

Labor Day: Sermon on THE CHURCH
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Rockstars!

Fabulous!

Thank you does not begin to express our gratitude...you are amazing...

These are words from a letter this church received this past week...I will read the whole letter to you at the end of this message

The letter was talking about YOU....the church of Jesus Christ... This amazing creation of God that lives in the world but is not of it Today in this communion meditation, I want to remind you what a privilege it is to be a part of **the Body of Christ - his church**, and remind you how special this body is...

What a high calling and what an opportunity, to be gathered together here today as the **ekklesia** – Ekklesia in the Greek **means an assembly of God's people called out (from others) to worship and serve him...**

When the world sees it their jaw should drop. Fabulous! Amazing! So grateful! Thank God for the church!

Being the church is not just a ho hum, sleepy kind of deal where we moderately engage on Sunday mornings and then go home feeling slightly better because we got to see our friends after worship.

Some philosophers have said that the church is just another social institution designed to keep us all in line and following a moral code. Maybe you have read these authors...

However for those who have experienced a taste of the wonder of who God is...

For those of us who know the power of community and the way God works in and through his people, being a part of the church is the most exciting revolutionary thing we could ever participate in!

I love the church! I always have...why?

Because **Being a part of a church** means that I am part of a place that **pulsates with limitless possibility and the very life of God**

Think about it....God Almighty dwells here, in our midst when we gather together

We gather because of him...and scripture tells us nothing is impossible with God

Scripture tells us that we are called as his people to worship; and that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in our midst...

God is here today...with us...in this place....NOW

The God of the Old Testament, the God of the New Testament, the God of the Exodus, the God of the Cloud, and the Fire by night...that God of manna, and the flood; the God of Jesus Christ...who lived and died for us

He is in our midst *right now*...that same God

Closer than you dare believe...ready to answer you...ready to move...ready to forgive...ready to bless...ready to comfort...ready to amaze you with his presence

The late Dallas Willard contemporary theologian, defines the church as *the aim of God in history*. Here is what he says about the church.

‘The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community (the church) of loving persons, with Himself included in that community as its prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant.’

Then Willard defines God as follows: **“God is the happiest, most joyful being in the universe”**.

Imagine being in a community with the happiest most joyful being in the universe is at your side. I mean I would join up, just for that reason! And that glorious inhabitant of the church is its prime sustainer....**Your Creator!**

Your Divine Companion! Your eager and friendly God!

The most joyful being in the universe is the prime sustainer of the church, and that's why God intends the church to be the most joy-filled place on earth!

That's God's intent.

Now you and I can probably think of a lot of ways that church falls short of that vision. For some of us church doesn't even come close to being that joy-filled community.

Church is where we've been hurt;
or told we are no good and we have to try harder;
church is where someone told us when we were young that God was going to get us,
or we were frowned upon, and judged,
or told not to use our brains because they are sinful things and we just have to believe without thinking...
Church is where people say one thing and do another...hypocrites.
Church is where we find leaders who manipulate and don't care for their people...

Here however, despite all of our weaknesses because every church has human beings in it and is prone to human weakness, WVPC has tried to operate out of the awareness that as a church we are meant to be a hospital for sinners, not a judgment hall for the righteous – cause no one is righteous – no not one. Jesus is our righteousness for us...

And because of this, we are meant to be a dancing people...dancing with delight that we have been healed and set free by the most Joyful Being in The Universe – God himself...

Not looking down our noses at each other, or spending time criticizing, moralizing or even patronizing. That has nothing to do with being the church...in fact it is contradictory to it...

We are meant to be a unified people, with one God as our parent. You know we may disagree on some things, but we are brothers and sisters because we have one parent...

Unity in the body of Christ was so important to Jesus...Read Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 sometime...He prayed it right before he went to the cross. He passionately prayed for unity among his people..."that they may be one, even as we are one." Pretty high bar...

As the church, and as a unified people – his church - We are meant to be a witnessing body pointing to the God who has given us life and sharing his love with others.

That's the church! What a terrific community – empowered by the most joyful being who loves and sustains the universe itself. WoW!

I would love it if everyone who walked in those doors on Sunday left thinking...I've never felt as if I belonged so well, I've never felt so loved, I have never been aware of a community that breathed and lived and talked and walked the very nature of God...as in this church right here...

Now those of you who have been in church for a long time, I want you to imagine for a moment that you were in a coma for a month, and you lost all memory. Especially, you lost memory about everything you had experienced that was negative about church.

When you come out of your coma...
You have forgotten about all those you had decided were hypocrites at church,
and you have forgotten about how they only sing your favorite hymn once in a blue moon to the wrong tune;
you have forgotten about the jello salad you ate at the potluck you didn't like,

or the way they misspelled your name in the bulletin,
or the thing someone said that darkened your view of someone in
leadership even though you had no idea if it was true or not.

You don't even remember the long boring sermon on a hot summer
day one time when you thought you couldn't bear it one more
minute...

I was raised in the Black Church and when the preacher was on
everyone would say Amen! Alleluia! When he got too long you
starting hearing from the pews "Help him Jesus"....

But your coma has eradicated any memory of boring, or irrelevant, or
hurtful judgmental stuff.

