

## **GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES** (September 25, 2022)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

What is your response when you crest a ridge and see before you a scattering of majestic peaks and towering pines? What is your response when you witness a magnificent sunset and soon after stars and planets at distances unimaginable? How do you respond to the miracle of birth, the miracle of love, the miracle of friendship?

For many of us, our response moves us beyond ourselves. Even in the unspoken thoughts of our mind and soul, we acknowledge a power beyond human power. And we worship.

This morning we are in the second of a seven-week sermon series taking seriously the question, "Why Church?" "I can worship God on my own hiking in the mountains, swinging a golf club, drinking a cup of hot coffee or downing a cold beer. Why do I need the church?" Are there good God-given reasons for the Church? Because making a commitment to a Church community is not for the timid, especially in our current day and age.

Today, while a large percentage of Americans still self-identify as Christian, more and more believe the church is unnecessary. Some even see the Christian Church as a hinderance to social progress, a place that is hate-filled, a place to be avoided. Those are conclusions reached by those who misunderstand the Church, and God's intentions for the Church. Is the Church, including Grace of Christ, imperfect? Yes! But the Church, Grace too, is still God's chosen organism to bring the hope and love of Jesus to a world desperate for real truth, love, compassion, and relationships.

This series is not an act of desperation. It is not an attempt to beg, badger, or argue, in order to convince people to come back to, or begin to attend, church. It is meant to be an intentional, scripture-based, communication of God's desire for the church and our part in it. The entire story of God creating us, rescuing us, calling us into a relationship with Him, is about "we" not "I". Christian life is contra-American individualism. Christian life is an invitation to community.

### **Why Church? I Can Worship God on My Own** (Several Passages)

**Exodus 20:1** "And God spoke all these words, saying,

<sup>2</sup> 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>3</sup> You shall have no other gods before me.

<sup>4</sup> You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God."

**Daniel 3:14** "(King) Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, 'Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?'

<sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.'"

**1 Corinthians 16:19** "<sup>19</sup> The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. <sup>20</sup> All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss."

### **WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

1. What is it that God commands His people in the Exodus passage? What does it mean that these commands are first?
2. What is King Nebuchadnezzar commanding his subjects, including the three young Jewish men, to do?

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

3. Why is God concerned about who His people worship?
4. Why are the three young men unwilling to bow to the King's golden image? Why is this important to them? To the king?

### **WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

5. What are people tempted to, and actually do, worship today?
6. Why can't Christian's worship God, and a few others too?
7. Why do you worship God, if you do? Why not, if you don't?
8. Who do you worship? How do you know who you worship?
9. How would you have responded to the command of King Nebuchadnezzar? Would you have the courage to face the fiery furnace rather than bow for a moment to a golden image?

As you spend time praying remember that prayer is meant to be the most natural, easy, and empowering, part of your day. Prayer is talking to God and hearing Him talk to you. Pray for your eyes to be open to the presence of God around you. Pray for a worshiping heart. Pray for His Church. God will help us because He loves us.