

IS THE CHURCH FOR REAL?

Eph. 2:19

A young man had not been seen in worship very much. And he was asked by a friend, tell me something - I don't want you to feel on the defensive, but you are of the "new generation" - what do you think about the church. What do you think about our church. What do you think about the protestant evangelical church in America.

He said, I do not want to be misunderstood - but we just don't think the church is for real. We have dismissed the idea about God - that the church stands for.

I wonder what your reaction to this young man's idea - I just don't think the church is for real.

(Robert W. Spike) wrote about Christianity in the American culture. He used these words. The church is like an old lady dressed in a hooped skirt, high button shoes, out on the sandlot with a bunch of rough-neck boys, trying to function as referee.

Now that is a colorful way of his opinion of the church.

Now to use your (imagination) a little more, (Harvey Cox) in "Secular City" wrote these words. Our churches today are based on the sociological patterns of about 1885. Before automobiles, trains, and industrial parks.

^{They}
~~The~~ Sunday at-ll cultus is timed to fall between the two milking hours in the agricultural society. Sermons remain one of the last form of public discourse, where it is culturally forbidden to talk back. In a mobile, scientific society - the church remains a Patriarchal, agricultural, pre-scientific relic.

What Harvey Cox is saying is what we have in the church today is a hold-over and we conduct services in the same way our forefathers did between milking times. That's very colorful.

Carl Heim writes, the church is like a ship on whose deck festivities are still kept up and glorious music is heard while deep below the water line a leak has been sprung and masses of water are pouring in. So the vessel is settling hourly, lowers, though the pumps are manned, day and night.

So the university fellow thinks that the church is going down.

Now what can be said with such judgements.

How vital is our relationship to the world.

How vital are the criticisms.

Are we having trouble living with the heritage of the past. Now we may as well confess that some of this which others have said, made be true. In America's history, perhaps the church has been late on the moral scene. She wants to play it safe, and perhaps interested in saving the institution.

Let me venture to say that we are like Rip Van Winkle. We are about to wake up from a long nap. You see some of this keen interest in the new programs, and the new interests in outreach. This is taking place in the world which tells us that God is at work in today's world. And this world is a world of economics, a world of political ideological.

But I want us to offer more basic reasons as to why I would reply to the young fellow, and to the ideas. And I would say, yes, the church is for real!

Now I would say this for many reasons.

Have you ever thought of it. CHURCH Now if I should give you the spelling Ch -- ch, and ask you the question what is missing, what would be your reply. This to me is why so many times people think the church is not for real. ^{"u" "A"}
You are not with in, you are not in it.

Now I want to give you, as I stated, some reasons why I believe the church is for real. Now I am sure that all of us know ways of killing the church.

Don't come.

If you do come, come late.

When you come, come with a grouch.

At every service, ask yourself what did I get out of this.

Never accept office, it is better to stay outside and criticize.

Visit other churches about half the time to let your minister know that you are not tied to him. There is nothing like independence.

Let the Pastor earn his money - let him do all the work.

Sit pretty well back and never sing - and if you do sing, sing out of tune and behind everyone else.

Never pay in advance. Wait until you get your money's worth, and then wait a little longer.

Never encourage the preacher - if you like his sermon, keep quiet. You know it may ruin him, to say something about it.

It is good to tell your pastor's failings to any stranger that you might meet, or happen in. They might be a long time finding this out.

Of course you can't be expected to get new members for the church with such a crowd we have in the church.

If your church has harmonious happiness, just call it indifference, lack of zeal, anything else - except what it is.

If there happens to be a few zealous workers in the church, make a protest and say the church is being run by a clique.

Now such an attitude will help you know that the church is not for real, and you know how to kill it.

Now if the church is for real with you, you will always attend. You will try to get there on time. And you will come with a radiant happiness. And you will come expecting to offer yourself to God. You will accept some office and serve faithfully.

When you visit other churches, observe the helpful suggestions., so you can help your church. Do the work of a good layman and be faithful to your pastor.

Sing on all the hymns.

Always pay your tithe, in advance, if you are going to be away. Expenses will

continue.

Speak up for the fine things about your church. The weak points are always conspicuous.

Win all the people you can to Christ and the church, no matter who is the pastor. Remember you are committed to Christ and to the church that belongs to him.

Always continue to the peace, the purity, the unity of the church.

Rejoice that the fellowship of believers is not a monopoly. This will help you to realize that the church is for real.

