TODAY'S ORDER OF WORSHIP

Welcome by: Don Taylor / Opening Prayer by: Robert Ward
Morning Assembly Song Leader: Brooks McKelroy

#470 Victory in Jesus
#712 Jesus Is Coming Soon

Scripture Reading by:
#662 All to Jesus I Surrender

Communion Devotional by: Jerry Mallernee
Lord's Supper and Contribution

#867 To Canaan's Land I'm On My Way
Sermon: "Fear God"
Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

#349 Ten Thousand Angels
#574 Oh, How I Love Jeus
Closing Prayer by: Gus Tristan

Our Small Groups will meet tonight.
Ken Coleman's group will meet tonight
at the building at 5:00 p.m.

Other Opportunities For Spiritual Growth

Sunday: 9:00am — Bible Study Classes, 10:00am — Worship, 5:00pm — Worship
Wednesday: 6:30pm — Bible Study Classes

Nov. 5, 2023

"Stand Firm in…Liberty"

Galatians 5:1

What Makes a Church Great?

When we look at the church in the New Testament, we cannot help but be impressed by its impact. On that first Pentecost, there were 120 disciples huddled together, waiting for the Spirit promised by the Lord Jesus. After he poured it out and Peter preached to the crowd that gathered in response, there were 3,000 baptized; that number soon grew to 5,000. Within a few years, there were churches planted all over the ancient world.

What accounts for the great success of the early church? You know, we tend to measure the greatness of a church in very human-centered terms, much like we would any old earthly enterprise. We probably think first in terms of size—if there are hundreds or, better still, thousands in attendance, it must be a great church! But Gideon's defeat of the Midianites reminds us that a small number are mighty if God is with them **(Judges 7).**

Perhaps we think of wealth—a large contribution, a big budget, those are marks of greatness, right? But the early church was far from wealthy. The NT church was generous—a sure sign of greatness—but they gave bountifully despite their poverty, as the Macedonians exemplify **(2 Cor 8:1-4).**

Well, then, it must be in great facilities; after all, there surely is a reason churches build big, beautiful buildings. Yet in the earliest days of the church, there were no buildings at all. The Jerusalem church, the greatest congregation in history, did not own a foot of ground, a brick, a stone. They met in Solomon's temple collectively and they met in small groups from house to house. And as Christianity spread across the Mediterranean world, we find that pattern of meeting in the homes of members continued. Despite that, they grew leaps and bounds.

Sometimes we think of the greatness of a church in terms of the preacher. It's true that in the first century, they had the apostles as well as other inspired teachers. But that is still only a handful of people; most of the work of church planting was done by ordinary Christians who went everywhere telling others about Jesus **(Acts 8:4).**

Family News & Notes

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Our Sick

Continued Prayers
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Steve Ward, Oscar Cantu, Caitlin Smith, Virginia Cole, Ken Coleman, Joe Edd Stifflemire, Donna Wilson, Patricia Prater, Edna Semien, Betty Spencer, Willie Spencer, James Wilson, Jo Ella McKewen, Kelly McCain, Wayne Noonkester

Shut Ins
(Need cards, phone calls & visits)

Jim Smith, Winona Angelle, Catherine Parker, Peggy McIntosh, Lois Watts, Willo Dean Ellis

Our Missionaries

Aaron & Marisa Bailey in Montepuez, Mozambique , Rod Kyle in the South Pacific

Upcoming Activities

Elders, Deacons, Minister meeting Monday, Nov. 6th at 6:30 p.m.

We will have a Houston Food Bank truck on Tuesday, Nov. 7th at 8:00 a.m.

Baby Shower for Kora Ward is today at 2 p.m. Kora is registered at babylist.com and amazon.com

Elders	Deacons	Minister
Ken Coleman	Zach Arthur	Bryant Perkins
Bobby Rader	Daniel Balch	
Don Taylor	Danny Balch	
Robert Ward	Walden David	
	Gus Tristan	

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We could go on listing the criteria that we so often apply. Now, none of those things are bad: we have fantastic facilities here, we have generous givers, and I would love it if we had more people! But ultimately, God judges us by other standards. What makes a great church?

1. Knowledge. A church begins to be great when its members know God's will and can distinguish it from error. We come to know that through studying the Scriptures. It has become cliché, but it's true that the Christians in Beraea were singled out for *searching the Scriptures daily* to verify the truth of Paul's teaching **(Acts 17:11).**

2. Faith. The Hebrews writer says, *Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him* (**Heb 11:6)** The faith Christians need is more than mere belief in the existence of God; the heart of biblical faith is trust. It is being persuaded that God keeps his promises, as Paul says of Abraham in **Rom 4**. And biblical faith always includes faithfulness: the obedience of faith, doing what God says. A great church puts their trust in God, not their own ingenuity or programs or talents (something that we preachers, in particular, would do well to remember!). They are faithful to him—but then they trust him to bring about the results, if he wills. We plant and water; God gives the increase.

3. Consecration. This is what Jesus meant when he said *Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you* **(Matt 6:33**). Unfortunately for many professed Christians, faith is a casual thing. It has only a fragmentary hold on their lives. The Lord would rather have "ten who are stout-hearted" than a thousand lukewarm like Laodicea. The enemy can surpass us in numbers or wealth or facilities—that is what he trades in. But one thing he cannot imitate or overcome is a Christlike spirit.

4. Work. No church can be great until it begins to carry out the work which God intends his people to do. Having the right doctrine is not enough. The Lord intends for his disciples to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the poor, encourage the disheartened, and lift up the fallen. He intends for his followers to carry the message of what he has done in Christ to all. The church is not a place just of knowing or believing only, but also of doing, as Jesus indicates in his picture of the last judgment **(Matt 25).**

5. Love. Finally, it is imperative that there be a warm and continuing fellowship among the members of a congregation if the church is to be great. The members must love each other. Christ said this is the badge of our discipleship **(Jn 13:34-35).** Where there is no sense of community, where there is anonymity, there is no fellowship. A church our size can be, and should be, like a family. That lends itself to this quality of greatness.

The question is, where do we fit in? Are we valuing the right things in the church? Or do we judge it by human standards? The church is great. *This* church has the potential to be greater still. Are we doing our part?

Bryant Perkins