The Local Church: Why Bother? — Delivery Transcript

Ephesians 3:8–11 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, September 18, 2022 · *Family Matters*

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All right, well thanks to the band for leading us. They do a great job as always. I love that last song. I said this in the last service, but sometimes songs just have a way of sticking with you in a season and they kind of pop up in your head over and over and over again. And that's certainly been the case with that last song. So I hope it was a blessing to you. Sean or somebody, y'all want to grab those lights while you're up in the corner. Jason's got 'em.

We're going to be in Ephesians chapter three this morning for our source text. And if you're new to our church, typically we preach through books of the Bible and we were preaching through the book of Revelation. And so for the next six weeks you're going to watch your pastor squirm because we're not doing expositional teaching like we normally do. I'm not working through a book of the Bible. I have to come up with a new title and a new text every week. It's like a kid in a candy store. I don't know what to do.

I'm paralyzed with fear. So but we're going to get through it. And the reason we're stopping, and the reason we're taking a break, is because we're going to do a series on the church called Family Matters. And not just the church in general, not just the theology of the local church, but this particular local church: how we envision God's will for our life together. And the reason we're doing this: as a staff, during January, we do this staff retreat. It's really a staff advance, but we call it a retreat so people feel like it's a vacation.

But we meet together, we talk about the year, we evaluate how we're doing as a church, how we're doing as a staff, and then some strategic goals we can put on the board to move us closer to where the Lord wants us to be and get the ball down the field. And one of the things we talked about last January, or this January, was that in our culture, as it increasingly

becomes less and less accustomed to the Christian worldview. It moves further and further away from this kind of cultural Christianity that has existed in West Texas for a very long time it becomes all the more important for churches to be very clear and forthright about what it means to be a member of a church, what the church believes, why we believe what we believe, and any expectations on membership, because sometimes people join a church because they grew up going to church and their mom and dad would join a church and then they join a church and they're like man, I don't believe what this church believes and I don't like what they do this and that and the other thing.

And they almost kind of sometimes, if we're not careful, identify the church kind of like they would a country club or some other service organization that they go to to get fed and ministered to and grow in their knowledge of God, and the church disciples their kids. And that's not at all what the New Testament presents as a vision for the local church. And we thought about just creating a membership class so that everybody who joins our church goes through the membership class. You know several churches that do that. We don't do that right now.

And so we thought about doing it that way. But the longer I thought about it, the more I became convinced that our whole church needs to go through the membership class, let's just do it on Sunday mornings, let's weave it into the sermons, and let's all of us together as Broadview Baptist Church— some of you are guests, and you're not members of our church, so you're kind of tagging along for the journey. But it will allow us as a church to be reminded why the church matters, why this particular local church matters, what matters in this church, and then how we specifically have covenanted with one another for the purpose of advancing the kingdom of God in obedience to the commands of Christ.

And so that's what we're going to do over the next six to eight weeks. I'm not quite sure how long it's going to take. We're going to examine different elements of the local church. We're going to talk about church governance. I know that sounds super boring, but we'll attempt to make it interesting. We're going to talk about our discipleship pathway, how disciples are made in this local church and why. And it's very informative. And by the time you're done, if you're not a member of our church, you would probably be able to say, here's why I'm not a member.

Or you'll be able to say, Okay, I'm ready to take the leap and commit myself to membership. And so the texts that we're going to be looking at are all over the place. In fact this morning is more of a biblical theology of why the church matters. We're going to have a source text but there's all kinds of supplemental texts this morning and in the next few sermons. And so typically the main point of my sermon is the main point of my text, and it's not going to be that way for the next six weeks.

And so if you can't stand that I can't either, all right? But just come anyway, all right? And the other thing I'll say, I don't normally say this, but I really want you to listen to the sermons if you miss them, for the next series. And typically I don't care if you listen to the sermons, but this is kind of one of those series it fits together, parts of a whole, and you miss one, you kind of miss the whole boat. And so if you're willing to do that, if you're watching online, keep watching online.

If you miss a Sunday, then check back in and catch up where you missed. Our passage, like I said, is Ephesians chapter three. And in my mind, before we can answer why the church matters, you got to understand what the church is and there is a misconception amongst many on what a church actually is, and it's not a building. And church is not a place. You're the church. You sitting in the pews right now. If you are a person who has repented of sin, put your faith in Jesus as Lord, then you are the church.