And as you awake from your coma an angel walks into your room...
points at you and says...Hello! Welcome back! You have been
chosen...

And you say, "Who? Me?"

Yes! You have been called out – (that's the meaning of the word
"church" or ekklesia in the Greek – gathered/called out)
You have been called out and filled with the very life of the most joyful
being in the universe – God himself!

*And you think, "yeah, I am feeling kind of joyful right now..after all I
just came out of a coma"*

Angel continues... You see, God has given you these gifts
For you have a purpose and a calling that can only be done in
community with others
It is so important that you be in this community because the world will
be lost without it....and you only have a certain number of days to
fulfill this calling together.

And you say..."Oh my gosh...what is the calling?"

And the angel says...

You, with a select group of others, are to be Christ's Body...here on earth...his very body...You are to be Jesus on earth...continuing on with what he started.

He has put you here for that purpose

You are going to be involved in some cutting edge stuff. Stuff the world won't like; for instance maybe standing up for the truth, or giving until it hurts...It's not going to be easy.

But you have been called out to be different, to point to a different way of life, and you have been given these gifts to use for this purpose unique only to you.

Well I don't know...you say. It sounds daunting.

And the angel responds...If you don't say yes, the Body of Christ will be hampered

It will limp to the finish line, or be blind in one eye, or unable to use its hands or be mute or deaf.

This would be terrible. If you are not involved, the Body of Christ, the church will suffer. You are a critical piece of this mission. And You have been given so much; life itself is a gift, and then all the extras that come with it...

Your call is to use your gifts to bring life to the Body of Christ. To make the body of Christ healthy and strong so it can function in the world as a change agent...and do what Jesus did

And the angel asks you...

Are you ready for the adventure of a lifetime?

Are you ready to see miracles happen, and lives changed?

Are you ready?

You get to be a part of this dynamic, Spirit filled, life giving, transforming, Jesus centered, community that witnesses to the truth, sees Gods hand at work, and brings people to God. You have been given gifts to this end! Use them!

What will your answer be?

As a pastor I know that the greatest danger in the church today is people not being willing to step forward and use their gifts, their God given abilities to shape and transform the church of Jesus Christ.

A colleague I know shared this about his family and said this....*My great-aunts lived their entire lives in a house that my great-grandfather built in the 1800's.*

The most special room in that home was the parlor.

They saved it for when someone real special came over to their house.

No one that special ever came over to their house, so they never used the parlor.

My grandmother was given one piece of china on every special occasion: birthday, commencement, confirmation, etc.

*It was valuable, and they didn't have much money. Because it was so valuable, she would wrap it up in paper, put it in a box and store it for a real special occasion. No occasion that special ever came. **And my grandmother went to her grave without using the greatest gift she had ever been given.***

She kept her gift in a box.

What about you? Are you engaged in being the Body of Christ here in Cupertino using your gifts, taking them out, and using them here....to strengthen this church?

Unless we are all involved using what God has given us, we come up short.

We need you all. Don't ever sit there and think that "others" are volunteering and you are not needed. WE need you...engaged and alive... for the building up of the body of Christ. God has given you gifts...use them

Last week we had Service Worship. Those that came made a difference together...The words I read to you at the beginning came

from a letter from those at Unity Care that recognized the life changing dynamic Body of Christ in action...

Good evening WV Team

Your entire team are ROCKSTARS!!

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*I speak for all of us at Unity Care in saying that **Thank You does not begin to touch upon our gratitude for the fabulous , large amount but much needed work that was completed in such a small amount of time.***

*The living room and kitchen walls look FABULOUS-
The kitchen is brighter and more open, and the addition of two ceiling fans made a HUGE difference in ventilation. The new kitchen set and computer desk as well as new bookcases to hold board games are a wonderful addition and new back screen door and window coverings complete the kitchen. We added a new sectional, sofa table, rug, coffee table, wall art, front screen door and new blinds to complete the living room remodel.*

The front yard we had pulled weeds and laid TONS of new flowering greenery- Great job KAREN for "digging" in- Where do I begin with the backyard..... You guys are AMAZING, I am so sorry that it turned into such a huge job but you completed that without blinking an eye. Bill- I Love working with you, you set the bar so high, your integrity and commitment to quality and lead with a servants heart- always a pleasure.

Not only is this a great letter for this project, but also Trinity Pres, and Los Gatos Methodist were there as well because they too are doing SW, thanks to the witness of this church and the volunteers here who put it on the map.

This is the Body of Christ in action, at work, to help street kids have a home that looks decent and welcoming.

This is one letter in a stream of thank you and bless you that I receive on my desk on a continual basis. We are the body of Christ.

We are going to be talking about what that means this fall starting off next week with discussion groups after the service on Sunday.

And I want to say that even if you have been a church member for years, you want to sign up for the discussion groups after service ... because it will teach you so much about who we are, and what we are called to become as the church of Jesus Christ.

WVPC we have so much more to do. ...What a calling! Be the body of Christ! Will you join? Will you be a part? Will you use your gifts fully and well..

Jesus did not hold back one thing from us when he lived on earth... He gave his very life so that we could be the church. (Lead into communion)