

October 2017



Dear Friends,

We are in the middle of a sermon series on 'What is it to be a church?' This is important, for if we do not really know what it is to be a church then it is unlikely we will fulfil God's plan for us. The sermon series started out with us looking at the following scripture: **'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.'** (1 Peter 2: 9) This means that it is God's agenda and not our own that we must follow, and especially not get 'caught in a rut' of continuing to do the same things and expecting different results (Albert Einstein's definition of madness!) In the Old Testament God called a people for himself and they were to be different and an example to the surrounding nations. In the New Testament, it is the same only we are not called to be a physical nation but a spiritual one, and therefore we follow a spiritual leader- Jesus.

When the Israelites were called by God to follow Moses they lived in tents and their tabernacle, the meeting place with God, was a large tent. When the Jews were settled in the promised land they had a special festival, called the festival of booths, where they would live in a special booth on the roof so that could remind themselves that they once lived in tents. When it says in John 1:14 **"And the Word became flesh and lived among us"**, The Message Version of the bible translates it as : **'the Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood,.'** another version says, he **'pitched His tent among us.'** This is saying that Jesus left His heavenly home for us (Phil 2:5-11) and chose to live among us although earth was not His true home. In the same way, we, as Christians, must see heaven as our true home, and in this world we are **'just passin through'**, as the old negro spiritual goes.

This sense of being a traveller on earth is what it means in the baptism service when it talks about us being **'the pilgrim people of God.'** Therefore we do not lose heart when we see the problems of the world because we know that this is how then world will be until Jesus comes again. We do not seek to 'blame' God when things go wrong in our lives- sickness, family problems, death, financial worries etc. - because we know that these things are transitory and will not last. Instead we:

'Look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart.' (Heb 12:2-3)

If we are able to get a right perspective of heaven, then we are set free from the worries of this world, and therefore much better able to help those who we live among, because we can point them to a better way and a sure hope.

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We are hoping to renew our church building soon which, as John Bourne said last Sunday, is our meeting place with God. Far more important is our spiritual renewal where we regain a fresh vision of God and His call on our lives to serve Him here as His body in the place He has called us to be.

This old hymn can help us as we recommit our lives to God in Jesus Christ.

**The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation by water and the word;
From heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride,
With His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.**

**Elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation—One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses with every grace endued.**

**Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy! Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with Thee.**

In Christian Love

Paul