I - Now let me say in the first place, I believe the church is real because the (kind of God) involved in the life of the church.

Do you really understand what the Bible says about God, who is involved in the life of this church. To get the meaning of this, we must go back beyond the time when ^{there} there a church.

The time of the Hebrews. How was God understood by the Hebrews. You asked a Hebrew to tell you about God, and he will rattle off the attributes, omnipotence - omnipresence, and omniscience.

He would not talk to you about God in Spirit, in the suffering servant, and father and creator.

No, he would talk about the God who called Abraham out of the Ur and the God who guided Jacob through 20 years of service with Laban.

He would talk about the God who led Moses to undertake the impossible task of leading the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage.

He would tell you about God who marched with Joshua around the walls of Jericho.

He would tell you about the God of the Prophets who came preaching against the idolatrous of the ungrateful and the faithless people.

Here was a God who was in touch.

Here was a God who was on the move.

Here was a God who identified himself with history. And he was bound by any form. And he could come in surprising ways.

Now, God in the New Testament is the God of beginning. He is the life of the church. And God is still in relationship - this time. As a little baby born in a manger, God moves in the world of that day, through Jesus, His Son.

Man resisted God's movement.

They hung his Son on a cross and put him to death.

The cross then becomes a symbol of hope for man.

Now when we come to God in the life of the church, we are coming saying, nothing in my hand I bring - ^{simply} to Thy cross I cling,

So this is a God who is for real. And he is a God who is involved in this world - who moves in this world.

He always moves through His people. And (don't) you forget it. The people of God today are called the church. The body of Christ. And here is a God who gives us eternal life.

Now, (God) flows through this church out into the world. (If we stop up the church, God will make some new channels).

Now this is a lesson for history. This is how we explain the reformation. The political, the economic movements - all of these may seek to shut down the church - but (God) is involved in the life of the church. You may block it, you may try to get it so formal - but the Lord of Glory moves before his church. It is just like the (pillar) of fire - moving ahead of the children of Israel. God is in advance of his church today.

Julia Ward Howe wrote about 100 years ago.

In the beauty of the lillies
Christ was born across the sea

With the Glory in his bosom
That transfigured you and me.

As he died to make men holy
Let us die to make men free.

→ While God is marching on.

When the dust of the revolution today settles - and the world is always in revolution. You will find that God has been on the move. And he has been involved in the life of his church in new and unexpected ways. Just as new as Bethlehem and as surprising as Calvary and the empty tomb.

In his work in the world today.

Don't give up on the church.

Just try to keep up with what God wants to do in the world through his church.

Victor Hugo - "A church is God between four walls."

R. L. Stevenson - "I never weary of great churches. It is my favorite kind of mountain scenery." "Mankind was never so happily inspired as when it made a cathedral."

The book of Psalms - "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord".

Matthew - 18:20 "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them."

No man can break away from the church and its worship with God without feeling the effect in his own soul.

If you see a man begin to serve pleasure and fame, and question the church, as to its reality - you would see a man who would soon begin a moral, as well as

a spiritual decline.

When a man begins to absent himself from church worship, something bad is taking place in his heart. Because the church is optional as far as a choice. But not as far as his spiritual welfare is concerned.

Remember this - Adam and Eve sinned. Then what? They failed God at the appointed hour of worship. Remember this - God was there! But Adam and Eve were elsewhere.

We are sons and daughters of these first parents - are we not? Are we at all different. If there is sin - it robs us of (any desire to meet God.) Therefore, the young man who said the church is not for real needs to search his soul.

The first step to obtain a happy and wholesome life are church steps. Great decisions for great living are often made in root at God's appointed place where he meets with his people.

When we neglect and despise and absent ourselves from the church during worship, we do so at our own peril. Somebody will pay, and we know that payday will come some day. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together for worship.

II - Now in the next place, I want to suggest that the church is real because of the task, which God calls the church to do in the world. God has provided the church with a task.

V.17 ✓ First of all, proclamation. Men are being free today. Some have already won their battles. But let me remind you that the great battle was won on the cross and through the empty tomb. And the power of this message frees the inner

man and his spirit. (It gets a man right in his relationship as they are brought under the judgement of our Lord's cross.)

The empty tomb speaks of the final triumph of our God. And God has revealed his love in Jesus Christ.

You know the proclamation is very simple.

Jesus loves me this I know
For the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to him belong
They are weak, but he is strong.

Jesus loves me and you
Yes, Jesus, love me - the Bible tells me so.

