

Pentecost | Preparing, Celebrating, Discipling

I. The Purpose

- Some people have had some bad experiences with the church. But just because the church doesn't look the way we want or feel the way we want doesn't mean that we get to ignore God's gift and His accompanying expectations concerning the church. So many people try to justify not assembling with believers because of the trauma they experienced with another set of believers. But I should never use my experiences to justify disobeying God.
- On Pentecost the Holy Spirit indwelt the disciples and inaugurated the New Testament church. But it's not just about us getting together every Sunday to sing songs and hear preaching.
 - We need to look closer at the connection between what was celebrated at the Feast of Weeks and what we celebrate during Pentecost.
 - At Sinai, the gift God gave His people was the Law.
 - At Pentecost, the gift God gave His people was the Holy Spirit.
 - Galatians 3:24-26
 - Everyone is a sinner, but we would never know we were sinners unless someone taught us. Why? Because we all believe we do the right things. However, when someone shows me how what I thought was right was actually wrong, I can now see that I'm a sinner. And that's what the Law did. It showed me my sin.
 - In a similar way, Jesus told us in John 6:8 that one of the roles of the Holy Spirit would be conviction. He would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgement.
 - We can only have faith in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- God gave the Law so that the Jews could be a nation. In a similar way, God gave the Spirit so His people could be a spiritual Kingdom that would one day be a physical Kingdom. The church is the physical representation of the Spiritual Kingdom.
- God gave the Jews the Law so that they could become a nation, and God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we could become a Kingdom. And the physical representation of that Kingdom right here and right now is the church of God.
- If you are a born again believer, you absolutely must be thankful for the Universal Church because it is the spiritual Kingdom of God on this earth. You cannot be part of the Kingdom of God and not be part of the church. They're synonymous.
 - That doesn't mean that everyone who darkens the door of a church building is officially in the Kingdom of God. It doesn't even matter if they were voted into membership.
 - To be a genuine member of the church is to be truly born again which is to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - Therefore, the greatest blessing that comes from the gift of the church is the ability to be part of the Kingdom of God.
 - The second greatest blessing is that — unlike the Old Testament saints — our entrance into the Kingdom of God includes a personal indwelling by God Himself. And the benefits of that reality are infinite.
 - And the third greatest blessing of the church is how it works. God designed for the church to equip us for the work of the ministry and build us into the image of Christ.
- Pentecost is an exciting holiday because it not only highlights God's love, wisdom, provision, and kingship, it also gives us time to reevaluate our participation in the Body of Christ. Are we experiencing what God wants us to experience? Are we participating how God wants us to participate? These are very important questions which we shouldn't take for granted.

II. The Preparation

- A great way to prepare our minds to celebrate God for the gift of the church is to read about church from His Word.
- Second, we need to pray.
 - You need to start by asking God to use His Word to teach you what the church is supposed to be. Now, once you've learned what the church is supposed to be, if you discover that you've been looking at it the wrong way or been bitter against it or refused to interact with it, you should ask God to forgive you for that.
 - In the same way it would be wrong for you to neglect and abuse your family, it's wrong for us to neglect and abuse the Body of Christ. It's just as much a gift of God designed for His glory and our good.
 - Of course, those of you who are already grateful for the church, I recommend you thank God personally for your local body of believers, but also the Universal Church.
 - You should also praise the Lord for setting up His spiritual Kingdom through His people called the church.

III. The Celebration

- If you're a pastor, I encourage you to remind your people what the church is all about.
- School teachers, you can have your students turn in an extra credit project the Friday before Pentecost and give them their Pentecost Project bonus grades on the Monday after.
- Parents, you can do crafts with your kids, teach them what God has to say about the church, you can invite your neighbors to church, and you can always spend time reading the Scriptures and praying.
- If the whole church is going to celebrate Pentecost together, that Sunday would be an awesome day for a community outreach. Show your neighbors just how awesome God's church really is, but make sure you do it biblically.
 - The church isn't awesome because it provides a family-friendly, moral alternative to a club, party, or concert. The church is awesome when it's fulfilling God's expectations from His Word.
- Part of your celebration can also include this Season's focus on Life. The church was created by giving God's people new life and it's designed — in part — to enhance and grow that life.
- Also, the salvation focus for this Season is Justification. What better way to celebrate justification than by introducing someone in your community to Christ through saving faith!

IV. The Discipleship

- Ephesians 4:11-16
 - God gave us the church to equip us to serve Him better.
 - God gave us the church to conform us into His image.
 - And God accomplishes both of those tasks through the life-on-life discipleship of His people.
- The pastors are equipping the congregation and the congregation is speaking the truth in love to each other so that the body fits itself together and holds itself together as each part grows up in love into Christ.
- If we miss out on discipling on Pentecost, we really don't get God's calling on our lives.
- Therefore, make sure to invest in at least one brother and/or sister in Christ for Pentecost. Start early by inviting them into your Preparation and definitely include them in your Celebration.