And the people who've covenanted together in relationship one another at this particular local church make up the church at Broadview Baptist Church, but Broadview Church is not the building. The building houses the church. We are the church. The church is a people. The word for church is the Greek word ekklesia, and it just means called out ones. Ek is the word "out of"; kaleo is the Greek word for "call," so we're the ones that have been called out. So it's not just people, it's people who meet in a place for a particular purpose, and the purpose for which we meet is to exalt the name of Jesus and to be obedient to his commands in our life together and his mission in the world.

Last week we looked at a definition for the church out of the Baptist Faith and Message. We're a Southern Baptist church. We have a doctrinal statement in our convention that we closely align with, if not outright endorse, and this is their definition of the church and I think it's good, it's long, it's tedious, but it's a good definition. And they say that the New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ "is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers." The word autonomous just means there's nobody controlling us as a church. No strings on us.

We are associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. We observe the two ordinances of Christ, that's baptism and the Lord's Supper. We're governed by the laws of Christ in the scriptures, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. This is not a monarchy. We rule together. "In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons."

We're going to have a whole week on this. "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture." I know that's very controversial. We'll talk about that later. "The New Testament speaks also of the church

as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation." Now again, I know that's very long, very tedious. Some of what we're going to do over the next six weeks or however long it takes is to unpack the different elements of this definition.

But that's a very good biblical vision of what the church is and ultimately why the church matters. And the basis in Scripture, to me, if you're going to raise the question, why does the church matter? It can be asked and answered in one passage. It's a passage that the more I meditate on it, the more I think about it, the more it grows in its impact and profundity in my life and it's in Ephesians chapter three. So that's our source text this morning, Ephesians chapter three. If you're unfamiliar with the book of Ephesians, it's a beautiful, wonderful book for how to understand the Christian life and specifically how the church should be structured, how we should do life with one another.

And in chapter one it talks about the gospel, the glory of the gospel, the vertical implications of the gospel on your life. Chapter two talks about the horizontal implications of the gospel, how we are reconciled not just with God through faith in Christ, but we're reconciled to one another, that the walls of hostility between Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, all sorts of different classes that in that day and age had separated people. Those are torn down by the gospel that we are united in Christ, that we are made one family.

It is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit. And then in chapter three, he has this beautiful prayer, how he wishes and prays that God would root the church and ground the church in the love of God and the profundity of the gospel. But sandwiched between all of that is this little biographical section in Ephesians 3. It's easy to just read over it, but there's a purpose statement, why the church exists in that little biography that is so profound, and that's what I want us to read this morning. Paul is talking about his ministry and he says, the grace of God was given to me to do what I'm doing in ministry, even though I'm "the least of all the saints," but it "was given to me to proclaim to the Gentiles the incalculable riches of Christ, and to shed light for all about the administration of the mystery"—in other words, God's gospel going to the world—that mystery that was "hidden for ages in God who created all things."

And here's the purpose statement. Here's the key text. Verse 10. This, me preaching the gospel, the church growing in grace. This is "so that God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the" what? "Through the church"—that it would be known through the church—"to the rulers and authorities in the heavens." So the church is not just for the benefit of the world. God is demonstrating through the church his wisdom and his power and his purposes in Christ to angels and demons, principalities and powers, natural and supernatural. So this what we're doing right now is a big, big, big deal to God, to us.

To God's purposes in history. Look at how he finishes this, verse 11. This is "according to his eternal purpose accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." So you think about the eternal redemptive plan of God. Most all of us go— think before time began: pre-creative decree, God is by himself, Trinitarian love, the dance of the Trinity. And he says, I've got a purpose for creating. And my purpose in creation is not just to create a world. But in creating a world that is redeemed and delivered by my Son, Jesus Christ, inextricably linked with that purpose in Christ is me also saving and delivering a group of people, uniting those people around the person and work of my son.

And displaying through that people my power and my wisdom and my redemption, my redemptive purposes. That makes the church a very important institution. I'm not saying we're as important as the death of Jesus on the cross, but we're inextricably linked with that ministry that our Heavenly Father accomplished through his Son. The church matters to God. God loves the church. It's a big, big deal. The question for us this morning: Is it a big deal to me? Is it a big deal to you? There's a growing mindset in our culture. Ever since COVID happened, 2020, whenever we shut down the church— which you can debate, should you or should you not have shut down the church?

