There is all this Old Testament imagery of not just the Son of Man coming, but a suffering servant who's coming, a King after David. There is a Christ, a Messiah who is coming. The whole Old Testament story is that God has gathered a people who were looking for one person who is going to make them a broader people. He's going to make them a people that are not just about Israel, but a people that are ultimately about the nations.

So, Jesus asks who people say the Son of Man is, and in verse 14, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." They're giving the various opinions of Jesus...Some say you're like John the Baptist raised from the dead, others say you're some prophet, maybe you're Jeremiah and been hiding out in a cave, now you've come out, but you're this prophet. Jesus is causing so much disruption that people are having to explain who this guy is.

In verse 15, the general becomes personal. Jesus said, "But who do you say that I am?" It's plural; He's asking all of the group. The reality is that the question about Jesus at some point in your life has to become personal. It's not what does momma think about Jesus, what does dad think about Jesus, my Church, my culture; the question to you becomes what do I think about Jesus. Who do I say Jesus is? That's where we're landing this very important question to all the disciples. Of course, we see in verse 16 that Peter is like I'll take this one and blurts out, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." I have to imagine Peter blurts out what everybody had to be thinking. All of the disciples had to be thinking Jesus has to be the Messiah. They were probably just a little scared to say it because they weren't 100 percent sure, but Peter says he is 100 percent

sure. I'm going to say Jesus is the Christ! That's that term Messiah from the Old Testament where this rich history of a coming One, a completer of the story. It was an Old Testament promise made and a New Testament promise kept. Jesus, the Messiah is here. Right after Peter gets it right, Jesus says great, you're blessed because you said it, but...you didn't come up with this on your own. It was My Father who revealed it to you. See, the revelation of who Jesus is, is actually a gift from God. So if you know that Jesus is the Christ, if you're following Him with your life, it's actually a gift that's been given to you. You weren't smart enough; God enabled you to see the reality of the good news of who Jesus is.

Upon that confession, Jesus says something that we're going to turn our attention to because Jesus brings up that term, Church. Verse 18 says, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The question is what does this mean when Jesus tells Peter 'upon this rock I will build My Church?' the ESV Study Bible says it is one of the most controversial verses in all of Scripture. That's always helpful when you're a preacher and you're going to give your interpretation of the most controversial verse in all of the Bible, so I cover this with a lot of humility. The Catholic Church would say, clearly, what Jesus was saying that Peter is going to be the stone that the Church is built on; he is the authority, the pope, and there will be a succession of popes that come from him, and he is Christ on earth, the rock that the Church is built on. Of course, as evangelicals, we don't believe that. There are usually two understandings of how we take this 'on this rock I will built My Church.' There's a wordplay. Peter means stone, and Jesus says on this rock. A lot of evangelicals say this rock means the confession. Peter is confessing Jesus is Lord, so on this confession, I will build My Church. Others say He is referring to Peter, but not in the same way that the Catholic Church says. How to we untangle this mess? I want to read a quote from Tony Evans commentary. It's brilliant, the best thing I've heard on this particular verse. He says, "Peter's name is *Petros* in the Greek, meaning stone. When Jesus said 'on this rock,' He used the Greek word, *Petra*, which was a collection of rocks knit together to form a larger slab." So Tony is saying Peter, stone, on this rock, this pebble that comes together. All of these pebbles, that is what Petra was, form a slab that

form a foundation, that is what the Church is going to set on. The Church is going to be built on Peter, but he was just a pebble in the whole structure. It's actually going to be a lot of Peters. Who was Peter? He was an uneducated common man; he was a fisherman. He called him Bar-Jonah; his dad was Jonah and nobody knew him. He's poking fun, here is your dad, but nobody knows your dad. You're a nobody, but God is going to use a nobody to do something extraordinary. The reality is 'on this rock' includes you and me. We are all those little insignificant pebbles and when we come together and make that confession that Jesus is Lord, we become part of those little pebbles that become the Church, and we are being built up into the bride of Christ. This rock, I think, is the united followers of Jesus.

