



Basic Christian Theology
Talk 5: Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church
Wednesday, May 9, 2018
St. Michael's Sanctuary
The Rev. Al Zadig, Jr.



The Church...

A movement...or a monument....?

A movement...or a monument.....?

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As we enter week 6 of our 7 week series on Basic Theology, today we come to the most **VISIBLE** part of Christian theology: That great monument in the Town Square...That wonderful Spire on the hill...

The Church, the most visible aspect of Christian theology. Years ago a tornado in England destroyed a small coastal church, and sadly the congregation was too small to rebuild. Shortly after the storm, a British admiral calls on the local Vicar to ask if the congregation is going to build a new church. The Vicar explains my folks are just too poor to replace it, the Admiral responds well...we will re-build your church because that spire is on all of our charts and maps, a monument by which ships of the seven seas steer their courses.

Church buildings are certainly monuments that root our communities, so important while being anchors of God's glory! It's no accident that this talk happens to be in the oldest sanctuary in our city, standing as a monument to the glory of God:

A monument that has withstood:

- The Revolutionary war
- Civil War
- Earthquakes
- Fires
- And Hurricanes!

One of my favorite historic stories comes from the Sunday when one of the early rectors here, preaching for the crown of England gets a less than welcoming response from the congregation, including a passionate colonist serving as an usher that day... As the English Vicar preaches, the usher goes up to the balcony with his Shrimp net to throw it over the poor unsuspecting Preacher. He throws the net, but misses the preacher and instead captures the sounding board...the security team of that era...takes the usher out, never to be seen again!

Church as monument...it's real! We say it's the people and not the steeple...But in Charleston especially-some people think steeple before people! But in reality of course, The Church is less a monument and more...a movement, Less a monument, more a movement, the Church, this part of our theology is the -ology we call: Ecclesiology.

- Ecclesia...an assembly of people
- Ology: Study of..

Ecclesiology therefore is the theology, the study of God regarding the assembly of his people, the Study of the movement of people...Tonight in our time together, I want to:

1. First, take you into the Old Testament so you can see for yourself the movement that initiated this divine institution...and how Jesus Christ truly is the foundation stone of the church As an aside. So many talks on the church begin with the New Testament...Maybe its my Jewish background, but tonight I need you to see in this first section that the church is formed out of the fabric of God's movement in Old Testament assemblies, beginning in Genesis right on into the very fiber of these pews.
2. Second, I will give you a three word purpose of the church that I hope will stick with you like grits in the stomach..
3. Third, I'll Briefly take you to what makes the Anglican church unique amongst the churches of the World as it pertains to our current Anglican chaos.
4. And bring it home with a story of hope and the church at her finest.
5. And then like a good bagpiper, done!
6. And luckily you have really comfortable pews...

As we engage we have to engage the senses, art, architecture, word and music...so lets stand and sing number 525, The Church's one foundation...

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Let's jump in...

The Church, less a monument and more a movement...why? I think of the story of: 19th Century German Poet Heinrich Heine standing before a great French Cathedral near Paris with a friend who asks: "Tell me Heinrich, why can't people build such buildings anymore?"

My dear friend replied Heinrich.. in those days people had convictions. We moderns only have opinions. It takes more than an opinion to build a Gothic Cathedral! Right!

Behind these great monuments is the testimony of a the strongest movement the world has ever known.

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It all began with that love letter of truth we call the Old Testament.

From the beginning we were called by God to Himself and to each other....God made Adam and Eve why? Because he wanted a people to fellowship with, He wanted humans to reign over His creation,

He wanted a community of people to glorify him through bearing His image.

Could this be why our pew boxes, or as I call them, our pew condo's...while completely different one from another...have one thing in common? There is not one pew box that has just room for one.

From the beginning we have been a community of people to glorify God through bearing His image. Yes, Adam and Eve created to glorify God by bearing his image....Yet, they broke fellowship with God and ruined their purpose on earth when they sinned. If God had done nothing,

- every human after Adam and Eve would be eternally separated from God in hell
- aimless on earth
- and never able to fulfill their purpose of reigning as God intended.