Trust me, I've had that debate in my own mind. And I'm not going to raise it or settle it today. But one of the unfortunate consequences of shutting down the church was that we communicated that it's not essential, that this gathering is not essential. And that decision, I believe, gave many, many people permission to do publicly what they had already done privately, which was to display the belief that the church doesn't really matter. And I don't really matter to the church. I say COVID accelerated that mindset. It didn't cause it because I think that mindset existed.

It existed in our congregation. It has existed in congregations throughout the United States. But there was this growing mindset that the church, take it or leave it, can be helpful, but it's not necessary. I can grow in my Christian life. I can listen to Andy Stanley on YouTube and I can get better music through Bethel or whoever the hot people are now. I don't recommend Bethel, by the way. But Hillsong, whatever the case may be. Better music there, better preaching there. I don't really need the church. I can kind of grow with Jesus on my own.

It is a mistaken belief. This may sound provocative and this may make you angry, but with every fiber of my being, I believe this now more than I ever have, a Christian without a local church is a Christian in trouble. And it is just a matter of time before that trouble manifests itself in your life. We were made for community. There is no such thing in the New Testament of a Christian who is not also linked with the local church. And I want to show you that in scripture, why the church matters.

Why it matters to you, why it matters to God. And then what matters in the church. And we don't have a lot of time to do it. So let's go quickly. I want to give you three points. The

church matters, number one, because it was purchased by Christ's blood. It was purchased by Christ's blood. We were bought with a price. Acts 20, verse 28, Paul gathers the overseers, the elders in Ephesus, and he says to them, I want you to be on your guard against false teachers. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood."

Jesus purchased us with a price. Paul says the same thing in First Corinthians 6, verse 20. He's getting on to a Christian in the church who was sleeping with prostitutes, which was a thing then just like it's a thing now, except they kind of had a whitewashed reason, like for them, sex with temple prostitutes was a way of worshipping God and Paul is saying, no no no no you can't do that if you're a Christian because when you do that with your body, you're uniting Jesus Christ to that prostitute. So he says, Stop doing that.

You were bought with a price. Glorify God with your body. Same thing in 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 18. You know that you were redeemed "from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors," but God didn't redeem you with gold and silver, that perishable monetary stuff, but he redeemed you "with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb." Now if you're new to church and you don't do Christianity, then all this talk about blood, you're like, see that's one of the reasons I don't want to be a Christian because that sounds very awkward, very weird.

What's all that about? Well, again, you've got to go back to the Old Testament. I'm not saying it's any less weird, but there is a reason for it. If you go back to the Old Testament, the way God communicated the seriousness of sin was through requiring a sacrifice to be made to atone for sin. Read the book of Leviticus. Without the shedding of sin, there can be no remission of sins— or without the shedding of blood. I'm sorry, without the shedding of blood there can be no remission of sins. So what they would do is in order to atone for their sins, they would sacrifice these animals.

And God had a template for it. He had a whole method of going about it. But it was to communicate a basic truth. Your sins are serious. They are an offense to a holy God. And for you to be in right relationship with God, someone has to pay the price. And that was a template getting us ready for the cross, prepaving the way for Jesus Christ. But that was the old covenant. When you get to the New Covenant, what the New Testament teaches is Jesus is bringing something new. The blood of bulls and goats were never meant to wash away our sins.

They were just meant to point us to our need for a substitute, our need for a savior, Jesus is that savior. So Jesus comes on the scene, he lives a sinless, perfect life of love and obedience to the Father. He is that spotless, sinless lamb, and he willingly lays down his life on the cross so that through his broken body and through his shed blood, He would absorb the

wrath of God, and we could be given his perfect righteousness. That's what's new about the new covenant. What's new about the new covenant is it wasn't an old animal, it wasn't the sacrificial system, it was God in the flesh paying the price and giving us a new promise, a new way to be reconciled to God, and that was by repentance of sin and putting your faith in Jesus Christ.

The book of Hebrews talks about this. We don't have time to go into detail, but it kind of lays it out in seed form. Hebrews chapter 9, verse 15. Jesus "is the mediator of a new covenant"—not that old stuff, but the new thing that he inaugurated. What's the reason for the new covenant? Look at this: "so that those who are called"—in other words, the church, the ekklesia—"might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant." So in other words, the church is the people of God made new under that new covenant.

