

PILGRIM PEOPLE

Hebrews 11:1-12

What if all the churches today should cease to exist?

Would anything about them be missed?

Disturbing questions - only answer after soul searching.

Not think about the church like the Arab -- awakened hungry one night - turned on the light, picked up a box of dates. He opened the first one, it had a worm in it. He threw it away. He opened the second, the third, -- so he turned out the light and ate the fourth.

HUMAN SIDE OF THE CHURCH

Define the church.

First what the church (is not.) It is not what it should be. It never has been. It is not perfectly divine because made up of imperfect human beings.

Church has it's faults.

Church not a rest home for saints, a hospital for sinners.

We are in the church because we are imperfect and need forgiveness.

No good Christian should be satisfied with the church, those who love the church are aware of its failure.

We all desire with all our hearts that the church be cleansed of its sins.

The Holy Spirit is sometimes frozen out.

Most churches are locked up tight during the week.

The church at times has managed to bless the evil of the world.

The church has refused to break down the barriers and partitions that separate

and divide God's people.

Not only races but social classes.

Apathy concerning its mission to evangelize the world. 70% of people in the world do not know Christ.

Acts 6:9.

THE DIVINE SIDE OF THE CHURCH

Honest about our failures, lets be honest about our accomplishments.

The church remains the body of Christ representing God before men.

It is a miracle the church has withstood the great waves of criticism.

No company, or business, no profession would permit the statements about their failures that we freely make about the church.

This is a witness to the divine that it has survived hostility and enemies and criticism by its members. Any other institution would have withered on the vine.

What would you do if some man from Mars would land in your yard and stick his atomic disintergrator into your ribs and say (take me to your church!)

What would you do?

Take him to some location, show him a building -- But a building is not a church.

You would take him to the church office to get him a bulletin and Messenger announcing the meetings.

But a church is more than religious meetings.

Take him to a map - show him the whole city.

The people live and are scattered throughout the city. Look at your watch - 7:30 A. M. The church is now eating breakfast. If it were 10 A. M. explain most of the church is scattered in factories, offices, super markets. If it's Saturday afternoon you could take him to the golf course, beauty parlor, ball game, beach. Show him people as they live, work, play, and worship. This is the church.

People who have faith in Jesus Christ - their total being. 24 hours a day, 7-days a week. Chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.

THE PILGRIM PEOPLE OF GOD

Patairachs - Pilgrim people - in tents.

Summer vacations - the family travels - on the go - camp.

Danger is that we will lose sight of the essential nature of the People of God as pilgrim people.

The church is people on the go.

It is not described in terms of now.

It should be described in terms of the ultimate end toward which God is leading it.

Losing our identity as Pilgrim people.

Water down the demands of the Gospel.

Succumbed to the world's standard of values.

Empty shell, blind, wilful neglect.

Ephesus - Lost its first love.

CHALLENGE TO BE THE CHURCH

It can only be the church when involved in the world after the pattern of

Jesus

He went where, people were and where the need was.

What is the church? God's own pilgrim people.

Function is to witness.

Put Christian goodness in every human relationship.

This is our task.

Early Christians - all they had was their lives - their witness - their loyalty to Jesus.

Stanley Jones - talk of missionary lost in African Jungle - Found small clearing.

Asked one native for help - find way out.

Followed native for while, worried, asked the native -- "Are you quite sure
this is the way? I don't see any path?"

Native replied "in this place there is no path. I am the path."

Many problems today, people give neat answers, an full of voices. But none

of them are leading us anywhere.

I would be hopelessly confused if it were not for Christ.

Few of us have intellect of philosophers but we can commit ourselves to
Him who is the way.

God's pilgrims must move as he leads.

I would rather walk in the dark with him than walk alone in the light.