

What Kind of Church? (Part 2)

Luke 5:27-32

People don't like church

People have all sorts of opinions about "church." Lots of people don't like church, period. When they hear the word "church" they think – "organized religion." That's negative twice over. "Organized" sounds too much like "controlled", and who wants to be controlled? "Religion" sounds too much like, well, "religion!" And isn't religion the source of all kinds of conflict, problems, and narrow thinking in our world?

No wonder the results of a recent survey were summed up like this: *"they like Jesus, but not the church."*

Ouch. That hurts. Why? Because every true Christian knows that Jesus died and rose again to create a new community of redeemed lives, His living Body in our broken world. This body is called the church. It's not about religion and it's not about control. It's about being the living presence of Jesus in our world. Why wouldn't people like that?

The truth is, in many cases the church has become something Jesus never intended. Often it looks less like Jesus and more a giant corporation. Then again sometimes the church comes off like a whacky dysfunctional fringe group, complete with abusive leaders and a fortress mentality that withdraws from the world in fear of being contaminated.

There endless variations too: "high" churches; casual churches; mainline denominational churches; non-denominational churches; hippie churches; boomer churches; urban hipster churches; rock and roll churches; hand-bell choir churches; right wing churches; left wing churches; Pentecostal churches; charismatic churches; anti-charismatic churches; intellectual churches; anti-intellectual churches; churches intensely on mission, and others that seem to have no mission at all (the rotary club is more fired up).

So – what kind of church is River West? What kind of church do you want to be a part of?

The one Question that matters most

For six weeks we're asking the question, "What kind of church?"

But there's a twist to the question.

It's not just about what kind of church you or I want to be a part of. That's important, for sure. But there's a for more important question; it's the one question that matters most: *"What kind of church does Jesus himself want to build?"*

The answer to that question is powerful. It's more than just an idea, a position or a point of view; it's an active description of our calling as Christ's followers. It tells us how to pray, what to focus on, and where to put our energy. It shows us how to set priorities. It reveals what Christ is ACTUALLY DOING in our midst and invites us to join with him in that work. That's why we're asking the question. We're on a quest to become the kind of church that Jesus is working to build in our broken world!

Last week Pastor Christopher gave us a picture of a New Testament church that was literally changing the world: the church at Thessalonica. Faith, hope, and love were the defining qualities of this church. Each of these qualities energized the church to DO something. They were a church of practical, energetic, hands on works of love. Who wouldn't want to be a part of a church like that? That's the kind of church that Jesus wants to build!

This week we go to the gospel of Luke and look at the life of a man named Levi. Levi was a tax collector. Levi was greedy, manipulative, calloused, self serving, and shallow. Then he met Jesus and things began to change. Levi's life is a picture of redemption. Levi is a man Jesus chose to build into the foundation of His Church. Levi is a man that Jesus used as a builder of His church. Amazing!

So, what kind of church?

The kind of church where broken, sinful, imperfect people find the grace of God in Christ and their lives are made new.

Who wouldn't want to be a part of a church like that? The answer might surprise you.