We've been brought into this new reality that God has inaugurated through Jesus Christ. And so one of the reasons that we matter as the church is because we display that new covenant to the world. We display what it means to be bought with a price. We display what it means to be delivered from sin, its penalty, and its power over our lives. We were purchased by the blood of Jesus. He is the mediator of that new covenant and he has saved a people, not just individuals, but a collection of people to display the beauty and power of that covenant.

So that's the first reason. The second reason the church matters is because we continue the ministry of Jesus on the earth. And not only do we continue his ministry, we're actually the vehicle that God has chosen to manifest Christ's presence on the earth. Jesus doesn't show up risen from the dead today, as much as we may want him to. What he does is he institutes a church, an organization that acts as his hands and feet on the earth today. Now, why do I say this? Do I have proof, biblical evidence?

I think it's profound the evidence in the New Testament that we the church are the presence of Christ on the earth. Some of the most compelling evidence to me is in the book of Acts when Paul is on the road to Damascus. We looked at this last week and he encounters Jesus Christ risen from the dead and he rebukes Saul for persecuting the church and killing Christians. When he says, why are you persecuting? Why are you killing? He doesn't say why are you persecuting the church or why are you killing the Christians?

What does he say? Acts chapter 9, verse 4: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Me, Jesus. "Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting." This is not the only time this happens in the book of Acts. Several times in the book of Acts when people get saved and they are added to the church. It doesn't say they're added to the church. It says they were added to the Lord. Sometimes it says Lord. Sometimes it says church. They're one and the same. The church is Jesus. Jesus is the church.

The church continues the ministry of Jesus on the earth. You see this dynamic in the book of Ephesians when Paul talks about marriage, how a husband and wife become one flesh. He says in Ephesians 5:29, no one ever hated his own flesh, but he provides for it and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church. Why? Because we're one flesh with him. We're members of his body. Then he goes to marriage: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

This mystery is profound," but I ain't talking about marriage. I'm talking about Christ and the church. Just like a husband and a wife become one thing, they are inextricably linked, they are one flesh, that's what happens with Christians when they become believers. They are united to Christ, they are one flesh with Him. That's why Paul told that guy in Corinth, "Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body? So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute?" That's First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 15.[1] The answer, of course, is absolutely not.

We continue the ministry of Christ on the earth. And not only are we made one with Jesus when you become a Christian, you're not just brought into him and he brought into you. You're also made one with everybody else who's made one with Jesus. When you are reconciled to God through faith in Christ, you are also reconciled to the reconciled. So everyone else who's been reconciled to God in Christ, you're also made one with them. That's why there's no such thing in the New Testament of a Christian without a church.

Because to be a Christian is to be one with Jesus, and to be one with Jesus is to be one with everybody else who is one with Jesus. This is communicated a couple of different ways. One of the analogies that the New Testament uses to communicate the nature of the church is that the church is the body of Christ. We're the body. Jesus only has one body, but every single Christian and every single local church is part of that body. In fact, when Paul talks to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 27, he says, "You are the body of Christ"—you, the church in Corinth, you're the body of Christ—but you individual members within the body of Christ at Corinth, y'all are "individually members of it."

He goes on, he says, some of you are a head, some of you are feet, some of you are a toe, some of you are a kidney. He doesn't say kidney, but he goes on and on all this different list. And so again, the implication is every Christian is in the body of Christ, but individual churches, the members within those individual churches are all linked together in one body. We all have our purpose. We're all individuals. We don't lose our individuality, but we are one flesh with each other. So that's why the church matters because when you're adopted into God's family, you get new brothers and new sisters, you don't get a choice.

You're linked to Jesus, you're linked to his bride. 1 Timothy chapter 3 talks about God's household. Every time I think of household, I think of Westeros. Oh, what's that show called? Good grief. HBO. Game of Thrones, there it is. I don't recommend it. But every time I

think of house, I think of Game of Thrones. Or if you're going to watch it, just keep your rewind— no, not your rewind. Keep your fast— no. Keep your fast-forward button handy. It's got some naughty scenes in there, but I'm done. Let's pray, it's time to close.

No. Okay, so Jon Snow, right, gets adopted into the house. Well, he's not the only guy adopted into families in that show, but when you get adopted— think about your own, if you're adopted into a family. When you get adopted into the family, you don't just get a new mom and a new dad. Legally, you also get new brothers and sisters. And that's how the church functions. God does not just become your father. Jesus does not just become your brother. But you've got to remember, in the New Testament, everybody who's in Jesus, everybody in whom Jesus dwells, they're also in Jesus.

And so when Jesus becomes your brother, they also become your brothers and your sisters. And so you get united to the church. We're one body, one house. That's why the church matters. It matters because we're bought with a price. It matters because we are continuing his presence on the earth. And then third thing, final thing, is we're entrusted with Christ's authority. This comes from the book of Matthew. You wouldn't think that the book of Matthew would have a lot of teaching about the church, but there are two passages in Matthew that address the local church.

And the first is in Matthew chapter 16. Jesus is talking with his disciples. He goes, Who do people say that I am? And they answer, some say Elijah, some say John the Baptist, some say one of the prophets. He turns the tables on them and he says, But who do you say that I am? And Peter answers him, you're the Christ. You're the Messiah. You're the Son of God. And Jesus says, that's right. This is a gift of God. You didn't come up with this on your own. The Holy Spirit revealed this to you.

And I'm telling you, you are Peter, Petros, and on this rock, petra, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it, or the gates of Hades will not overpower it. He goes after that and he says, I'm giving you, and it's a singular verb, so he's talking to Peter, I'm going to give you, Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven. Keys are a symbol of authority.

So when I say churches matter because they've been entrusted with the keys. That means churches matter because we've been entrusted with the authority of Jesus Christ. That sounds crazy, but that's exactly what the New Testament teaches. Jesus has all authority and power in heaven, seated at the right hand of God. But he has given that authority to his church. Now there's a debate, is it the church or is it Peter? Well, here it's Peter. It's very clearly Peter. And if you read the book of acts, it's Peter. Who preaches at Pentecost?

It's Peter through whom the house of Cornelius gets saved. Peter is the rock on which the church is built, but it's not just Peter, it's also his confession. It's his confession. That means every person who names the name of Jesus, every person who professes faith in Jesus Christ, they're brought into this thing called the church. And that thing called the church has been endowed with the authority of Jesus Christ. So that whatever they bind on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever they loose on earth is loosed in heaven. And that binding and loosing is talking about who is and who is not a believer.

The church gets to exercise: you're in or you're out. And I know that sounds wild, but if you read two chapters later in Matthew 18, there's this whole narrative about what happens when someone in the church makes you angry and he says, first go to them and tell them their fault if they don't repent and if you're not reconciled, then bring other people with you. If they don't listen to you with the other people, and you can't settle it that way, then bring the matter to the church. And if he still refuses to repent, if there still is no reconciliation, then the church can loose him.

The church can bind or loose. They have the authority to kick him out or bring him in. They can speak with one voice whether or not that person really belongs to God. You said, I thought my relationship with God was between me and God. Absolutely, 100%. Only God truly knows who is and who is not a believer. But Jesus Christ has entrusted the local church with a mechanism for saying publicly, we think you are or we think you are not. And that authority has been given to them by Christ. And that authority is a stewardship, which means they're accountable, which means it matters how we do church here.

It matters that we care about people. It matters that we are concerned about people's lifestyles, whether they're abiding in Christ, whether they're walking in faithfulness. It's an incredibly important stewardship, and we'll give an account to God for how we managed it. Now if that's true, which I think I can make a very biblical case those things are true, if the church matters for those reasons, then what matters in the church? Well, if it's true that the church has been purchased by Christ's blood, and we're members of the New Covenant, then it's crucial that church members be saved.

We need what's called regenerate church membership, which means every member of Broadview is a Christian. If you are not a Christian, we don't want you to be a member of our church. Doesn't mean we don't want you here. I like to say you can belong before you believe. So attend, come, participate, plug into a small group. Grow, figure out whether or not Christianity is true. We want you here. But the only way you can become a member of this church is if you are regenerate, if you're saved, if you've made a profession of faith.

Secondly, if it's true that the church continues the ministry of Christ, if we are the visible expression of his presence on the earth, then that means the members of a local church must be holy. Another biblical word for this is sanctified. Sanctified means set apart, holy. Doesn't

mean we're morally perfect. It just means we have lives that are surrendered to God to be used by God. Thirdly, if it's true that the church carries the authority of Christ, then it's crucial that every member in the church be accountable and submitted. Submitted to the authority of Christ.

