

Reimagining Church

Part One: Is Church Pointless?

Matthew 16:16-18 - [watch online](#)

Summary:

For many people church is a place to experience God, a reminder of painful memories, or just an exercise in pointlessness. But the Church was originally created to be a source of true, meaningful life. And it can be that again if we are willing to reimagine church.

Main Points:

1. If we aren't careful, "church" can become just a place we go to have our religious preferences met.
2. We have put our religious preferences above our God-given purpose.
3. The Church was created to be the means by which we discover the life we are all looking for.
4. Jesus Followers don't go to church. They are the Church.
5. The Church is the community of Jesus' Followers who invite all people to encounter the all-loving God.
6. Crosscreek exists to invite our neighbors to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers... together.
7. The Church was created to be a guide on the road back to our Heavenly Father.

Invitation:

Reimagine Church...

Ask: Do I see "Church" through my preferences or through our purpose?

Read/Memorize: Matthew 11:28-30

Discussion Questions:

1. What drew you to join the Crosscreek community?
2. Jon said, "We have put our religious preferences above our God-given purpose." Have you ever seen this play out in your faith journey?
3. Read Matthew 11:28-30. How do you think this description of Jesus can influence our approach to being the Church he envisioned?
4. In what ways can Crosscreek be a community that invites our neighbors to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers... together, rather than a religious club based on preferences? What role do you feel you could play in this purpose?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

IN: Church.

Word can carry a lot of weight, right?

- The whole range of feelings/emotions...
 - A safe place that feels like family and helps you feel close to God
 - The place of some of your greatest pain

For many it just seems like a pointless waste of an hour or two on a Sunday.

But the original purpose of church was anything but pointless, so much better than a place to feel close to God, and something that brought healing not hurt.

It can be that again... but to find it we have to take the time and even have the courage to reimagine church.

So let's talk about it... together.

WE: Let's talk about church... I know some you want to tune out right now... but stick with me and I promise you'll be glad you did... or your money back.

If you're a church person why do you go to church?

- Know the right answers huh? But maybe if we dug deeper or I asked, "Why are you at THIS church?" answers would fall into these categories...

Preferences of...

People: My friends go here... these are people who are like me... think/talk/look like me.

Personality: I like the preacher's personality/teaching style/etc... I agree with them.

Place: I like the building/it's close to my house/it's the place I feel close to God

Programs: I like the religious experience they create for me (Music/Style of Service/Kids/Etc)

For some might need to throw **politics** in there too.

Not altogether bad (Some of the things we've decided to do at CCC are influenced by our preferences)... but...

If we aren't careful, "church" can become just a place we go to have our religious preferences met.

When that happens... church becomes a religious club rather than what Jesus had in mind for his Church.

Now let me ask you this...

If church hasn't been your thing either for a while or ever... What brought you here... what were you hoping to find?

- Were you hoping to join a religious club? With your preferred people/place/programs/personality...
- You were hoping to find God... belonging... meaning... community... the God given life you know/hope is out there

And often people like you are disappointed b/c when they encounter the Church they don't find God, belonging, community...

They find a religious club with its own insider language, spoken and unspoken rules/expectations... mini-personality cults, and a weird religious culture that you either conform to or leave.

They might even find judgment and straight up rejection.

Who wants that?

Who cares about other people's religious preferences? Why would I want to conform to those? Why do I want to be judged for not fitting within someone else's view of what I SHOULD be?

- I want to find who God is, who he made me to be... I want to relate to God in my own way...

So why does much of what we think about church differ from what we are looking for?

- How has the Church strayed so far off of what Jesus expected?
- And I believe this is why you or someone you love had rejected the entire idea of Jesus/church/Xianity...

We have put our religious preferences above our God-given purpose.

We've forgotten why we exist... what the true point is.

The Church needs to remember who it is and what we are actually invited to be a part of.

So, before we get back into Story of Jesus, going to take a few weeks to talk about what the church actually is, why it exists, how CCC plays its part in all of it, how all of us can find what we are actually looking for.

Could not have picked a better time to check us out...

For those who haven't been part of CCC from beginning give you the whys and hows of CCC (Like newcomers class)

For others might be review... but so important to make sure we haven't drifted and know who and why we are. And why we do what we do.

I think it's important to make sure we are still focused on our purpose b/c...

And here's the thing and the beginning of the good part... The Church was created to be the means by which we discover the life we are all looking for.

So what did Jesus envision for the Church? Not what many of us think of when we hear "church."

GOD: One of Jesus' 1st followers, Apostle Matt, recorded for us the first time we see the word "Church" in the NT writings...

After Jesus had been with his disciples for a while... teaching, healing, miracles, etc....

He takes them on a trip 150 mi N of Jerusalem... Caesarea Philippi. Named for the 1st Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus...

And he asks them... after all you've seen... Who do you think I really am?

- Peter answers for the group... **Matt 16:16-18.**

For hundreds of years people have been hung up on “What’s the rock? Did Jesus just make Peter the first pope or what?”

- But the real point here isn’t Peter... It’s Jesus’ claim... “I will build my church”

Unfortunately the emphasis can be missed b/c of some confusion... the word “church” there isn’t what most of us think when we hear church...

The word we have as church... comes from the German word for House of the Lord... a place where God is.

But the Greek word Matthew used doesn't mean House of the Lord...

Ekklesia... not a religious word. Means gathering, assembly, group of people together for a specific purpose.

What Jesus said wasn’t that he would build a religious clubhouse based on our religious preferences

- He said he would create a group of people.

A group of people brought together by one thing... Him.

- His identity as the Chosen Savior of God... God himself... the messiah/Son of God.

The church is not a place we go to fulfill our religious preferences. It is the worldwide community of Jesus’ Followers.

Jesus Followers don't go to church. They are the Church.

And Jesus said even death (Hell = place of the dead) wouldn’t be able to stop it.

Must have seemed a bit crazy to these 12 boys, in the presence of the might and wealth of Rome, for this humble teacher to be claiming he was going to build something that would conquer even death.

But then Jesus continued to prove who he was... healed diseases, declared the kingdom of God was coming, defied the oppressive religious leaders, accepted the unaccepted, even raised people from the dead.

Must have been exciting... “This is really going to happen!!”... but then he was killed.

Create a community that even death can’t stop??? Death has now stopped it’s leader

Obviously not going to happen, impossible... Jesus had based this whole thing not on his teachings, or a new religion but on himself (I am way, truth, life none come but through me)... and now he is done.

But everything changed when he rose from the dead... the ultimate proof that Jesus is who he said he is and can do what he said he can do...

And a few weeks later he gathered his followers together and told them what this Ekklesia/community, is created to do... **Matthew 28:18-20**

All authority... That's a lot... but what is he going to do with all of that authority?

"I'm going to empower you to GO and invite others into this ekklesia. Invite them to discover what you have discovered..."

What had they discovered?

Not a list of rules, not a religious club based on their religious preferences... they discovered what we all are actually looking for...

True life with/through the God who truly loves them and accepts them... Who described them as the sheep he would leave 99 others to find... who described them as lost children that the Father is eagerly waiting to embrace...

They discovered that God is for us even before we are for him

They discovered forgiveness, peace, grace, purpose, meaning, joy

They discovered that to love this all loving God is to love his children.

They discovered the full, abundant, eternal life Jesus offers.

And this is what we've missed b/c we've been distracted by our preferences of place/people/personality/programs...

The Church is the community of Jesus' Followers who invite all people to encounter the all-loving God.

Crosscreek...

And it is for this purpose that some of us decided to start a local expression of Jesus' Ekklesia that we named Crosscreek Community Church.

- Why? B/c we thought it sounded good. (If time tell golf course story)

We wanted to create a small version of Jesus' vision of his people... a community not based on preferences, shared religious rules/traditions... but based on Inviting our neighbors to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers.

Crosscreek exists to invite our neighbors to discover, enjoy, and share the life Jesus offers... together.

Inviting... not preaching at/arguing against/pushing... simply inviting through our loving words and actions

Our Neighbors... everyone... no matter who, what, where, why.

- A community that isn't for the insider but is open and accessible to everyone no matter where they are on their faith journey.

To Discover...

- Allowing/welcoming questions/doubts/exploration... different points of view
- Removing every barrier possible that keeps people from knowing/experiencing the love of God

Enjoy...

- Jesus said he offers an abundant full life. A life of purpose, meaning, love, peace, forgiveness, grace.
- It's not always easier... but it is a life we can't help enjoying when we know how much we are loved, how much we are valued, expressing and experiencing God's love flowing through each other to each other.

Share...

- As we discover and enjoy, we share it with others...
- We invite others not just to observe but to participate in this community
- When you've experienced it you can share it. And the more you share it the more you experience it.

Together...

- Most important part...
- Crosscreek is not a place or a religious organization... it is a community of people.
- I am not crosscreek... The leadership team isn't Crosscreek... we are Crosscreek.
- To be the Ekklesia of Jesus we need each other... and need to find our roles in this community together.
- Love each other and with each other.
- Serve each other and with each other

Not trying to be unique/new/better... But to simply be who we were created to be

- remove any barrier that would keep someone from discovering, enjoying and sharing the life Jesus offers.
- And exemplifying God's love by loving his children.

YOU: Whoever you are... Invited to be a part of it... first by discovering for yourself... who Jesus really is... **Matthew 11:28-30**

Take time... explore doubts, ask questions. You might discover what you've been looking for all along. All he requires is that we come to him.

And if you have come to the place that you have come to him...

You are invited to **Reimagine Church:**

Ask: Do I see "Church" through my preferences or through our purpose?

- How to know? What would make you leave?
- Change of music style/building/teacher/disagreement over minor part of theology or mission?

Read/Memorize: Matthew 11:28-30... this is our king. This is the life we are invited into and that we get to invite others to.

WE: I want to read you a story Jesus told when describing God... **Luke 15:11-24**

Our Heavenly Father is waiting for each and every one of us with open arms... ready to race out and embrace us the moment we take a step toward him.

Some of you have been waiting for God to move on your behalf... answer a prayer... change a difficult circumstance...

I hope you see today that God has been waiting for you. Waiting for you to take that first step...

Jesus' brother James said, Come close to God and he will come close to you...

He is waiting for you with open and loving arms.

He is waiting for our neighbors... are you ready to play your role and help guide them... together?

If so then come back and continue reimagining church with us.

B/c... The Church was created to be a guide on the road back to our Heavenly Father.