But God did something. God made a way for people to be brought back into fellowship with him. Right after they sin-- God promises in Genesis 3:15 a Redeemer to come through Adam and Eve who will crush the head of Satan. God then makes a special covenant with Abraham in Genesis. Genesis 12...

"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Then...God promises Abraham's grandson Jacob that He would make his 12 sons into a harmonious worshipping community of nations known as..

ISRAEL...

The word Israel means: May GOD Prevail, even against our sinful nature..

This worshipping community continues when God promises to deliver Israel from the Egyptians...Exodus 6:7..

“I will take you as my own people and I will be your God...”

Critical ecclesial point here...God is telling his people through Moses that they are his bride.....The groom is God, the Israelites are His bride...it is intimate and beautiful! Again for the purpose of fellowship and bearing His image. After the great exodus from Egypt...

Moses then presents the Bridegroom Israel to the Bride in Exodus 19:17..Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God and they stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai and God would give them the 10 commandments. The law is the medium, the way the Jews connected to God. Despite golden calves and failures. They were still God’s treasured possessions, a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This beloved imperfect community continues in Deuteronomy 4:10...God says:

“Assemble the people before me to hear my words so they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.”

As a sign of his love for them, they were given the tabernacle, a tabernacle was the portable earthly dwelling of God during the time of the Exodus from Egypt through the conquering of the land of Canaan. Built of woven layers of curtains with:

- 48 boards
- overlaid with polished gold

The tabernacle served as the sanctuary of God’s Old Testament assemblies, for the purpose of bringing His people into His presence for fellowship, that they might hear his voice, worship Him and bear His image.

Assemblies were held:

- Before the Death of Moses...
- When Joshua brings people into the land
- When David begins to secure the succession of Solomon.

In addition to these assemblies, the law required the people to assemble 3 times a year for:

Passover

Assembling to celebrate the angel of death Passing-over the Jews in Egypt

Pentecost

Celebrating the 50th day after the Passover to give thanks..

Feast of Tabernacles...

Sukkot ..celebrating the ingathering of the harvest ..

Then comes the vision for a Temple, and this is an important part of our ecclesiology. When the Children of Israel ended their wanderings and settled in the promised land, they were in a position to build a permanent temple. During Solomon's 4th year in office, the temple would be built, twice as large as the tabernacle, but housing the ark of the covenant. The Temple was that place of residence for God, and less a place of public worship and prayer. The general public could only walk into the temple courts, even the clergy couldn't circulate freely in the building. The inner sanctum was off limits to all but the chief priest and to him only on one occasion annually at the day of atonement. The temple most basically was an incarnate sign of God being with them...

It was also where 3 things happened.. Animal and burnt offerings and sacrifices for

- a. Thanksgiving
- b. Atonement
- c. And purification from sins were made.

This temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE when Jerusalem was conquered. A Second Temple was built called the Jewish Holy Temple. This was the temple standing in Christ's time. The Romans would destroy it in retaliation for an ongoing Jewish revolt. The only thing left of that second temple today is the wailing wall, known to the Jews as the Western Wall that is used every day to this day..

If you go to Jerusalem today, You will see what's called: The Dome of the Rock rebuilt on the site of the first two Temples. It's now a Muslim shrine and mosque for pilgrims, it's this golden dome that figures prominently in most pictures of Jerusalem. As an aside, the Christian Crusaders captured Jerusalem in 1099 and the Dome of the Rock was given to the Augustinians, who turned it into a church. Jerusalem was recaptured by Saladin in 1187, The cross on top of the dome was replaced by a crescent and the whole place re-consecrated as a Muslim shrine and has been so every since.

