

Foundations of the Kingdom

Part V--Spiritual Family/the Church

Ekklesia: The Called Out Ones

Text: Matthew 16:18

I. What is the Church (Ekklesia)?

A. What do I mean when I say these words? “Cool”, “Tight”, “Prairie Gopher”

- Cool – original meaning “to chill or freeze” (1600’s). Today’s meaning “fashionable or enjoyable”
- Tight—original meaning from the 14th century “having elements close together. Strongly fixed or held.” Today’s meaning is “fashionable or enjoyable.
- Prairie Gopher – original meaning “small animal in the rodent family which lives in burrows in open fields/prairies”. Today’s meaning “people who peer above their cubicles at work.”

B. How about the word “church”?

1. It seems to have taken on many different meanings from that of the original use.
2. Jesus said, “Upon this rock **I will build my church,**” (Mt 16:18) I don’t think He had this in mind. (Drive-Thru Church Video)

C. “Ekklesia” is the Greek word that literally speaks of a **gathering** of people who have been **called out, or elected**, from the people to discuss the **state of the union** and then **go back** to their communities to **advance the agenda** of the ruling authorities.

1. Rome’s Ekklesia
 - a. When the government became too corrupt *they would call for an Ekklesia to help get it back on track* and rally the people to once again support the rule of Rome.
 - b. Caesar—believed he was a god and the son of God. “Caesar is lord & savior.” “There is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved...”
 - c. These Ekklesia gatherings were for the purpose of **discussing and advancing** this agenda, this rule of Caesar and the Empire of Rome.
2. Jesus’ Ekklesia
 - a. Jesus comes on the scene **preaching a different kind of Kingdom** and telling people to repent (return) to this thing called the Kingdom of God. (Mt. 4:17; John 14:6, Acts 4:12)
 - b. It was in **direct opposition** to Caesar and Rome.
 - c. Matthew 16:18 “Gates of Hades” – kingdom of man, world system
 - d. When Jesus says, “I will build my Ekklesia,” He could have chosen any number of other words to mean church, but He didn’t.
 - e. He was saying that He would build a community of “called out, elected, ones” *who would address the corrupt state of the earth and once again help to advance the reign and rule of Jesus Christ as King.*
 - f. Following His ascension, **people began coming together**, or assembling, to worship Jesus as King and to discuss the agenda of His Kingdom.
 - g. They began to **live in communities** where they would love each other and care for each other. They had all things in common and were selling their property to help each other get out of debt. It was a **new kind of community** where people lived in **covenant** together, loving Jesus and one another rather than just living for themselves.
 - h. The Jews at this time referred to their worship gatherings as “synagogue,” a service or event.

- i. These early Christians realized that what they were gathering for was far greater than synagogue. They took on this word Jesus used, “Ekklesia” because they knew they were called out for more than an event or a service.
- j. They knew it referred to an assembly of people called out for the advancement of a kingdom and of a king. They declared what rightfully belonged to Jesus as the only Lord and Savior—the true King—and declared themselves to be the true Ekklesia.
- k. So the original meaning of the word “church” spoke of a community of people who would **gather** for worship and **scatter** for advancement.

II. What Are We “Called Out” For?

A. God is love (Agape). (1 John 4:8).

- 1. God is a trinity in perfect community within Himself.
- 2. Agape is the center of the Kingdom.

The Christian faith says the Lamb—sacrificial love—is at the heart of the throne, that the very center of power in the universe is sacrificial love.”

E. Stanley Jones.

- 3. We have been called out to advance this Kingdom, not our own kingdom.

B. The Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40)

- 1. The Kingdom of God is the kingdom of sacrificial love, always seeking to give, serve, honor, sacrifice for others, choosing to die to self.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His love for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

1 John 3:16

- 2. The Word became flesh and came to demonstrate for us what the Kingdom of God looks like.
- 3. We are His Body! He has called us out of the world in order to continue this incarnate expression of His Kingdom.
- 4. It is the way we love that shows the world what the Kingdom really is.
 - a. He **modeled** the Kingdom with His life, **proved** the Kingdom in His death, and **established** the Kingdom in His resurrection.
 - b. We too are called, as the Ekklesia, to **model**, **prove**, and **establish** the Kingdom.

