



**Forest Hill
Church of Christ**

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Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship.....10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 6:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

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THE PURPOSE OF THE GLORIOUS CHURCH

Barry M. Grider

The church of Christ is the most glorious institution on earth. Jesus purchased the church with His own blood (Eph. 5:25). Furthermore, while many philanthropists, humanitarians, and good will organizations exist to aid and assist the sick and helpless, only through the church does God receive glory. Paul wrote, *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages world without end"* (Eph. 3:21).

Since God places such a high value on the church, every member ought to be concerned about building up the church and in no way hindering its purpose. But, what is the purpose of the church? Unless the purpose of the church, and particularly, the purpose of each congregation, is made clear, God's people will never rise above the level of mediocrity.

Sadly in many places today congregations of the Lord's church have lost sight of their original purpose. Jesus said,

And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18,19).

Jesus and His chosen apostles have given us the divine standard by which the church should be patterned. Liberalism has set aside that perfect standard and developed its own standard. Liberalism attacks everything about the New Testament pattern and those who are committed to speaking only as the Bible speaks. Change for the sake of change is what drives liberals. The *"preaching"* from such pulpits is usually very weak with a softening of what the Bible teaches concerning matters of doctrine and morality. While some of these congregations grow numerically as they become like the denominations around them, they no longer understand God's intended purpose for His church.

Radicalism is just as dangerous as liberalism because radicalism binds where God did not bind. Radicals see themselves as God, and entire congregations can sometimes be infested with this spirit. Always ready to harshly judge others who do not agree with their views in matters of opinion, those who are radical will completely tear down the good works of faithful brethren, forgetting the true purpose of the church. The *"Diotrophes"* mentality is still very much alive today (3 John 9).

Still, other congregations are beset with lukewarmness. Jesus said to the church at Laodicea,

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So, then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth (Rev.3:15, 16).

Congregations beset with lukewarmness are satisfied the way they are. There is no desire for spiritual or numerical growth. Keeping house is the order of the day. The motto of lukewarm churches is *"don't rock the boat."* Such congregations have no vision and never accomplish anything of value for the Lord's cause. The purpose of the church is totally lost with them.

Every Christian ought to do his part to help make the church glorious (Eph. 5:27). The church fulfills the purpose of God (Eph. 3:10,11). However, the church can never bring glory to God if its purpose is not understood. What is that purpose and as individual Christians are we helping or hindering the purpose of God?

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH IS TO SAVE

Jesus stated His purpose for coming to earth succinctly, when He said, *"For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). How did he do that? He offers salvation through his death on the cross. The purpose of the cross was three fold. First, Jesus paid our sin debt when He died. Peter recorded, *"Who his [Jesus] own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed"* (1 Pet. 2:24).

(continued on page 4)

THE BEST GIVER IN THE CHURCH

Allen Webster

Who will be the best contributor in the church this year? *It could be any person in the congregation.* Someone might say, "I'm living on a fixed income, it couldn't be me." *Yes, it could.* A college student or young person might say, "I don't even have a job, it couldn't be me." *Yes, it could.* How? Read on.

The New Testament has many examples of good givers. Barnabas sold land and laid the money at the apostles' feet (Acts 4). Christians in Antioch gave to brethren in Judea whom they had likely never met (Acts 11). The Macedonians gave "beyond their power" (2 Cor. 8). None of these is the "best giver" in the New Testament, though. That honor resides with a widow whose name we do not even know. Her story is so impressive it is told twice in the New Testament (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:2-4). Three points from this passage are worth our consideration.

JESUS WATCHED. "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and behold how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much" (Mark 12:41; Luke 21:2-4). The scene is the Temple in Jerusalem where Jesus is inside a part of the temple called "the treasury" (*gazophylakion*). Barclay explains that this refers to a part of the Court of the Women where thirteen collection boxes were set up (cf. 2 Kin. 12:9; Mat. 27:6; John 8:20). It was nearest the "Beautiful Gate" and opposite the court of the Gentiles. These receptacles were called "the trumpets" because they were shaped like trumpets. The "Trumpets" were set with the narrow part at the top and the wider part at the bottom so coins would make a loud clanging when dropped. As the collection was taken, noise from the dropping coins filled the temple.

JESUS IS INTERESTED IN MONEY. This shows that Christ is concerned with what we do with our money. Sometimes people say, "I wish the preacher would preach the Gospel and stop talking about money." But it is impossible to preach the Gospel without "talking about money." Almost half of Christ's recorded sayings relate directly or indirectly to money. One out of every six verses in the Gospel accounts concern man and his possessions. Nineteen of thirty-eight parables deal with material possessions. Sixteen times more is said about stewardship in the New Testament than about baptism and thirty-two times more than about the Lord's Supper. Christ said more about money than about repentance, the new birth, heaven and hell (as vital as these subjects are). We will one day give account for how we made and invested our money (Mat. 25:27; Luke 19:23).

JESUS WATCHES THE COLLECTION. Jesus sat directly opposite (*against, katananti*) the treasury, where He watched people as they gave. The word *sat* (*kathizo*, "hover") indicates a continuing presence and *beheld* (*theoreo*) literally means, "to be a spectator." Try to put yourself on the scene. How would you feel if the one passing the plate Sunday stared at you while you gave? Would you feel uncomfortable? Jesus observes our giving just as

He sat over against the treasury and observed theirs. Some possibly gave a little more that day since Jesus was watching. If Jesus should sit beside me Sunday morning, would I give more?

Give as you would if an angel awaited your gift at the door.

Give as you would if tomorrow found your giving here all o'er.

Give as you would to the Master if you met His loving look.

Give as you would of your substance if His hand the offering took.

JESUS JUDGES THE CONTRIBUTORS. Every collection is a kind of judgment. Christ cannot help but judge us when we give. He saw much that was commendable that day in the temple. He saw many rich men cast large gifts in. That was fine. They were interested enough to attend the service. They were interested enough to support it financially. Godless people do not have all the wealth. Some rich men are not too tired on Sundays to come to God's house. They do not all have to relax on the golf links. Not only were the rich men present with their gifts that day, but there were liberal givers—"...many that were rich cast in much." These did not throw in pennies when they could give \$100 dollar bills. For a rich man to give a mite would have been shameful, but they did not. Jesus did not condemn these givers, but then again, neither did He commend them.

We judge ourselves at offering time, too. If the collection plate offends, bores, annoys or angers us, we have serious symptoms of heart trouble. If, on the other hand, we rejoice in the privilege, we mark ourselves as kin to the Lord (Jam. 1:17). When we give, we either sadden or gladden Jesus. We win either His approval or disapproval. We call forth either his commendation or His condemnation. We judge ourselves and are judged by our Lord by what we do with the wealth he put into our hands that week.

The widow's giving fascinated Jesus because it was costly to her. One artist painted a picture that was touched by a lovely and fascinating crimson that no other artist could imitate. They studied it and sought in vain for its secret. It was not until the artist died and they prepared his body for burial that they understood. They found above his heart a half-healed wound. The secret of the fascinating picture that had cast its spell upon them was that the artist had dipped his brush into his own heart's blood as he painted. They could not paint as he painted because they were unwilling to pay the price he paid.

The widow was commended that day for she had put her heart into the collection basket—not just her coins.

"WORDS FROM THE MASTER"

Forest Hill Church of Christ
Wednesdays: 5:00-5:30 P.M.
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Second, Jesus died to purchase the church. Again, Paul states, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). Third, Jesus died to provide a new and better covenant. The writer of Hebrews stated, "And for this cause he [Jesus] is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

Now most who identify themselves as Christians understand that Jesus died for our sins, yet miss the importance of the church and the new covenant or new testament of Jesus Christ. What does the church have to do with our salvation? The church is the saved (Acts 2:47). What does the new covenant have to do with our salvation? Only under the new covenant is salvation found. Such was not provided under the old covenant (Heb. 10:4). Only in the prospective view of the new covenant did the faithful who lived during the Patriarchal and Mosaic ages obtain forgiveness.

Since forgiveness was made available through the cross of Christ, what did Jesus command his disciples to do as He was about to ascend unto His Father? Remember His words,

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matt. 28:19-20).

The message of salvation was first preached on Pentecost. The good news of a risen, reigning Savior brought about the conversion of some three thousand souls (Acts 2:41). Hence, the church began on that day. What do we know about those converted?

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common (Acts 2:42-44).

Notice, those who were converted to Christianity were united. This fulfilled the prayer that Jesus uttered, when He said, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). The concept of denominationalism is completely foreign to the New Testament. Paul wrote, "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10). Furthermore, the apostle described the members of the body of Christ as functioning in harmony as does man's physical body (1 Cor. 12:12ff). This demands that all "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11).

Consider the pronoun "they," once again. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Why did they do this? They clearly understood their purpose. When saints are converted they will convert others. How is this accomplished? The church enacts the seed sowing program of the Savior (Luke 8:5ff). As the song suggests,

If the souls all around you are living in sin,
If the master has told you to bid them come in,
If the sweet invitation they never have heard,
O will you not tell them the cheer bringing word?

Someone has said the church could best be described as an emergency room for sinners. Indeed, if the church understands its purpose is to save souls.

(to be concluded next week)

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