

Sermon Text for February 2, 2020

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Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Acts 20:7-12

“Stating the obvious”

This week we were reminded of Ecclesiastes 3 and specifically the very first of the many opposites that it provides us when it states in vs.1-2 “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die.” With the death of a superstar like Kobe Bryant in such a sudden and tragic way many of us were left reminded of how his death came about in a way that our death could come about at any time. Sudden, without warning, with so much more life to live. I hope it increased the intensity that has been building up with your time here in this church with your personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

There is something about death that reminds us of the precious and yet fragile nature of life. There is something about death that no matter your age it brings a sobering realization that you are not master of your own castle, but rather the Providence of God is ultimately what makes all the difference. For me today it reminds me of how important what we do here really is. How important what we do as the body of Christ, what we do as the bride of Christ, what we do as the family of God here on Sunday morning is. It would be stating the obvious if I said: Our worship together is important on Sunday morning. But I’m going to go a step even further. What we do on Sunday morning is the most important thing that we do in life. Because it is from what we do here on Sunday morning that the rest of our life emanates. How we worship God is going to be a reflection on how we live our life.

Let’s go ahead and read the first time that we see the body of Christ gathering together on a Sunday worship together as they celebrate a communion over the Lord’s supper.

READ SCRIPTURE

So if I were to ask you what season of life are you in, how would you respond? Stacy and I are in a season that is so new and different to us. In our second year as empty nesters we have found a great rhythm in bring together and being apart, in finding goal oriented activities and watching the Super Bowl together. We’ve never done that before. What season are you in? As you answer that question then identify what role does this body of Christ play in this season of your life.

Maybe you are single and young and not really sure what comes next and church is a solid rock that keeps you focused and allows you to strengthen your relationship with your Savior. Maybe you have started a family and you see church as a place to raise your kids so that

they can have the same teachings that you had as you were growing up. Maybe you don't see it serving necessarily a role for you, but certainly for your kids. Maybe you are like me and Stacy empty nesters looking forward to this next step in life and the church continues to be present but maybe not as vital and important as you once thought it was.

Maybe you are retired and uncertain of the next steps and don't want to overcommit and the church might be seen as a place that just wants to suck up your time and resources. Wow, these are cynical approaches. Or maybe you have a few years under your belt and you have seen the power of prayer and you can't imagine going through life without the support and fellowship of the church community. What season are you in? Is it stating the obvious to you if I say church is important, or are you more like: prove it to me.

I'm not going to try to prove the role of the church today, I'm just going to read Scripture and explain what the church was a few decades after the death of Jesus and as it was growing in the Middle East and beyond. We have been following the life of Paul and we continue as we find him preaching and teaching one last day in a town called Troas which he was going to leave the next day. So he wanted to give the faithful there all that he could so he begins preaching, and as sermons can seem to do, he went on and on and on. It was a really, really long sermon. But before we get to the length of the sermon what we find here in Acts in vs.7 is the earliest definite reference to weekly Sunday worship.

Sunday was the first day of the week in the Jewish week because Saturday, the Sabbath, would have been the last. We find the community in worship as they broke bread together. Does that sound familiar? Sunday is what we call the Lord's day when Christians gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Christians sustain one another through the presence of God as experienced at the table. Worship allows us to do that.

I love our Young Adult Sunday School class. We really, really have a good time together on Sunday morning. But Sunday School isn't worship. What really excites me is that every single person in that class comes to worship on Sunday. Without the sustenance received on Sunday morning in worship, the church might lose itself in mere busyness, might forget who it is and whose it is, might lose heart amidst the myriad of demands and assaults upon it by the surrounding world.

What we do here on Sunday morning does not happen anywhere else in our life. It ought to be that way. While we are busy praising God and exploring the ways of God in our worship, something happens to us, a ministry of encouragement. One of the first things we did some 9 years ago was to create a Fellowship Committee in our church because when we gather in

worship it requires that we also gather to break bread and to be in communion not only on Sunday morning but in our lives as whole. Without fellowship we cease to be a church.

What are some needs that you think you have today? You can list them, right, financial, health, honesty, whatever it might be. What is the most important, the greatest need for the church at this time? It is not the preaching of the Gospel, it is not our social ministry programs, it is not the experience of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is simply the call to be the church, to love one another, and to offer our lives for the sake of the world.

The creation of living, breathing, loving communities of faith at the local church level is the foundation of all the other answers. The community of faith incarnates a whole new order, offers a visible and concrete alternative, and issues a basic challenge to the world as it is. What we do here matters. And that may be stating the obvious. But what we do here as we install and ordain elders and deacons and trustees matters because we are saying that you need to be different from the rest of the world. What we do on Sunday matters because you are saying that who you are is different from the rest of the world. What you post is going to be different, it isn't going to be divisive, it is going to build up. What you do is going to be different, it is going to be founded on love and not based upon actions calibrated by fear and protectionism.

In our Scripture today as Paul's sermon went on way too long a young man fell asleep and fell out the window three stories and died. Paul stops his sermon and gives life to the one who had died. He tells the people gathered there: Do not be alarmed. So that is what ought to make us different. As we gather to worship we ought to be focused on this message that gives life.

When we heard "do not be alarmed" in the midst of all that is happening around us, this word and act of life rehabilitates the church, brings it back to life, transforms the church from the fearful little band huddling behind closed doors to a confident band of prophets who are able to confront the world by shouting there is life found in Jesus Christ. We get that confidence by what we do here.

Sure, Paul's was a long sermon, but what more could a church ask of its Sunday worship than to return into the world on Monday morning alive and not a little comforted? Amen.