The reason we can say that pretty confidently is because we can look at the rest of Scripture and see how the Church actually gets built. We see that Peter is actually used to kick start the Church, Acts chapter 2. In some way, He's saying I'm going to use you to build My Church. How does that happen? Peter gets up in Acts 2 and preaches the gospel, three thousand people come to Christ, and they become that first Church. It's not Peter and all of a sudden this Church is built; it's all of those brothers and sisters coming together who are now going to be the Church. We can see pretty easily that Peter is not the pope because in Galatians chapter 2, Paul rebukes Peter for getting it wrong. Peter is isolating himself from the Gentile believers and going back to the Jews. Paul says you can't do that; because of the gospel, this is a multi-ethnic group. This is all people coming together. So Paul actually calls Peter out. In Acts 15, we see that it is not Peter who decides the fate of the Church. The whole Church comes together; there is Church council, and actually, James is the one who gets the last word. So, in Peter's mind, he's not the authority of the Church, he is a pebble in the foundation. He is helping build the Church. Paul would summarize it very clearly to make sure we don't get it wrong about Peter being the rock the Church is built on; instead, the foundation is the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus is actually the rock. Jesus is the cornerstone that everything is built on. Here's what Ephesians 2:19-22 says, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” This beautiful picture of what is happening here is there is a Church that is being built. Notice what happens when we see this beautiful Church. It’s built on a foundation, not on Peter, but on the apostles. It’s built on the prophets. It’s built on the body of Christ. Who is the cornerstone? It’s not Peter; the cornerstone is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let’s get back to Matthew 16:18. What does Jesus say when He says I will build My Church? It’s an audacious claim. Think about that: My Church. He’s not saying God’s Church, a Church, or the Church; He says My Church. This Church is about Jesus. Clearly, He’s considering Himself to be God. He is building His Church. The word, Church, in the Greek is *ecclesia*. I know you’ve heard it, and probably know the meanings if you’re a Christian. I just want to dive into a few of the meanings. It was used three different ways in the Greek world. The first one is to talk about a regularly summoned legislative body or assembly. It could be a court system or different things where people assembled to make decisions. The second one is a casual gathering of people, an assemblage, a gathering. It could just be a bunch of people; that’s a Church over there because there is a gathering. The third definition is a people with shared belief, a community, or a congregation. So, when we hear the term Church, we think of a building. We have Evie Kate’s perspective of ‘real Church,’ the place on 641. We think of bricks and steeples. We’re trained to think of a Church in that way, but the original hearers didn’t hear stones and steeples when Jesus talked about building His Church. They heard a gathering. I will build My gathering. See, we hear place, they heard people. We’ve got to get back to their notion of what Church is; it’s not a place, Church is people. Let’s be honest, when they heard it, they thought of Jewish people. That is what, of course, the Church would have to be because in their mind, they were the people of God. The Jewish people are the people of God, so Jesus has to mean a gathering of Jewish people.

We see that they misunderstood Jesus' gathering because in Acts 1, they say ok Jesus, now that you've risen from the dead, when are you going to restore Israel? When are we, the Jewish people, are going to be this gathering? When are we going to be this Church? We see Israel missed what God had clearly communicated through the Old Testament, and that is I'm not just about one people; I'm about all people. The promise to Abraham is not one nation; it is all nations, all families of the earth. In the great commission, they didn't hear the whole thing. He says don't just go make disciples among the Jews, make disciples of all nations. This Church would be filled with multi-ethnic groups of people. It would be about all nations, not just one people. Jesus hasn't to clarify what the purpose of this Church will be in Acts 1:7, "It is not for you to know the times and season fixed by the Father's authority." Again, they're asking about the kingdom of Israel and when it will rise again. Verse 8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria..." They are like, yeah, we will go to Jerusalem. Then He says all Judea, and they are like, oh ok, we can do that. But then, He says Samaria, and they are like whoa, hold up! What did He say? Samaria? No, we don't go there. We don't like those people. Then Jesus says, "...and the ends of the earth." He says, remember; the Old Testament, if you read correctly, is not just about you as one people, it's about all people. It's about all nations that the Church would be one people, a multi-ethnic, diverse people from all the nations that are worshipping the Lamb, all bearing the image of God, all bought with His blood. That would be a people who were empowered by the Holy Spirit to do His work among the nations. See, you're saved, not just for Heaven; you're saved so you can join a people who live out Heaven on earth. A people that come together and say you know what Heaven is going to be like? We're going to live that right now. Heaven is going to be filled with the nations worshipping the Lord with no more division. We're going to be unified. We're going to be one.

