

September 13/14, 2008

The "Ecclesia"

Pastor Mark Burch

Quest for the Authentic Church

This fall from late September to early November, we're going to dive into a critical series of messages on the life of the church. In the next 2 weeks we want to "prime the pump" with some background work. The introduction you read below is one that I shared with our weekend design team several months ago as we planned for the fall. It will help shape the direction we're headed in the coming weeks.

- Pastor Mark -

The "church" is coming under a lot of fire in the west. We're living at the transition point from a Christian world-view that predominated society, to a church that is standing at the margins of culture. Many voices are critical of the church (and often they are right) but there are also many critics who come across as angry, cynical, and antagonistic toward the attempts of the church in our day...and what is most concerting is that many of these voices are coming from "within" the church herself.

The impetus for this series comes out of my own musings over the past several months and even the last few years. I have heard so many stories of people leaving the established church, been told that the "institutional church" is irrelevant, that the "mega" church is dead, that God is doing a new thing that will be more organic, incarnational, missional...etc...etc...etc.... In short, I've heard and seen a lot of criticism and deconstruction of the "church." Yet Jesus promised that He would build the church!

I believe its time for us to get back on the hopeful, positive, solution-side of the equation. Openly admitting that the church is not perfect; she has many flaws – spots and wrinkles – but one day we'll stand at the wedding feast of the Lamb – and she (we) will be beautiful! In the meantime, we are called to partner with Jesus in building the kingdom of God and His chosen instrument is the church.....But what is the church all about? We need to grapple with these questions!

A view from 30,000...

The cultural landscape...

The sociological fabric...

The pragmatic question...

Jesus promise: "I will build My Church..." Matthew 16:18

Framing the Discussion:

The 7 last words of the dying church...

"We've never...."

We usually begin with our own experience...

- But where should we begin?

T _____

C _____

M _____

E _____

What do you think of this definition?

The local church is a community of confessing believers in Jesus Christ, who obey scripture by organizing under qualified leadership, gather regularly for preaching and worship and scatter to evangelize and care for people everywhere. They observe the biblical sacraments of baptism and communion; are unified by the Spirit for mission in the world and are disciplined to live out the Great Commandment and the Great Commission for the glory of God. (Driscoll and Bashirs)

The "Church" is:

The "Church" is not: