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Pataskala Church of the Nazarene

September 21, 2008

3rd Sermon in the Series of “**Out of Many One and Out of One Many**”

Centennial Celebration – Church of the Nazarene

The Church as the Temple of God

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

Text: Ephesians 2:19-22

19 “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

I Cor. 3:16-17

16 “Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.”

Intro:

Today we are on the 3rd Sermon in our Series in our Centennial Celebration of our denomination the Church of the Nazarene.

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We call this: Out of Many One and Out of one Many.

In our last sermon we dealt with the subject matter **The Church as the Body of Christ.**

This morning I want to reiterate that one of the temptations we often fall into in the Church is to think of the Church as a building.

In the NT the Church is never a building. It is always a group of people who gather together to worship God and to build each other as the Body of Christ.

Most of the churches of New Testament times met in homes or rented rooms, though some met outside.

For several centuries the Church did not have what we would refer to as legal status.

You see - Illegal organizations do not build buildings and put their names on the front of their churches.

Let me give you some information on how the NT Church was described:

- The people of God
- The Body of Christ
- The Bride of Christ
- The believers or the saints

- It was called the elect
- Or the Field of God

The NT also refers to the Church as the Temple of God.

Temples were noteworthy for several reasons in the biblical world.

- They were thought to be the dwelling place of deity.
- They were sacred places where the sacrifices were offered and worship was given.
- Temples were a place where they came to pray. Specifically it mentions Peter and John on their way to Pray at the Temple when they encountered the lame man.

In this sermon today I want to refer to the Temple as the Lord's body, the family of God.

But it is also extremely important that we see that it is also our individual body that embraces the indwelling place of God's Holy Spirit.

Our text in Eph. 2:22 says, ***“And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling place in which God lives by His Holy Spirit.”***

One of the concerns Solomon questioned was whether God could dwell in a building made by the hands of men.

Solomon said in I Kings 8:27 ***“But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!”***

Can God – Will God dwell in the temple built by the hands of men? Absolutely!

God will do it NOT because He can be contained in a building, but because God had made a promise He would keep; and God fulfills His promises. God can do anything!!! Amen!

The only thing left to happen before God would dwell within the walls is the temple must have been dedicated to God!

This building that we as a collective group come to on Sunday mornings and evenings and Wednesdays nights is a place where unsaved people can come to find Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

It all has to do with the front entrance into this building

People from the community either see us or they don't see us.

As every car or truck drives by, they see a building made by hands, but this building has been dedicated to be a place where we can worship,

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serve and disciple and we are in Christian unity and love.

I. First, we want to address a House of God that is United. Verse 19

19 “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household ...”

As I stand up here and scan the congregation of people here today, I see lives that have been transformed by the Grace of God.

One thing has brought us together and that is the life transformation that Jesus brings when we are saved.

One of the concerns that some have is whether or not this life transformation and our commitment leaves this structure and becomes His Church in sharing the Gospel Message to the world.

Could it be that some even within the church sub-consciously tell themselves that spiritual dedication and commitment should be found only in the lofty ivory towers, but never enter our homes or go into our communities?

Or what about this – if we get somewhat happy or somewhat extreme in our emotions as we worship

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God – would there be people today refer to us as Jesus freaks?

Why do we do this? Because we know what we have been saved from!

These blessings come from the reality that we have a spiritual dedication of our temple.

Our Scripture says we are “**no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household ...”**

Now this is interesting and important for us to understand.

If you would have traveled with the Apostle Paul we would have seen what he was talking about.

Now understand this – If you went into Jerusalem, we would have seen a wall.

This wall was about 4 ft. tall.

It surrounded the Temple. It divided the outer court of the Temple, known as the Court of the Gentiles.

Around this wall were signs that warned in Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

The warning was that no Gentile was permitted past this wall on pain of death.

You see – the Gentiles were excluded from worshipping God in the Temple.

They could worship from afar, but they were excluded from the Jewish worship of God.

They were separated from Christ.
They were shut off from the commonwealth of Israel.
And they were strangers to the covenant of promise.

The Jews had the promise of the Messiah.

They were God's holy nation.

The Gentiles, which would have been us were excluded from any of this.

Paul says these Gentiles were **“Without God.”**

The Greek word says they were **“atheoi”** – it's where we get our word - atheists.

How about you – are you an atheist?

And we would say, “Of course not! We believe in God and His Son Jesus.”

But the question I have for you is this, are you living a Christian life as though there were no God?

You see – now understand this – I want you to think about this.

Are you loving God with all of your heart, all of your soul, and all of your body and if you are not serving Him, then could it be that you are acting like He isn't there?