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Back to our timeline, stick with me now. The Babylonian Talmud relates the dramatic story of Johanan Ben Zakkai. Remember that name. Zakkai escaped from the Roman siege of Jerusalem in the year AD 70. Even before the Romans breached the walls of the city, Johanan Ben Zakkai foresees the fall of Jerusalem, and has himself smuggled out of the city in a coffin. Through flattery, and by humbling himself before the Roman general, he is able to negotiate a deal, allowing him to establish a new center of learning in the city of Yavneh. It would symbolize an important shift in the worship and communal life of the Jewish people following the destruction of the Second Temple. In many ways it was this man, Johanan Ben Zakaii that births Rabbinic Judaism, he was one of the first rabbi's, a way of life focused on Torah and Jewish law. He guides the Jews in dealing with the loss of temple worship, to replace animal sacrifice with prayer. This would be the prototype of the Synagogue. The Synagogue then became the way the Jews

fellowshipped and worshiped. At the center of the synagogue, a large elevated area, known as the bimah, where the Torah is read.

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But we know that time and time again, Israel would fail in her priestly calling. Though Israel was married to God she proved an unfaithful spouse. The nation of Israel's unfaithfulness was expressed as spiritual adultery, deserting God for false gods, like Baal, Asherah, Molech, Dagon etc.. God uses Hosea the prophet and his personal life to illustrate this adultery. It was clear that the Holy Nation had no power to live up to its calling. Prophets like Isaiah began proclaiming a new assembly of the people of God, the glorious future when God would again manifest His presence.

Isaiah pictures a great feast, spread on the mount of God to which not only the remnant of Israel but also the remnant of the nations would be gathered in.

A new Day is Coming...Isaiah 25:

*On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined*

*He will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he
will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.*

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Then the Prophet in Chapter 53:6-8 would proclaim the Messiah, Jesus...

*All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.*

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.*

*He bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

As Westminster Theological Seminary professor of Old Testament Dr. Iain Duguid explains:

“To fulfill God’s purposes, another, better Israel would be required, a servant who would take Israel’s place, doing what Israel was unable to do, fulfilling her calling to bring light to the nations...”

This servant Israel...(God Prevails) took flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

From the moment of His birth, Jesus reenacted Israel’s history:

- *Going down to Egypt*
 - *So that He could be the true son whom God called out of Egypt...*
- *Just as Israel passed through the Red Sea*
 - *Jesus passed through the waters of baptism*
- *Then led out into the wilderness*
 - *where He successfully faced the same temptations that Israel had failed to endure.”*

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus read aloud Isaiah 61:, declaring that the Scripture had been fulfilled in His hearers’ presence

Isaiah 61...

- *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me*
- *to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,*
- *to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*
- *to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;*
- *the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;*

- *that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.*
- *‘They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;*
- *‘For I the LORD love justice;
I hate robbery and wrong
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.*

Jesus reads this and says today, This Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing...then drops the mic! As the new Israel, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the demands of the law.

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My friends, the reason this must be mentioned in Ecclesiology, the reason the Old Testament is critical is that: Israel, from the beginning, is the seedling of the church.

“Israel...God Prevails” took flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

If as Paul Says we truly believe that the Church is the Body of Christ...then this is profound! It gets even better...even more profound, let me take you back to the role of the temple. Remember that in the temple, 3 things happened, animal sacrifices and burnt offerings were made for:

- Thanksgiving
- Atonement
- And purification from sin.

The New Testament tells us that Jesus is the NEW Temple, John 2...Jesus said: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews thought Jesus was referring to the physical temple because they asked Jesus how the temple could be raised up in three days when it took 46 years to build! John explains in verse 22 that Jesus was speaking NOT about the temple made of stones, but about his body, death and resurrection on the 3rd day! His listeners didn’t realize it, but Jesus was greater than the temple. Jesus said to the Pharisees in Matthew 12:6... I tell you that one greater than the temple is here...referring to Himself. Jesus the New Temple... 3 roles of the temple..

Animal sacrifices and offerings were made for:

- Thanksgiving
- Atonement

- and purification from sin.

Jesus is the perfect atonement for our sin, He is the one who purifies us. Christ's blood on the cross fulfilled the law and all they pointed to, as the final sacrifice for sin.
Hebrews 9:11:

“When Christ came as High Priest of the Good Things that area already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man made.

“Jesus entered once for all into the Most Holy place, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by the means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption!”

Jesus is the Holy Of Holies, he tears down the dividing wall! Paul puts it this way in Ephesians 2:12-22..oh so rich, please hang on every word.

- ¹²*remember gentiles, (non Jews) that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*
- ¹³*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*
- ¹⁴*He himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*
- ¹⁵*by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,*
- ¹⁶*and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*
- ¹⁷*And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.*
- ¹⁸*For through Jesus we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*
- ¹⁹*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens,^[a] but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*
- ²⁰*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.*
- ²²*In Jesus you are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

By the Spirit! Through Jesus Christ you who were once far away have been brought near through the Blood of Christ. Jesus Himself is our peace and has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.

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Jesus is the New Temple, lived out in the church, so in the church instead of receiving forgiveness of sins through a sacrificed and bloodied lamb on the altar. We receive forgiveness of sins in confession through Jesus, the sacrificed lamb of God. We then receive Jesus anew through His body and blood in the Eucharist! This is how we fellowship and bear the image of the Father!

We are a community of people
glorifying God
through bearing His image.

The Church as the body of Christ,
a movement of the hand of God.

From the Old Testament assemblies
To the Temple
To the Synagogue...
To Jesus...

In the Old Testament where God is the husband of Israel, to the New Testament where: Jesus is the husband of the church, making the church the bride of Jesus open to all! It's why I wear white vestments each Sunday. It's why saying:

"I love Jesus but not the church," is kind of like me saying, Kendall, I like you but your wife Elizabeth, not so much.

We as the church together are the means by which Jesus Christ is delivered to the world in both word and deed. How could there be anti-Semitism in the church with this heritage! It takes our breath away to see the movement of God through Jesus Christ, from Genesis to this monument over our heads! It's why we have the star of David on our pulpit!

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We are a community of people
glorifying God
through bearing His image.

Quickly...Now:

3 Umbrella purposes of the church..

3 Words....

- Up
- In
- and Out.

The Church today exists to be up-in-and out..

WE ARE A CROSS CENTERED PEOPLE,

- VERTICAL,
- HORIZONTAL
- OUT.

- We exist to look up and surrender in worship to Jesus..
- We exist to audit our hearts and care for the hearts of others..
- We exist to look out and win the world for Christ!

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First...as the bride we look up. Our most important practice in life is worship. Communal worship. Worship is the primary way we give God glory! Not by going to get something out of it, but going to give God my heart!

Worship begins with the Holy Spirit:

- who moves us to pray
- convicts us of truth
- and imparts his gifts to and through us for others.

Worship comes from two words...Worth and Shape...Finding our highest worth through the Cross of Christ and what He has done for us. Without Jesus, without communal worship, our jobs, relationships and did I say jobs become our highest worth. As we find our highest worth in Jesus we are then shaped into His image.. We are what we worship! So, looking up, worth-shape our highest priority.

Archbishop Bishop William Temple defines worship this way:

Worship is the submission of the whole being to Jesus Christ

- It is the opening of the heart to receive the love of god
- It is the subjection of conscience to be directed by him
- It is the declaration of the need to be fulfilled by him
- It is the subjection of desire to be controlled by him
- It is the surrender of the whole being, the total giving of oneself...

- ✓ We pray,
- ✓ We read Old and New Testament
- ✓ We hear it proclaimed

- ✓ and we receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist...
- ✓ and of course the oil through the engine of our worship is music, that fills our heart with the praises of God!

Disclaimer...

Sometimes churches get confused about the kind of music they like in worship..
And you get music wars, contemporary music Vs. traditional.

Let me pose the question: What is God's favorite kind of music? Anything his people sing to him that comes from the heart. So, this might be a good time to sing a hymn that brings the old testament forward into the new, blending the Jewish heritage we all have from Jesus. The music is called: Torah-Torah and it's actually in our hymnal!

Hymn 536...

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So the church exists to look up in worship...The sacraments of the church are designed to help us do this. Just as the Old Testament covenant had two sacraments... Circumcision and Passover. We have two sacraments..

- ✓ In Jesus, Baptism replaces circumcision
- ✓ and the Eucharist replaces the Passover.

