

Sermon Title: **The Purpose, Place, and Mission of the Church**

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Scripture Reference: **Acts 11:19-26**

Thesis: **The church took a significant turning point in Antioch as Paul was called into action finding his purpose, place, and mission;**

Purpose: **Today, we will better understand the purpose, place and mission of our own Church.**

Key Word: **"The Church"**

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **Acts 11:19-26** (*Black 130 / Red 158*)

A) The Setting:

1) **Why do you come to church?**

- (a) Why do you come to this church?
- (b) **Does the place make any difference to God?**
- (c) What is the mission of Christ's church?
- (d) **Does our purpose align with God's purpose?**
- (e) This is just some of what we are going to look at this morning.

2) **Several weeks ago, I began a series covering the key beliefs that guide my life.**

- (a) These are my core beliefs that direct my life decisions and approach as a minister of the gospel of Christ.
- (b) We took a couple weeks off to cover important events in our lives to honor veterans and for giving thanks to show gratitude for God's blessings.
- (c) This is the final message of that series covering the Purpose, Place and Mission of the church.

3) **The good news of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to pay the penalty for all sin and demonstrated power over death was at first only spread among the Jews.**

- (a) The devote Jews were looking for a savior who would rescue them from their oppressors and restore their kingdom.
- (b) When Jesus commanded his disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit who would give them the power to take His message to the rest of the world; **many mistakenly thought that He was referring only to God's chosen people, the children of Abraham or better known as the Israelites.**

4) **However, Jesus' message was for everyone born into the world.**

- (a) It was a message open to anyone who would accept that Jesus was who He said He was;
- (b) The Son of God
- (c) The God-Man
- (d) The Lamb of God who came to take away the SINS of the world.

5) **The events we are about to read about are the beginning of God taking that message outside of the Jews.**

- (a) This would be difficult for them to accept at first because they had many prejudices to overcome.
- (b) They had dehumanized the gentiles calling them dogs.
- (c) They were considered animals; just as unclean as a dead corpse and not to be associated with.

6) **On the other-hand, the Jews thought that because they were descendants of Abraham that this is what made them children of the promise.**

- (a) After the stoning of Stephen and the persecution from the Religious leaders towards followers of Jesus,
- (b) many believers were forced to leave their homes and spread throughout the Roman empire.

7) **The Synagogues were the lifeblood for the Jews providing assistance as needed.**

- (a) But converts who professed Jesus as Lord were cut off and shunned from all Religious activities or assistance from the Synagogues.
- (b) Other Jews were commanded to not even be caught associating or speaking with them.
- 8) **Today's message is a significant turning point in our understanding of God's purpose for the church.**
 - (a) For what the Jews failed to understand and carry out; God would do by the power of His Spirit.
 - (b) When God made His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his seed . . . God was speaking of Jesus who would come from his descendants.
 - (c) For Jesus would bring an offer of salvation from those condemned by SIN.
- 9) **So, let's see how this all began if you would like to follow along in our scripture reading of Acts 11:19-26.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

II) The hook:

- A) **This Antioch referred to here in this passage is in today's northern Lebanon which was once part of Syria.**
 - 1) 15 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea and not far from today's Turkish border.
 - 2) The inclusion of Cyprus, an Island in the great Sea not far Antioch;
 - 3) And Phoenicia with area which ran along the border of the Sea;
 - 4) Cyrene, was a city in North Africa, **lets us know that what we are about to hear is utmost importance.**
- B) **This city was one of many bearing the same name, was the third largest in the Roman Empire behind Rome and Alexandria.**¹
 - 1) Antioch was beautifully situated and carefully planned as a vital commercial center and also was home to a large Jewish community.
 - 2) In spite of this fact, it was a vile city, with gross immorality and ritual prostitution. As part of its temple worship.
 - 3) It was here that followers of Jesus were called Christians.
 - 4) And it was also this place that was destined to become the base of operations for Paul's missionary journeys.
- C) **I thought that given the significance of what happened here in Antioch at this point in the churches history; that it would be a good launching off point to examine the Purpose, Place and Mission of the Church.**
 - 1) For it is not only the place where Paul finds his true calling;
 - 2) But, it can help us to better understand the purpose, place and mission of our own Church.

TS: **So, we begin with my belief of . . .**

III) Body: (Key Points)

- A) Key Point #1: **The Purpose of the Church**
 - 1) I believe that the true Church is made up only by God's people who have accepted God's gift of salvation by believing in His Son, Jesus.
 - 2) It is because of God's great mercy and grace through the sacrifice of His Son which has given us the opportunity for salvation.
 - 3) We need to be dependent on God and interdependent on each other as outlined in **1 Corinthians 12:14-20**.
 - (a) Here, Paul uses our bodies as a metaphor to describe the body of Christ.

¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament, John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, Victor Books, 1983, p.383

- (b) And that as the body of Christ we are made up of many parts that need each other to be healthy and effective in achieving its mission.
- 4) **Hebrews 10:24-25** says, ²⁴ ***And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***
- (a) The teaching here is clear; the church needs to meet regularly in order that we can encourage one another toward love and good deeds; things which do not come naturally to our human nature.
- (b) If the church hopes to be effective for Jesus; we need the Spirit of Christ living in us and helping us.
- (c) Where two or three are gathered, Jesus said, I am in your midst. (**Matthew 18:20**)
- 5) **The point is that we are stronger together; it is not good to be alone God said of man.**
- (a) If we don't have the habit of meeting together; we become weaker individually and as a body.
- (b) Just in caring and checking in with each other we help each us to be accountable to the rest, encouraging growth and spiritual maturity.
- 6) **People who say they don't need to go to church to have a relationship with God are only half right.**
- (a) Satan wants us to think that so we don't mature and grow in our faith.
- (b) While God is everywhere and we can worship in spirit all the time alone or together; the truth is that we need each other to challenge us to grow in our love and good deeds.
- (c) God doesn't give anyone all the answers and we need each other to be more complete.
- 7) **This is especially true as we see the day of Christ's return approaching.**
- (a) We want to be found to be faithful and trusted servants; not slacking with no passion to serve the living God.
- (b) So, let us remember the purpose of the church is to strengthen us.
- 8) **The problem is that the church is not doing a good job of encouraging and building our faith.**
- (a) Too many church people are willing to hold others accountable with criticism and judgment.
- (b) When we are really called to love one another in spite of our faults.
- (c) We need to remember that God loved us in spite of our faults and wants us to do the same.

TS: **Next, where is . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **The Place of the Church**

- 1) **I believe that when we accept Jesus' free gift of salvation, He sends His Holy Spirit to live in us.**
- (a) We essentially become a living temple in which God the Holy Spirit dwells.
- (b) I believe it is the body of believers and not a building that make up "The Church."
- 2) **When this church incorporated in 1818 they had no regular building in which to meet.**
- (a) Therefore, they set out to build this place for the church to gather and completed it in 1826.
- (b) When we celebrate the age of our church next year, we are not celebrating the age of the church building; we are celebrating the 200th anniversary of our church.
- 3) **The church will not cease to exist if we lose this building.**
- (a) In fact, we can join with the body of Christ in another building.
- (b) Or, we can meet in the park across the street.

- 4) **A pastor friend of mine was called to preach in a dying church;**
 - (a) The church had long been the Unitarian Church in town but could find no one to lead the service or bring a message.
 - (b) When they asked him to come; he explained that he was a Baptist and would only come if allowed to preach as a Baptist.
 - (c) They said fine; and as he pointed out they would have been just as fine with a Buddhist monk.
- 5) **He preached there for a couple of years and the church began to grow . . .**
 - (a) Until, one of the old Unitarian members came home to visit that summer and heard him preach.
 - (b) Apparently, she had some influence because they met him at the door the next Sunday and said, "*Your services are no longer required.*"
 - (c) He said that is not for you to decide; he entered and tried to reason with them; but they made such a fuss that he had to leave.
- 6) **That morning about half the congregation left with him and they all met in the park across the street.**
 - (a) They held worship right there and thus a new church was born.
 - (b) Since then God has provided a place to meet around the corner from the Unitarian Church which is now struggling to keep their doors open.
 - (c) The true church will be blessed by God and a building is not a requirement.

TS: **So, What then is . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **The Mission of the Church**

- 1) As we read in our call to worship from **Matthew 28:19-20**, Jesus told His disciples that they are to "***Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.***"
 - (a) We call this the great Commission.
 - (b) When we have been commissioned we have been given the authority to speak in behalf of the one who sent us; namely Jesus.
- 2) **And if Jesus has sent us to do a job for Him; shouldn't we do it?**
 - (a) He said that when we received the power from on high in the form of the Holy Spirit we would have what we need to carry out our mission.
 - (b) I believe that God provides the resources we need when He calls the church to a ministry in the world around them.
- 3) **We are to be the light of the world for people who are desperately falling into the darkness of their own sin.**
 - (a) In **Acts 13:46**, Paul said if the Jews rejected the message; he would carry it to the gentiles.
 - (b) When we do these things, we bring glory and honor to Almighty God through His church.

TS: **Finally, what is the . . .**

IV) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **Mission of the Church today?**

- 1) The mission of the church today is to spread the Gospel, the Good News of God's gift to a lost and dying world.
- 2) **The church is strengthened by the assembling of its believers in order to promote the Word, worship God, build up the body, and reach out to those who are lost, both in foreign lands and here, near to home.**

3) **Such an outreach can be best accomplished by the support of the local church willing to meet the very real needs of those around us.**

- (a) This includes those who need it most during times of adversity and supporting our own foreign missions.
- (b) When we help people through their darkest hours, we demonstrate God's Love, providing an opportunity to invite others through the power of the Holy Spirit to find eternal salvation.

4) **I believe that if our church wants to experience God's blessing, then we need to be serious about fulfilling the mission that Jesus gave us to do.**

- (a) **Everything we do should be measured against this yardstick.**
 - (i) Does what we are doing advance the mission of Christ?
 - (ii) Are we making a habit of meeting together to encourage each other in the faith?
 - (iii) Are we growing spiritually both personally and as a body in our relationship with Jesus?
- (b) Yes, we can always do better; but, let us consider prayerfully, can we do more?

V) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**