Let's go back to our text in Matthew 16 because there are a few things Jesus says that we're just going to hit on briefly as we move through. He says some things about a gate, some keys, a loosing, and binding that can be really hard to understand. I don't really understand it completely, but

I'm going to give you my thoughts on what it says. Verse 18 says, "...and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." Let's just pause for a moment and say praise God. The gates of Hell will not prevail against it. That's a beautiful verse, let's just sit on that a moment. The reality is that Covid 19 cannot kill the Church. That's an amazing reality! If you would have told anyone in January that there was a pandemic coming and every Church in America and across the world will shut its doors, we would have said, "What? There's no way. That can't happen." And, if you would have said the Church would actually grow, multiply, and get stronger because every Church door is closed, we would not have been able to process that. But we're a people who have walked through three months of Church growth, Church continuation, of the Church marching on. Even though it seems like Covid 19 should have stopped the Church, it can't because nothing can't stop the Church. We have a promise from Jesus that the Church is an unstoppable force. That's a great thing. If you want to be part of something grand, be part of that. Nothing can come against and stop the Church.

Verse 19 says, "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven." What exactly does Jesus mean with these keys? I think, just very plainly, Jesus is saying to Peter and the disciples that they have the keys to the Kingdom. The keys are the gospel. He is saying you have the authority and the necessity to go tell people who I am. When you preach the gospel, you're giving them the key to get into the Kingdom. How do they get into the Kingdom? It is through knowledge of who Jesus is. Repentance and faith in Christ are the keys to the Kingdom. Jesus is saying if you give that out, people can come in. If you neglect to share the gospel, people don't have the keys to get into the Kingdom. Church, are we giving out keys? Church, are we preaching the gospel? Are we telling people the good news of Jesus so they can get into the Kingdom?

Then, Jesus talks about loosing and binding. I think this is the authority. He's not just giving Peter the authority; He's giving the whole Church the authority. Matthew 18 says when you have a problem, bring it before the

whole Church. In Acts 15, we see the Church making decisions. Jesus is saying that you, as the Church, can make decisions. So what you decide as the Church is a declaration from Heaven because the Spirit is among you. So we see that the Church is an unstoppable force that Jesus is building, and He's doing it with these little stones who are confessing Him as Lord. They're coming together, and they're being built up as the Church. It is a multi-ethnic group of people who all come together to worship the one true God.

So, what does it look like? What does it look like when a Church comes together? What does the Church do as it comes together? I want to give a snapshot of what that first Church did in Acts chapter 2:41-47. It says, "So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Think about that picture. Look at that beautiful picture of who the Church is and what the Church does. There's an entry point into the Church. The entrance is belief and baptism. That's the entry point of the Church. They believed, repented, and were baptized. Now, those who believed in Jesus and were baptized were brought into the fold. They're now counted as part of the Jesus gathering, not a building, but a people, a Jesus gathering who are set apart for His own possession.

After the entrance, there were actions. They devoted themselves to certain things. They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching. The Church, the gathering of Jesus, would be a people who are devoted to the teaching, devoted to the preaching of God's Word. You listening to the preached Word of God are doing what the early Christians did. They gathered to hear the preached Word of God. The Old Testament gatherers of the Lord

did the same thing. They sat around the scriptures and heard the preached Word of God. We are in line with them.

There is also a fellowship element. This is the unity. This is the 'one another' that we're supposed to be doing in the Bible. We're supposed to be loving, forgiving, and serving one another. We will talk more about that in later sermons about the Church.