A Christian sacrament defined is both what Jesus did on earth, as well as that outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace. The outward sign of Baptism is water and the outward sign of the Eucharist is the bread and wine.

The inward sign of baptism is the inner washing of our souls, a drowning to the old Adam and receiving the sonship and daughterhood of Jesus. As Milne said, Baptism is a consecration to live for Jesus. Thus careless living is seen as a denial of baptism. The Eucharist is rooted in the Lord's Last Super, when on the night in which He was betrayed, He took the cup. Jesus as the new lamb and through His blood becomes "our" Passover of death,. The inward blessing is that we are strengthened and refreshed with the love and unity of Jesus and our brothers and sisters...

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There are 5 other institutions commonly called sacramental rites:

- Confirmation
- Marriage
- Reconciliation of a penitent or private confession
- Holy Orders
- And Unction.

One more quick disclaimer. Theologically, today's church runs the risk of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls: Cheap Grace. The beauty of the sacraments is that they define that one way love of Jesus we call grace. Yet Bonhoeffer in his classic book: The Cost of Discipleship defines cheap grace this way:

- Preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance...
- Baptism without church discipline
- Communion without confession
- Absolution without personal confession.

We like the Jews run the risk of seeing the sacraments as an exterior duty verses an interior transformation.

Cheap grace is:

- Grace without discipleship
- Grace without the cross
- Grace without Jesus Christ living and incarnate!
- Failing to remember that something is required of us in the sacraments...

If we baptize a child with no intention to bring them up to know and love and serve Jesus, that's Cheap grace. Receiving the Eucharist like an hors d'oeuvre at a party instead of realizing that what is required of us is to first make sure I am reconciled with my neighbors. Working out my Unforgiveness before partaking in the Body and Blood Of Jesus. This is how we fellowship with God! This is how we bear His image! Bonhoeffer wrote this book in 1937 and cheap grace is still the cancer of the church today. Worship, the most important function of the church, pointing us to heaven, reminding us of hell.

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During our family sabbatical some years ago, we spent some time in Canterbury Cathedral, the spiritual seat of world wide Anglicanism. It is impossible to enter such a building and not think of heaven! But interestingly it wasn't the obvious that lured my heart while we were there, but something very easy to miss. It was the tomb of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury. Chichele was a lawyer turned bishop who became Archbishop. In the early 1420's, he thought he was dying of a terminal illness, and so he orders a cadaver tomb made for him, a fascinating tomb standing on the opposite aisle from the pulpit. On top of the cadaver tomb is his likeness in his full 'Bishopped' regalia and accompanied by two angels at his head and two monks reading from prayer books at his feet, glorious!

Yet underneath, the base of the tomb is pierced to reveal a second likeness of Chichele:

- An emaciated corps
- Withered body
- Tiny legs

Written on it are these words:

- I was a pauper born, then to primate here raised,
- Now I am cut down
- Served up for worms ...
- Behold my grave.

The Kicker? He orders the tomb, it arrives in 1425, but surprise surprise, He's given good news, he's been healed! Great for him but what it meant was that for the next 20 years, everytime he worshiped and preached in the Cathedral, he was reminded of his own mortality. Worship brings us face to face with the after-life.

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Secondly, the church as the bride exists to look inward. Each Sacrament of the church points us inward to audit ourselves, specifically the Eucharist, looking inward to see where our cleansing is needed. Again we turn to the Old Testament prophet Joel: 2:12...Return to me with all your heart, rend your heart and not your garments. We think here of the Sacramental rite of the Reconciliation of a Penitent found in our prayer book. It's looking inside the heart to see what garbage needs to be taken out to Jesus the divine garbage man, so we can be forgiven and free! Yet there is another dimension to this looking inward...

The church is a family unit and exists to inwardly care for each other. Think about it this way. The church as a hospital where people come be restored and healed. I think of the Sacramental rite of Unction (healing). Let me ask you this question. If you had tumors in your stomach, would you be able to perform surgery on yourself? Of course not, we are to help each other to surgically remove those areas of sin, despair, Unforgiveness, and regret! Hence the need for prayer ministry and weekly prayer stations during worship.