Story:

Let me share with you this morning this story. There is old story about one of our church fathers by the name of Augustine. Early on in his life, he was intensely absorbed in the writings of Cicero. And around this time, he had a dream that he had died. And now he was standing at the pearly gates. And the keeper of the gate said, “Who are you?” And he said, “I'm Augustine.” Then the keeper said, “What are you?” And he said, “I'm a Christian.” The gatekeeper said, “No, you're not a Christian. You're a Ciceronian!” Augustine said, “What are you talking about? I'm a Christian!” And the gatekeeper said, “All souls on earth are judged by what dominated their interests. In you, Augustine, it was not the Christ of the gospel. It was the Cicero of Roman literature. You are not a Christian. You cannot enter here.” Augustine was so startled by that – that when he awoke, he resolved then and there to be fully committed to Christ for the rest of his life.

Application:

I wonder this morning what we might be called at the pearly gates: Workaholics, Preacherites, Fisherites, Shopperites, Televisionites, Sportsites. We get the picture – you understand don't we?

What is it that dominates our interest above God? Where does our dedication and our commitment lie?

Does it lie with the book you read, the job you hold, the literature you enjoy, the video game, the movies?

You see our dedication must lie with Jesus and this brings me to my second point.

II. When the Lord's Temple is dedicated to God it is to be filled with Praise and Worship.

Paul got so happy in this that he said in Ephesians 1:3 ***"Praise be to the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."***

What was Paul saying?

- He said we ought to Praise our God for He has blessed us with spiritual blessings.
- And when we praise God because of these things we will see these spiritual blessings.

What are they?

Love

Unity

Peace

Joy

Forgiveness

Freedom

Purpose in life

Believer friends, these are wonderful things!

Aren't you glad Christian believer this morning that Jesus Christ gives freedom and forgiveness of our sins? Amen!

Paul gets so excited about this in Ephesians 5:19-20 he exclaims ***"...Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."***

Folks, learn to Praise Him outwardly. Don't be intimidated or afraid to raise your hands in worship to Him for what He has done for you.

I'm convinced when we get to heaven we will do it automatically – instantly!

Surely this morning you and I have something to praise Him for!

Anthony Campolo wrote, "One year, my best friend and I devised what we thought was a brilliant and

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creative plan for mischief. We decided to break into the basement of the local five and dime store.

We didn't plan to rob the place (Sunday schools boys would never do that sort of thing.)

Instead, we planned to do something that as far as the owner of the store was concerned, would have been far worse.

Our plan was to get into that five and dime store and change the price tags on things."

We just imagined what it would be like the next morning when people came into the store and discovered that radios were selling for a quarter and bobby pins were priced at five dollars each.

Campolo says, "We watched with diabolical glee and we wondered what it would be like the store when no one could figure out the prices of things the way they really should have been."

Application:

You know – sometimes I think Satan plays that same kind of trick on us.

Sometimes I think that he has broken into our lives and changed the price tags on the principles of our lives.

Too often under the influence of his malicious tricks, we treat what deserves to be treated with loving care as though it were of little worth.

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On the other hand, we find ourselves tempted to make great sacrifices for that which, in the long run of life has no lasting value and delivers very little gratification.

Sometimes I think we have compromised so much that we have a very hard time understanding what really is important in life.

LET ME JUST SAY THAT PRAISING GOD AND KEEPING OUR PRAISE UP TO DATE IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT KEEPS US FROM CHANGING THE PRICE TAGS IN LIFE.

III. Thirdly – We need to Understand the Church as a Dwelling Place for God. Ephesians 2:22

21 "In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit."

The Root idea in the Greek word "***Dwelling***" is a house or a home.

The Temple is to be the place where God is at home.

Illustration:

I can still go home to where my Mom and Dad make their home.

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Up on 10 Knob Ct in Pataskala Dru and I and Mom make our home.

There is something special about being able to go home.

There's sanctuary at home.

A Home is a place where we can feel good.

But if the Temple is to be God's home, then God must be present in His Temple. Amen!

So this means that Church is not primarily a place to talk about God or to do things for God. **Church is a place where we meet God.**

We meet God here together!

Friends, as Nazarenes, followers of Jesus from Nazareth, we are a church of many.

We are enriched by diversity

We are bonded in unity

Our core values are firm

We are Christian

We are Holiness.

We are missional.

We are a church embracing the Great Commission from our Lord and Savior to make Christlike disciples to the nations.

- Disciples who hear.

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- Disciples who understand what it means to grow in Christ.

- Disciples who obey the teachings of Jesus.

So as a missional church, we are a discipling church.

This brings me to our 3rd point:

III. The Church is built with People. V. 20

It says we are “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.”