Then, there's the bread. They're breaking bread. I think this refers to the Lord's Supper. The Church has certain ordinances, and as Baptists, have two, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. We have missed this through the livestream, and these are some of the things that we've been so aching for. We can't wait to get back together and share the Lord's Supper together, and to see baptisms together. There is an aching because we can't be together. Yes, at our houses, we're doing church because we are the Church, but there's a sense where it's not quite how it's meant to be. We're supposed to be together.

Also, notice the prayers. There is a reliance on God from the Church. The Church is a people that rely on God. Notice the unity that happened in the early Church. It says those who believed were altogether. As they believed God, they were reconciled to God, but they were also reconciled to one another. They were part of something bigger than themselves and there was growth. Check out the growth, "The Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." Here is some of the perception, even of the gathering. We can think the Church is a weekly gathering, but it's not. Yes, we gather as the Church weekly because that's what we see in Scripture. That's the pattern God put forth for us, but we are a gathered people all throughout the week. We are the gathered ones, the ones who are gathered to the Lord Jesus. Every single day we live out as the Church. You are the Church when you leave your house church today. When you go to work tomorrow, or wherever you go, you are the Church that carries the gospel so that through you the Lord can add to our number, this local Church, day by day those who are being saved. So far, we see that Church is a gathered people who respond to the gospel and devote themselves to Jesus and one another for the mission of God.

One of the lessons from Covid that I've learned is how much I took restaurants for granted. You're probably the same way. You just went to restaurants, ate, and didn't think much about them. Now for months and months, we haven't been able to go into a restaurant and just dine like we always have. You can go get takeout, but that's not quite the same. Last week as a family, we went to The Pond. That's a great fish place in Aurora. As we sat down, we kept saying, "How great is this!" It was so amazing to sit down at a table and be in a restaurant. We ate the food and talked about how great the food was, but really, the food was the secondary item. It was being together around a table, having someone to serve you, and having the experience of people and community. It was a beautiful thing; it felt like a vacation!

I think before Covid, we had taken the gathering for granted. The gathering is just something we go to every week; it's no big deal. Now, we realize how precious it is to walk in a place and be together, to serve one another, to be part of something bigger than your family, to be around people from the community, brothers and sisters that don't share your house; we all get to come together. There are things about the Church that we long for and we can't wait to get back to that whole Church gathering.

We need to notice that the Church is both local and global. I want to read three texts. Acts 8 says, "But Saul was ravaging the Church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison." That's talking about the whole Church; every believer is part of the global Church. There are also local churches. Acts 14 says, "...and when they had appointed elders for them in every church." Now we're talking about individual churches, different churches; this would be local churches. The local church can even exist in a house. Romans 16 says, "Greet also the Church in their house." Some of you are at home thinking this can't be church, but a lot of the churches of the early Christians were their houses. They met together in each other's homes as the Church, as the gathered people that come together and worship the Lord.

One of the Covid lessons we've also learned is the Church is not an address, but the Church has a zip code. That means it is not a building, but local churches have a zip code. The world is in a pandemic, so what do we

do about it? What is your zip code? Where does your church exist? How do you, in your zip code, make a difference? Hardin Baptist Church has a zip code, and we're called to serve our local community. We've been trying every week to meet the needs in our local community because our church isn't a place or building, but we do have a zip code. We have a community that we are bonded with and that we serve. We're trying to do that as best as we can.

The big idea that you are hopefully beginning to see is Jesus came to do more than just save you. He came to build His Church. Salvation is more than just going to Heaven when you die. Salvation is belonging to a people who live out Heaven on earth right now. Guess what. It is messy. It is often far from beautiful, but as the bride of Christ, we are called to try in every way we can in our hearts, and in our minds, to live out what Heaven is like. Let's live that out right now. How do we live that out right now? When you think about the Church, you still might not quite get what exactly the Church is. We will close with four metaphors about the Church. I will name them and read a Scripture.

1. We are a body.

This idea that the Church is a body comes from 1 Corinthians 10:17. "We who are many are one body." If you're part of the Church, you're part of a people. You're part of a body. You belong to other people. You're not just an isolated individual. You are one, but you are part of many. You actually belong to the Church and you have a part and place in the Church.