Submitted: mutual submission in the body of Christ, Ephesians 5, but also submission to church leadership, which we'll examine later in the series. Now you see all three of these things, saved, sanctified, and submitted in our definition of the church, which I'll read again very quickly. The nature of a New Testament church is they're an autonomous local congregation. They're baptized believers. Baptism is like a front door into the church to say, We think you're saved, so we're going to baptize you. They're associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, governed by his laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word.

See that submission to Christ there, seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation is operated under the lordship of Christ through the democratic processes. Meaning there is no one singular boss; we rule together. Kind of like the American experiment, we're a democracy. We rule together. And in such a congregation, each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. And that submission to Christ manifests itself through submission to church leadership whose offices are pastors and deacons. Now we're going to look at all that later in the series, and some of that stuff's controversial, I understand, but there's a New Testament warrant for every single one.

As we close this morning, what I want us to look at, and I'll try to be very quick on this, but if that's what matters in the church, that church members be saved and set apart, sanctified and submitted to Christ. What has Jesus given the church to help us be those things? Because Jesus doesn't give us a task without also giving us the power and tools to accomplish that task. And if you read the rest of the New Testament, what you'll find is Jesus has given the church at minimum four things to accomplish those three things.

And that you could add a lot more, but you can't have less, in my opinion, as I've studied the New Testament. Those four things are the ordinances, which we saw in the definition, offices, meaning church leadership. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God, which interestingly enough are very closely linked in the New Testament. Be filled with the Spirit, let the Word dwell. They're one and the same. So ordinances, we're going to look at that this morning when we take the Lord's Supper. Offices, church leadership, the Holy Spirit, which empowers us for mission.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. It empowers us to live a godly life. And then the word of God gives us authority. It's the authority of Christ exercising the church. Christ rules the church through the word. Christ sanctifies the church through the word. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to sanctify the people of God. Those are the

four things. And we'll spend the rest of the series unpacking those four things. If you think of God's church as a house, you might think of the ordinances as the front door to the house and the back door.

They're the fence, they're the gate. They keep people who shouldn't be in from getting in, and they take people who are in but shouldn't be in and kick them out. That's the ordinances. The offices is kind of like the plumbing of a house. No one really cares about the governance of a church until there's a mess, right? And then once there's a mess, something bad happens, we want to know how do we flush the mess down the toilet. That's church leadership. So it's the plumbing. The Holy Spirit, you might think of the Holy Spirit as the electrical wires within a house.

And all throughout the house, they give energy and power to the things that take place inside the home. And then you could think of the Word of God as the structure or the walls that give stability and frame, or you could think of it as the blueprint of the house. It tells where everything's supposed to be and how everything's supposed to function. Those are the four things given to the church so that they might realize what really matters in the church, which is a saved congregation, a sanctified growing congregation, and a congregation submitted to Christ.

Now some of you heard me say the ordinances are a front door and a back door and you go, I don't know about that. I thought the ordinances were given to remind us of the gospel. Because Jesus said when he gave us the Lord's Supper, he said, Do this in what? "Remembrance of me." Do this in remembrance of me. So the ordinances were given to remind us of the gospel. Every time we do a baptism, whoever's doing the baptism says this baptism is a picture of the gospel. It reminds us that we're dead to sin and we're raised to walk in newness of life.

The ordinances were 100% given to remind, but they weren't just given to remind. If you read the New Testament, you also see that the ordinances were given to restrict and remove. They restrict people from getting access into the church. That's baptism. Baptism is a front door. In the New Testament, you weren't baptized just because you wanted to be baptized. You didn't get baptized because you attended for a certain length of time. You weren't baptized because you gave money to the church. The only reason you were baptized in the New Testament is because you made a profession of faith.

You demonstrated through your confession and through your life. I really believe in Jesus. I really repent of sin. Jesus really is Lord of my life. And then the pastors or the church would say, we believe you, and we'll show everyone else we believe you, by dunking you. And that is your public profession of faith. You're in the front door. So when you join our church, you can't join our church unless you've been baptized. Because baptism is a front door. Now you

don't have to be baptized here. You could be baptized by immersion in another church, but it needs to be a biblical baptism because baptism, we believe, is a front door in.