V. 16 The second task given to the church is reconciliation.

Now Jesus talked about this in two directions. One is toward God. The New Testament talks about this. God was in Christ - reconciled the world unto himself.

Our rebellion or our indifference has set us on edge with God. We are estranged. But God takes the initiative in reconciliation.

The reconciliation is a task of the church. And in order to begin there - it travels out to the broken common places of life. Eph. 2:14-15. He is our peace, who has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. That he might create

in himself one new man in peace in place of the two.

In the world there is hostility - religious, racial, cultural, political.

Our Lord bridged the world of the Jew and the world of the Gentile in the first century.

Not To Make Enemies, hurt People in Church - Usher seating People, A Dog trying to get in - finally Door shut - sat down & Back door opened Man & wife appeared - Dog Between, Usher Kicked At dog & hit The woman on the shin - she said it's sorry we are late, we are New here!
Part of the church would have none of it. It was the Jerusalem church.

And because they would not move into the world in obedience to the Lord's church - the Jerusalem church became extinct.

Church in The Healing Business - somebody comes along side - Today, we send missionaries to Jerusalem. Reconciliation is still our task.

Jews & Arabs still Hostile
Either we pay the price to be obedient in the work or we will be marked out through extinction. The church is for real.

Hatred & unforgiveness Are Luxuries God's people cannot afford -

V. 20

The third task God has given the church is that of demonstration.

Harvey Cox wrote about visiting East Berlin. And there is a street called Karl Marx Allee. It was built by the communists of East Germany for a purpose. To demonstrate to visitors that the communists society would be like that when it was completed. It is the street of the future.

Now that is a parable on the church. We are here as a visible symbol. We are a colony of Heaven, here in the world to demonstrate God's hope for mankind. The church has the only provision for the perfect fulfillment of this.

And right here is where I think we stumble. And this is where perhaps the young man got his idea that the church is not for real.

The world knows what we of the church are supposed to be.

Young people learn from the Bible - the shape and style of life - which is involved in belonging to Jesus Christ.

Men also know that what we ought to be and what we are is often twisted and distorted.

In this actual world a churchless community would rapidly degrade. And here is a responsibility.

Did you know there are enough Holidays for most of us - but Sunday is a different day from other Holidays. In fact, there are 52 of them every year. Therefore on Sunday, every Christian ought to be in church.

I know all the excuses. I know I have this or that, or the other. But listen, my brother, if you do not worship - something is going to happen to you. Now you may hear a sermon on the radio. If you are shut in - then God bless you. Coming into the church, listening to a sermon, enjoying the reading of a beautiful passage of God's word, singing some of the wonderful Gospel hymns will cause you to find life a little easier. You will be on better terms with your neighbors. And further more, you will be showing your faith by your works.

Remember, one thing I said - the church is for real. And God is moulding and shaping the whole world through this church - and he still moves.

One last idea - the church is for real because the call of God is addressed to me through the church.

When the Call of God is extended to you through the church, it comes as a crisis of choosing.

It comes as a personal call - speaking through the depth of your feelings.

The church calls you to recognize that within you is another world. That inner world. And you have missed the splendor of God. And you have missed the mark. You have fallen short.

The church calls for you to confess your own need of a Saviour. To confess your own helplessness - your own dependence upon God's grace.

The church calls for you to set your pride aside, your pretenses and your virtues - and confess your needs. That is why the church is for real. It speaks to your fundamental condition.

Eph. 4:1 - The call is God in Christ and this is a terrible responsibility. For our calling is for a commitment - to become involved.

Now you be honest. Most people rationalize and turn away this call. We don't want to teach. We don't want to tithe. We don't want to confess our sins. It might involve us.

Our sin is the sin of trying to save ourselves.

It is no wonder that people ask is the church for real. Some of you have already given your answer by the pattern of your loyalty and the lack of involvement.

By your life you have said the church is nice. We need the church, to bury our dead, to teach our young, to conduct our weddings. To have an obedient society. But that is not what God intends for the church. We are supposed to be demonstrating - reconciling men by the cross of Christ. Who will decide

and choose.

Major Ivan Thomas said that when he was 12 years of age, he attended a Bible Study. And when he was alone - he simply prayed earnestly - Lord Jesus please be my Saviour. ' /

The later preaching during World War II, he said, I thank the Lord that this was my situation.

I'd like to ask you today - how is it with you. Is what you got real.

← Remember The Song;
It's Real
Praise God, I know it's REAL -