James 5:14

- Is any of you in trouble?
 - pray
- Is anyone happy
 - sing praise
- Is anyone sick
 - Call the elders of the church

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So far...

1. The church exists to help us look up in worship. In fellowship with God bearing His image..
2. In to our own hearts and the hearts of each other...as family and as hospital
3. And out to the world

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Looking outward: The church is the body of Jesus. We are the hands eyes ears and feet of Jesus! You are the body of Christ...1 Corinthians 12:27: Some have the gift of leadership, some have the gift of teaching, preaching, giving. We are the body of Jesus. Through Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we are the rescue plan of god.

And the church is not just the clergy; the church is everybody. You are the church; you are the body of Christ. Evangelism-Discipleship NOT bad words! They prevent the extinction of the church! Several years ago, we were on a mission to Burundi, and one particular day doing door to door cold call Evangelism. We entered one of the homes, all the family gathered in one room, dirt floor of course...after we finished our invitation to faith, the matriarch of the family looked at me and said:

What took you so long to get here?

Jesus used the word go more than almost any other word!

- Go make disciples
- Go into all the nations
- Go go go!

So, less and less do we measure church by Sunday attendance And more we measure by how many people are going for Jesus into the world. Therefore another image of the doctrine of the church is church as airport! How many people are coming and going.

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THE church:

- Up to Jesus,
- In to our own hearts and the hearts of others..
- And out to the world to change the world!

Let me pause here and ask you...

Where are you more comfortable?

- Up and in?
- Up and Out?
- In and out?

- We Anglicans love Up and in...yet...
- 2 without three isn't complete!

Now we could talk for hours on the church, and that's why you have the textbook to read everything else I just don't have time to mention: Including the '4' marks of the church...the church as:

- One
- Holy
- catholic
- and Apostolic...

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But because of the day we find ourselves in as Anglicans, let me tell you what makes Anglicanism Unique. For this I take you to our "Why the Battle" series and Kendall's portion on "Why the Church." The Anglican way as C-S Lewis called it, is Mere Christianity, or what John Stott called: Basic Christianity. Yet There is one word that makes us different from most other denominations...and one word that describes the challenge we have in our church today.

That word is Conciliar.

Anglicanism's way of making decisions is conciliar. Just last year, a friend of mine, The Rev. Dr. Phil Ashley published a new book with a title that serves as a great definition of this unique word, it's called:

Anglican Conciliarism, the Church Meeting to decide together.

The Church meeting to decide together is what makes Anglicanism unique. Remember..

We come from the Church in England which dates all the way back to the earliest first few centuries, but the historical Anglican Church began to emerge with the Elizabethan settlement in the latter 16th century. From this time onwards, the early years of Anglicanism overlapped with the British Commonwealth, held together by the church of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury, known as the first among equals. As the British Commonwealth expanded all over the world, the church decided to invite all the Bishops of the Communion to Lambeth at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury once every ten years. This became known as the Lambeth conference, which had its first gathering in 1867, and this proved a way by which Anglicans throughout the world developed their:

- Interrelationships
- Maintained cohesion
- Made decisions
- And continued this concept of conciliarism..

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Other councils and instruments that make us unique as a church..

- The Anglican Consultative Council, consisting of laypeople, priests and bishops from the various provinces throughout the Anglican world.

- The every 2-3 year meetings of the Primates..primate defined is an Archbishop, Presiding Bishop, meeting at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury.
- These three plus the spiritual authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury make up the 4 main instruments of conciliarism in the Anglican Communion:
 1. Archbishop of Canterbury
 2. Lambeth Conference
 3. Primates meeting
 4. Anglican Consultative Council.

Remember, Anglicanism is the third largest denomination in the world and these instruments are meant to be a glue.

Anglican theologian Richard Hooker believed that the purpose of councils was to promote peace and stability, he argued their authority was related to their conformity to the teaching of and obedience to Holy Scripture and the decisions of previous councils, as well as to the degree to which their decisions were more widely accepted over time. Which is very different from Free Church Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

- Free Church Protestantism tends to place a great deal of authority in the individual parish for making decisions,
 - and has as a danger a tendency to fall into individualism when it is at its worst.
- Roman Catholicism places a great deal of teaching authority by contrast in the hierarchy.
 - Roman Catholicism has a danger of falling into authoritarianism when it is at its worst.

Now..For a conciliar church, the more important the decision, the more widely you consult. This is where we have failed in the current crises. The issue of Biblical Authority through the issue of gay marriage marks a failure of conciliarism...here's how:

The Lambeth Conference of 1998 produced – Resolution 1.10: which:

“Upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;”

And “while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation.”

Second, – The Anglican Consultative Council in 2002 –called upon “dioceses and individual bishops not to undertake unilateral actions or adopt policies which would strain our communion with one another without reference to their provincial authorities; and provincial authorities to have in mind the impact of their decisions within the wider Communion.”

Third, the primates meeting Communiqué from May 2003 where they write: “The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke for us all when he said that it is through liturgy that we express what we believe, and that there is no theological consensus about same sex unions. Therefore, we as a body cannot support the authorization of such rites.”

Fourth, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams declared in a letter to the Primates on July 23, 2002:

"The Lambeth resolution of 1998 declares clearly the mind of the overwhelming majority in the Communion, and what the Communion will and will not approve or authorise. I accept that any individual diocese or even province that officially overturns or repudiates this resolution poses a substantial problem for the sacramental unity of the Communion".

In October 2003 – a special & second Primates meeting at Lambeth votes to:

- *“re-affirm our common understanding of the centrality and authority of Scripture”;*
- *“re-affirm the resolutions made at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 on issues of human sexuality*
- *and that “none has authority unilaterally to substitute an alternative teaching.”*

In 2004, the American branch of the Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church thumbed its nose at the conciliar nature underpinning our Anglican Communion with the Consecration of the first openly gay bishop. It sent the communion into chaos, where we still find ourselves.

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Yet I’ve always felt great comfort in what Jesus said to Peter about the church..Matthew 16:

You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Yes the church is imperfect, yet she is still God’s vehicle to reach the world.

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Let me return to the beginning...As we saw an hour ago, the Bible knows nothing of a solitary believer.

Church is all about being gathered in...to go out bearing the image of God. "You are no longer orphans" as Paul to the Ephesians in Chapter 2 says, "but fellow citizens with God's people and members of the household of Christ, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone."

We therefore need to keep before us stories of the Church being her best.

Let me end with one such story.

Several years ago on a Saturday we were hosting what we call...A Day of Healing Prayer. This is a day where our healing ministry team turns this sanctuary into a hospital operating room, a surgical center of the soul, focusing on the healing miracles of Jesus, forgiveness and new life. On this particular Saturday I was out front greeting folks coming in...when out of the corner of my eye, I see a strange sight, A woman in her pajamas walking like she just got off the craziest roller coaster you could imagine. She was in a daze, almost like she had been hit by a car. Immediately I see the body of Christ activate. Bishop Dickson, and many others of us went up to her, I'm not sure how long she stayed that day. But it turns out she was just coming out of a very difficult episode in her marriage that would lead to divorce. Over time, she started coming to church, And I'll never forget the Alpha retreat that year, she committed herself to Christ and I couldn't help but think this woman is brand new! A new creation! From pajamas and crazy hair, to a whole new look! But it was her insides that were truly converted. Well, wouldn't you know it, she meets a man in Alpha, they get married, he plays in our band and the Lord even delivered a baby in their midst.

The church, Not just a monument but a movement of the Spirit of God that began in Genesis and continues right through every human heart today! My friends, the Christian church, coming from the seeds of Israel...

A community of people to glorify God through bearing His image.

The Church as the Bride of Christ
The Church as the Body of Christ
The Church...yes, as the army of Christ..

Standing Let us sing a hymn my Norwegian grandfather taught me on his lap. Number 562..Onward Christian Soldiers.