Christ is our Chief Cornerstone.

What does the Cornerstone do? What is its purpose?

The cornerstone holds the two adjoining walls together.

Do you see it? Remember the Jews wouldn't accept the Gentiles.

But Christ broke down walls of division and rejection.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, holds the Jews and the Gentiles together.

Friend, listen to me, you need to be blessed by this next statement. **IF YOU ARE IN CHRIST, THEN YOU ARE A PART OF THIS BUILDING.**

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST IS BUILT WITH BELIEVERS WHO HAVE FIRM FOUNDATION IN HIM.

You have been fitted in your particular place with the rest of the church.

We are a building. But not just a building, we are a temple.

Let me say it again, the temple is the place where we come to meet God.

It's the place where God abides in His holy Temple.

Think of it! Those who at one time made it their practice to worship false gods and goddesses in the heathen temples of Ephesus were now a part of the very temple of God.

Folks, this is a wonderful thing God has accomplished.

He has made a single body of diverse peoples.

- Not two bodies.
- Not an OT Israel and a NT Church
- One body.

- One Temple

Why? To serve as the dwelling place for One Spirit.

Peter says in I Peter 2:5 ***“you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”***

What does this mean? It means that the Church must be highly personal and relational.

We are not free to determine the shape of the Church.

We're not here to change what Jesus did to establish His Church.

But we have to guard what is in His Word and what the Church really means from generation to generation.

Being ***“Living Stones”*** set together in the Church can be more than challenging at times.

Sometimes we are placed by those other stones we would prefer not to be aligned with.

We'd rather not spend time with them.

But I want you to listen to me – it's not our job or our place to change these people or to seek another place on the wall.

Our task is to align ourselves with Jesus and to live in Grace, Peace and Unity with the other stones seeking to be together in the dwelling place of God.

My last point is this:

IV. I want you to see the Church is a Holy Temple.

16 "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple." 1 Cor. 3:16-17

What is Paul saying? Paul is telling believers in the Church of Corinth to stop defiling the Temple of God, which was their gather place.

He was telling them to stop dividing the people.

In both cases, when you study this passage, you find God's Temple was being dishonored because people were focused on themselves instead of being focused on God.

As the Temple of God believer friends, we take God with us everywhere we go.

- When we go to work, we take Him with us.
- When we engage in any sinful behavior, guess what? We take Him there too.

Folks, listen to me, God's Temple is sacred, and you are that Temple.

It's hard to be any clearer than that.

But when you sit down to your computer and you intentionally decided to pull up some pornography, God is there. But God won't stay there in that filth and immortality!!!

A Holy God cannot be at home in an unholy temple.

Did you get that?

A Holy God who builds His Church with living stones demands that those stones be holy.

He said, ***"Be Holy for I the Lord God am Holy."***

Because the Church is God's and not ours, the Church's holiness must be God's holiness.

In Ephesians 4:30 it gives us this command. ***"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."***

Think of this way:

God loves you.

God is with you.

And when He sees you honor Him, there is love and happiness that is so great that He shares with you.

But when God sees you dishonor Him, even though He doesn't stop loving you, His heart breaks and His Holy Spirit is grieved and hurt.

I ask you – is that something you want to do to God and His Holy Spirit?

I think the real problem is that most people don't visualize God as being real.

They don't feel Him in their lives, so they end up acknowledging God, but looking to Him as a vague idea or concept.

Possibly they view him as an old man with a long white beard sitting on a throne.

Do you do that friend?

Does it dawn upon you that God is very real and God is with you in every thought and every action?

You see I believe that is part of problem in our worship.

We don't see God or feel God or believe that God is right here, right now!

When we get this right, then we will endeavor to live the life of Holiness.

I don't want to do anything that would displease my God and My Savior.

As good and as safe as some might think they are this morning, you could very well be on a one-way trip to the entrance of hell.

When you realize how very real God is in this Holy Temple of ours then you will have a change in the way you live for Him – the way you worship Him.

Conclusion:

God has called us to be a Holy Temple in which He is at home.

The Church is not a building; it is people whose lives have been changed by the Amazing Grace of God.

But the Church is a people where God is at home and where people know that He is really among us.

That can only happen when we are holy people.

The question you must face is whether our Holy God would be at home in you.

Is there anything that is part of your life that would make a holy God uncomfortable dwelling within you?

Friend, I'm here to let you know that God can help you deal with whatever that might be.

Would you open your heart to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you now about any sin or any impurity within you that would keep God out of you?

I'm going to ask the Praise team to come and sing the old invitation song **JUST AS I AM**.

Would you be obedient and without hesitation come and let Him cleanse you from all that is wrong in your spiritual life?