What about the back door out? Well that's the Lord's Supper. We don't just take the Lord's Supper to remember. We don't just take the Lord's Supper to examine ourselves and to make sure we're in the faith and all that stuff. One of the things that the Lord did through the Lord's Supper is it's a backdoor so that people who refuse to repent. For example, in First Corinthians 5, there was someone sleeping with his stepmother,[2] and they were like, No, no, no, we don't do that. Not even— I mean, not even pagans do that.

You definitely can't do that as a Christian and he's like, No, I'm a Christian. I want to, you know, keep this thing going. And so Paul says, gather the church, dismiss him, and the mechanism for dismissing him from the congregation was the table. You're not allowed at the table anymore. So the table was a back door kicking people who say they're Christians but who don't live like Christians— kicking them out. That's called church discipline. It's not very popular today, but churches should practice it, and that's how they practice it. So even today when we take the Lord's Supper, you'll hear me say, if you're not a Christian, don't take the Lord's Supper.

Why? Because it's a gate, it's a fence. Only believers should participate in the Lord's table. And if we, God forbid, ever have to practice church discipline, one of the things we will do in removing you from membership, you're no longer allowed at the table. It's a back gate. It's a back door. It wasn't just given to remind. It was also given to restrict and to remove. So as we get ready to take the Lord's Supper this morning and we bring this to a close, I want you, if you're a member of our church, I want you to reflect upon your attitude towards this local church.

I know that some of you are guests, some of you maybe are not members, but you consider this your church home, but you haven't really covenanted together. This sermon's not even about that question, but if you think you belong here, I want you to evaluate: What words would be used to describe your relationship with this local church? Because the reality is Jesus Christ loves his church like a groom loves his bride. He loves her. Sometimes when I'm stressed as a pastor and I wonder, are we going down? Do I need to leave?

Have I ruined this thing? I tell myself, no, Jesus loves this church way more than I can even imagine. He is so committed to Broadview. And even if I mess it up big time, he loves us enough to work through my mistakes and failures and whatever the case may be because he loves this church. He loves this church like a groom loves his bride. What words would be used to describe your commitment to this church? And if it's like casual, apathetic, indifferent, why? If it matters so much to him, why does it matter so little to you?

And maybe this morning the Holy Spirit would use this Lord's table as a way of drawing you not just to him, but drawing you to his bride and saying, I know we're imperfect, I know we mess things up. I know there's grievances. I know there's all sorts of reasons why people distance themselves from the church. But you know what? There's all kinds of bad mojo that goes down in a marriage too. All kinds of grievances, all kinds of reasons, all kinds of frustrations, but your love for your spouse enables you to overcome those things, to make it right and to stay.

And that's what we're called to do with the church. Let our love for Christ and our love for that vision, the church— that's the thing. He's chosen the church to advance his mission. It's his plan A. It's the vehicle. So I'm going to get over myself. I'm going to get over my petty grievances. I'm going to use the church to reconcile and to make these things right and I'm going to love it and give myself to her as Christ empowers us to accomplish his mission on the earth. And so I don't know what that looks like, you know, for you.

For some of you it's just a change of your mind. Some of you maybe need to start showing up. Some of you maybe need to join. Some of you maybe need to be baptized. Some of you maybe need to start serving. You know, I don't know, that's between you and the Lord. But if your relationship with his church doesn't match God's passion for the church. This morning is an opportunity for us to repent and to leave this place in alignment with how God feels. And so I'm going to pray. I'm going to ask our ushers to come down to the front to help us with the Lord's table.

If you're not a Christian this morning and the Lord is drawing you to Himself to repent of your sins and to put your faith in Jesus as Lord, you can do that as the Lord's Supper is being passed out; you can just come down to the front and say, Wes, I need to give my life to Christ, and I'll be happy to walk with you through that decision. Father, as we take the Lord's Supper, you challenge us to let a man or a woman examine himself and to take the Lord's Supper in a worthy fashion, to not do it in an unworthy fashion.

And so would you help us to examine ourselves to repent and renew our relationship with you and our relationship with this local family. And we give this time to you; we pray your will be done. In Jesus' name, amen.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "Ephesians chapter 6, verse 15"; the verse quoted ("Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body?") is 1 Corinthians 6:15. Source: 1 Corinthians 6:15 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩
2. Transcript note: spoken as "his mother-in-law"; 1 Corinthians 5:1 says "a man is sleeping with his father's wife" (his stepmother). Source: 1 Corinthians 5:1 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