

Where Your Treasure Is
(Stewards of the Body of Christ)
We Are Church

... a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? **She has done a beautiful thing to me.** Mark 14:3-6.

Several weeks ago I began this series of messages called "We Are Church." The first Sunday I posed the question: Why church? And I began to answer that question with another question: the one Jesus posed to His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" He asked the question to help His disciples come to the right conclusion about Him, and then come to the right conclusion about their own identities. Peter responded to Jesus, "You are the Christ (Messiah, Savior). The Son of the living God." Peter's declaration of faith in Christ was a launching pad for Jesus to declare a number of important truths. "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Mt. 16:18.

1. In saying You are "**the Son of the living God**" Peter declared that **Jesus was God in the flesh** – the only person to completely unite divinity and humanity into one person.

2. Peter's **confession of the true identity of Jesus is the foundation of the church - on this rock I will build my church.** Christians are people who make the confession that Peter made and they begin the journey Peter began. You don't need church to become a Christian, but if you're a Christian you need to be in church because it's Jesus' own creation and that's where you belong.

Two weeks ago Darrell talked about being neighbors to those around us. Just like the 72 followers that Jesus sent out to the neighborhoods to make friends and to listen to people, Jesus sends us into our neighborhoods with God's light shining in our hearts. And right here in our church's neighborhood we are slowly making Him known. Last week's outreach event (Trunk or Treat) brought 2,500 to our campus. It's the first small step to bring people closer to the "transforming power of Jesus Christ."

Vessel of the Lord

The Church is Christ's vessel for carrying His healing presence into the world. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? 1 Cor. 3:16. His presence ... that's why the Bible speaks of the church as the Body of Christ, and this treasure in earthen vessels; that is us, in all our frailty and imperfection. We carry this treasure: Jesus. He, who was the heavenly presence among us, said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," Matt. 6:19-21. **Do you treasure Him enough to put your resources at His disposal?**

His very presence and His saving power – to save us from our sins and all the calamities that sin produces – this saving power, is what the church, in all its fragility, is meant to carry to all people. The church is here to offer Christ to people. The reason we continue to emphasize the path of transformation is so we can be made more and more into His likeness, so that our church will look more like Him. To make Him presentable to others we want to reflect His character as much as and

as best we can. Christ loved the church and gave His life for the church. Surely we would want to emulate that kind of giving. Generosity is a characteristic of our Savior and ought to be ours as well. By the way research has shown that giving:

- increases the health of those with chronic illnesses (Stephen Post, *Why Good Things Happen to Good People*)
- decreases the risk of dying in the elderly after volunteering (Doug Oman, University of California, Berkeley)
- lowers stress and blood pressure.

Clearly giving is a great thing. The more we pour out, the more He pours in to us everything His presence brings: joy, peace, contentment, belonging, purpose.

We carry Him in this fragile gathering of those who confess Him as Lord and Savior. **He established the Church to be his body presented to and for all people around us.** He has given us this church – meaning the assembly of those who have responded to His call to be with Him – to care for, support, increase and extend.

Doing A Beautiful Thing

Much of the time, if we think at all about our place in church, we think about what we can do, or maybe should do, or have time to do, or don't want to do. And it is true, what we do for Christ is important. We ought to we act as God's own children and bear witness to His presence among us. Two weeks ago Darrell shared with us how important that is – being Christ's presence in the neighborhood. Yet those **acts of ours only have power as they flow from Him.** Recall that Jesus said, ***She has done a beautiful thing to me...*** This woman poured out a deep sacrifice, a true outpouring of her heart. *"It could have been sold for more than a year's wages ..."* – astounding! Who knows if she had kids to care for, a shopping list to fill, and many errands to run. She just poured out great love through this great gift, a great sacrifice for a great God, and a great example ... What would happen if we poured out like she did? **What would happen if we could hear Jesus say of us: "You have done a beautiful thing to me."**

When we pour out, like this woman, our hearts have a chance to be touched. The wick of our pride, selfishness, and complacency begin to melt down to the ground, leaving us on our knees, where we receive and give our very best. It's there that we get into the places where He can use us to prepare others for a new life.

Maybe we still cling to the notion that it's about what we do to help others, or the projects we generate in His name. But it's really about Him. *She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me...* It's in the offering of our greatest that we get to kiss the feet of the one who walked into desolate dry hearts to make abundant new life. Maybe someone here today has that very dry heart. He's here, waiting to walk in, just ask Him.

When we keep our eyes on Jesus, suddenly our excuses grow small. We find it's so much less about the other and so much more about Jesus reconfiguring our vision. Giving is the only gift that hands back more than we could ever hand out. It's one of the only ways to get more than you ever asked for.

We are Church – vessels of the Lord, the Body of Christ. We carry His healing presence into our neighborhood and community. ***Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy...*** Eph. 5:25. Jesus treasures His Church – each and every individual who makes up His body. Jesus hopes that each and every one would treasure the Church for in that way we treasure Him.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... Matt. 6:21.