III. What is the Role of *Spiritual Family* in this Calling?

A. (I say all this to provide a foundation.) **Why has God placed us in this community?**

B. **Love must have an object.**

- 1. Father-Son-Spirit community *reproduced in community*.

God places us in community to accomplish what none of us could ever do alone; namely, advancing the Kingdom of God on the earth.

- 2. Paul illustrates this in **1 Corinthians 12** when he gives the picture of a body.
 - a. On our own we lose the context in which to understand the role we play.
 - b. With the body, our specific calling makes sense within the context of the larger calling of the church. With the body we can **show the world what Jesus really looks like. Agape!**

C. **The church is the only way God has given us to do what He created us to do.**

This is God’s provision, His answer to the question of how does the Kingdom come to earth for which Jesus taught us to pray.

IV. The Covenant of Spiritual Family within this Calling

A. These relationships have to be *more than just casual acquaintances or even just strong friendships*. Acquaintances come and go, and the best of friendships can fall victim to offenses.

B. Our relationships, our community, must be of *covenantal proportions*.

1. The Bible is full of covenants. Adam. Noah. Abraham. David. Us through Jesus.
2. Every covenant God has ever made with man has been the product of God pursuing those who have offended, rebelled, sinned. Yet He has pursued them to say, "I choose to love you. I choose to commit to you. I choose to walk with you. I choose to forgive you. I choose to release you from the debt that is owed."

C. He calls us to walk with one another in the same way.

1. It doesn't mean that we will always get along.
2. It does mean that we contend for unity, we deal with offenses, we speak the truth in love, we believe the best about one another, and most of all we do not forsake one another but rather we pursue community with one another.
3. We seek first His Kingdom (Agape).
 - a. Jesus said (Mt. 5:24) **if you have an offense with a brother** leave your sacrifice at the altar and go make it right. He doesn't even want you to worship until you get your relationships right.
 - b. Our community is to be a reflection of the community that exists between the Father-Son-Spirit, the love that holds all things together.
 - c. If we are the Ekklesia...we must look like the King to the rest of the world.
By this men will know you are my disciples, by the way you love one another.
John 13:35

V. What Does this Mean for Us in Austin, TX?

A. During Jesus' time, Rome was the best that man could offer. It was the pinnacle of success by man's standards. Yet Jesus, brought a different standard, a different pinnacle.

1. We find ourselves in a city that very much puts man and the kingdom of man at the center of life.
2. God in His sovereign placement has joined us together as a family called Christ Community Church within the larger community of Austin, TX to take His Kingdom to the streets.

B. We must all be centered on Jesus for the glory of Jesus.

1. We are called to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, to love one another, and to love our city and the people in it.
2. *This is the church* Jesus said He would build, and **if we will be this church**, the gates of hell do not stand a chance against what God will do in us and through us.
3. One by one we will begin to see the enemy's strongholds come crashing down.

C. Laminin-We are Designed for This.

1. If we as the church will paint an accurate picture of Jesus and His Kingdom, people will respond because it resonates with that part of the Kingdom within them.
2. It begins with repentance and faith in Jesus, connecting with one another in community, committing to grow and mature in our understanding and obedience to Jesus and His Word, and then together answering His call to take the Gospel of the Kingdom into the streets of Austin, TX.

VI. Are you Ekklesia?

A. Are you willing to come out of your comfort, your agenda, your definition of what church is, for Jesus' definition, His agenda, His calling? Are you willing to come out for the sake of being sent back into a corrupt culture that so desperately needs the King and His Kingdom?

B. Then we need to get connected to Jesus (salvation) and to one another. We have some small group sign up cards here today. If you are not connected to this community this

is the best way to get started. It will take sacrifice and commitment, but, hey, that is what the Kingdom is all about right?