2. We are a bride.

I love what Revelation 21 says. "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." Jesus describes the bride, the Church, as the wife of the Lamb. We are the people who share the same love. We love our Lord Jesus.

3. We are a family.

This means we belong to one another. Ephesians 2 says, "So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens and with the saints and members of the household of God." We are family! We are all

brothers and sisters. Imagine that! He is speaking to a culture of Jews and Gentiles who typically didn't get along with one another, and he says now you are brothers and sisters. Do you know what brothers and sisters do? They have to get over their differences and love one another. That's what we are called to do as well.

4. We are the temple.

We are God's dwelling place. 1 Corinthians 3 says, "Do you not know that you (you is plural this verse) are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you." The reality is that God's Spirit dwells in us, not just as individuals, but as a collective people who love the Lord. In an even bigger sense when we're all together, this manifestation of the Church, both locally and globally, we are the dwelling place of God. Think about how mind blowing that would be to the early Jews. They've seen then temple, grown up around the temple, they know what the temple is. The temple is the place God is. The kids grew up knowing that is where God was. He was in the Holy of Holies. Of course, that was sort of true, but not true, because God is everywhere at all times, but if you wanted a manifestation of God's presence, it was in the Holy of Holies. But if you went in there, you would die. So Paul is saying if you want to know where God is, He is amongst us. How will the world see who God is? It's the way we, as the Church, who has the Spirit that dwells among us, love one another. What the world needs to see is a group of people called the Church who love one another far greater than the world could even possibly imagine. We're a body, a bride, a family, and we are a temple.

Here are a few questions to leave you with. Do you love the Church? We see Jesus came to build the Church. It was His purpose, His intention, so do you love the Church? Have you missed us? Have you missed the gathering? Or, do you think this is much better, sitting on your couch, watching the sermon, getting on with your day; this is way better than going and having to talk to all those people? That would be a wrong perception of what Church is. Church is not downloading a sermon; Church is being part of a people who are living out the Kingdom of God. That's what the Church is. Have you missed us? Have you missed the fellowship of your brothers and sisters? Do you love the Church? Jesus loved the

Church so much that He died for her. So as believers, we need to have affection for the Church. Do you live daily as the Church? You watch the livestream, but when it's over, are you living daily as the Church? We don't just say I am going to church; no, I am the Church. Every day you get to live out part of what the local and global Church is. It's the way you interact with people, the way you talk to people, or the way you post things. It's representing the Church and showing what God is like. How are you personally doing with the people that you come in contact with? Are they seeing you as a possessed person of Jesus, that He owns you, He has bought you, and you've been gathered to Him for His glory and His purpose?

I want to circle back to that question that Evie asked me. "Dad, are we going to real church, or, are we going to house church?" Evie, if you're watching, and I'm sure she's not, I'm sure she's outside doing something else because it's hard to keep a four year old locked into a sermon for forty minutes, but if you are watching, you are doing real Church. The people gathered in homes right now are believers in the Lord Jesus. They are worshipping the Lord. They're about to be sent into their communities on mission. Even though it's a small gathering, the Church is right there, and it is the real Church. But in a sense, there is something missing. What is missing is that we still long for the whole Church. Soon, we anticipate and hope to all get to gather together in our favorite place that has a Hardin zip code where we meet as the whole Church to fellowship with one another, to hear the preached Word of God, to worship God, to give together, to go together, to pray together, to do 'one another,' and then to be sent out every Sunday to go into the world with the mission of God to tell everyone about who He is.

The Church is not a place; the Church is a people. The Church is those gathered believers who are worshipping the Lord and living under His lordship. We also long for the day we all get to come back together. The question, what is the Church, is really a bad question. What is the Church is not really the correct question. What we need to ask is who is the Church? The reality is we can answer that real easily. It is the people who have claimed Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is the ones who have been

baptized. It is the ones who have taken the Lord's Supper. It's the ones who gather together and say we confess that we live in a different Kingdom. We're not just saved for Heaven; we are saved to live out amongst a people what Heaven is like on earth. If we look around at our world, what our world desperately needs is a little more Heaven on earth. Are you one of those people?