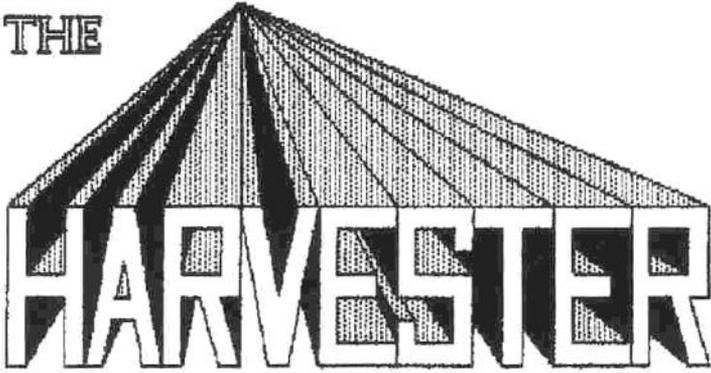


THE



“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

October 2017

No. 382

GOD’S PURPOSE FOR THE CONGREGATION

It would be interesting to take a survey and see what everybody thought of their congregations. Some might be dissatisfied. Some might think the congregation should do more. Some might be content. Some are not sure.

It is hard to decide unless we understand what the purpose of the congregation is. How many of us really know what the reason is? Does God have a purpose in mind for the congregation?

The Bible gives five purposes for the congregation. Two of them are found in Mark 12 and the other three are found in Matthew 28.

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The first two:

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31)

These commandments apply to all of us, as individuals and as a congregation.

Purpose #1: Love God. There is only one Almighty, one True God, one Creator, and we should praise him, we should adore him, and we should sacrifice unto him.

In the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20) we see this principle: There is only one Jehovah. Israel could have no other gods, nor make any graven images and were not to bow down nor serve other gods because Jehovah is a jealous God.

As a congregation we come together to worship our God -- not to gossip, not to make a show of our clothes.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

Likewise we sing praises, a sacrifice of our lips (Col. 3:16; Heb. 13:15). We also offer our prayers (1 Thes. 5:17), we listen to His Word being taught (Acts 20:7), we remember the death of His only begotten Son (1 Cor. 11:23-26), and we give of our means (1 Cor. 16:2). We do all of this to show our love toward God and because we love God!

Purpose #2: Love our Neighbor. That means to help our neighbor.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (Luke 10:33-34)

Notice: The Samaritan WENT to him and took care of his needs! Likewise, we must GO to the needy (neighbors) and help them. Do we expect them to come to us?

As a congregation our goal is to help the needy, the poor, and the down-trodden. We can aid with finances, physical assistance, or mental comfort.

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” (Mat. 25:35-36)

The next three purposes:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Mat. 28:18-20)

Purpose #3: Teach all nations. Make disciples of all nations. Preach the gospel and convert the lost.

Notice it says to “Go.” Usually the lost do not come to us. We have to go out to them. They are out in the world and one purpose of the congregation is to find them. That’s why we support work in other nations (Africa, Philippines, and Mexico, for example). It is important to send evangelists, to spread the plan of salvation.

When Saul persecuted the church, did the congregations go into seclusion? No, *“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4).

This also happened during the time when Gentiles began to be converted:

Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. (Acts 11:19-21)

Purpose #4: Baptize those who believe.

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did...But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:5,6,12)

And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)

We also have the examples of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10), Lydia, and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16).

Those who believed that Jesus was the Son of God, those who repented and confessed, were always baptized by the congregation! Those who desired the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and wanted to be planted in the likeness of Jesus' death to be raised in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6) were always baptized! This is one of the purposes of the congregation today. When we understand that, we will know what we need to do.

Purpose #5: Teach brethren to observe Jesus' commandments. Jesus had a special prayer for all His followers: *"But I have prayed for thee [Peter], that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren"* (Luke 22:32) .

Jesus knew that His disciples would still need help after being converted. There would be many tests of faith and many temptations. His disciples would need reminders and encouragement in order to grow.

So the fifth purpose of the congregation is to help the brethren to mature, to edify them. Give milk to the young members, give meat to the older members. To help us move beyond the first principles and unto perfection or completeness (Heb. 5:12-6:3). In our worship service, this is what most of our sermons consist of – messages to build up our brethren.

Paul sums up this last purpose in Ephesians 4:11-16.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Think of your congregation as the body of Christ, and your congregation's goal is to become a full-grown man "*unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*" (v. 13b).

Now that we see the purposes of the congregation, we can assess how our congregation is doing and what we need to work on. What are we (as a congregation and as individuals) doing in these areas?

Everyone should know they can contribute to these goals. Eve-

ryone has a gift or talent given by God. Do you believe that?

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom. 12:4-8)

Prophecy is public proclamation. Ministry is serving. Teaching is instructing one on one (like Priscilla & Aquilla). Exhorting is giving encouragement. Giving is donating liberally. Ruling is leading by example. Showing mercy is to have a forgiving spirit. What is your gift, and how is it helping your congregation fulfill its purpose?

Based on a sermon by RAY MCMANUS
(Deceased)

THE ACTS OF COMMITTING SEDITION

We read in Acts 24:5 where the Apostle Paul was accused of sedition by the Jews:

For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5).

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We understand that Paul was only teaching the word of God, but the Jews felt that he was committing sedition. What is sedition? Language or behavior that is intended to persuade other people to oppose their government. Incitement of discontent or rebellion against a government. This is what we are seeing today all over the news.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. (Gal. 5:19-26)

So according to the scriptures those that rebel against the government are committing sedition. We as Christians need to take heed and not get caught up in the cares of the events that are happening in our country today. He tells us we are to live in peace. As the scriptures read, those that commit sedition will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Of course, if the government asks us to do something against the word of God, “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29b).

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Cor. 15:58)

A.D. PENDERGRASS
(Fresno, CA)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
Sept. 29 - Oct. 1	New Bethel Cullman, AL	J.D. McDonald & Timothy Lewis
October 6 - 8	Delvinta Beattyville, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
October 13 - 15	Valley Valley, AL	Hunter Bulger (Prattville, AL)
October 13 - 15	Marrowbone Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
October 19 - 22	Goochtown Eubank, KY	Thad Eubank & Gerald Carter
October 20 - 22	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
October 27 - 29	Willow Oak Russell Springs, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
October 27 - 29	Verona Verona, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. Which land did the Lord promise to Abram? **CANAAN**
(Gen. 17:8)
2. How many plagues did God send on Egypt? **TEN** (Exo.
7:14-12:30)
3. What was Jesus wrapped in when he was born? **SWAD-
DLING CLOTHES** (Luke 2:7)
4. What was Jesus teaching about when he said, "What there-
fore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"?
MARRIAGE (Mat. 19:6)
5. Which city came down from heaven "prepared as a bride"?
NEW JERUSALEM (Rev. 21:2)