

## THE COMMUNITY OF THE KING

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

Three Metaphors for the Body of Christ

Ephesians 2:17-23

### DISPLACED PEOPLES

- People with no home/ wanderers
- People not received by other nations
- Refugees/asylum seekers

### DESIRE FOR ACCEPTANCE

- Citizenship is a sign of acceptance
- A new passport is a symbol of belonging
- The church as the body of Christ speaks to the heart of this issue

The greatest need of our time is for koinonia, the call simply to be church ... to offer to the world a living, breathing, loving community of church. This is the foundation of all answers.

Jim Wallis

### THREE METAPHORS FOR THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 2:19-22

### I. CITIZENS

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints

Ephesians 2:19a

### **'STRANGERS & SOJOURNERS'**

- Strangers – xenoī (xenophobia – fear of the stranger – dislike or prejudice against people from other countries)
- Sojourner – paroikos – resident alien, landed immigrant

### **CITIZENSHIP**

- Sumpolites – 'with the same polity'
- Paul speaks as one having Roman citizenship

### **FULL MEMBERSHIP**

- Speaks of full acceptance in the Kingdom of God
- Legal standing
- Part of the commonwealth
- No longer strangers

### **GOD'S KINGDOM**

- International
- Interracial
- Intergenerational
- Our first loyalty is to God's kingdom

### **II. FAMILY**

and also members of the household of God,

Ephesians 2:19b

### **THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD**

- Members of God's house
- We are part of the family of God
- Adopted as his sons & daughters

### AN IMAGE OF INTIMACY

- Speaks to more than legal standing
- We are now part of the family
- We are now God's children

### KINSHIP

- We are linked together as brothers & sisters in faith
- Not separated but connected
- We are linked together as an anchor's chain

### III. TEMPLE

built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Ephesians 2:20-22

### A BOLD, NEW METAPHOR

- In Paul's day temples were everywhere & made of stone



### A DIFFERENT TEMPLE

- Not made of physical stones but as a new humanity with Christ as the cornerstone (v20)
- The preached word as the foundation (v20)
- The structure as the people of God

### INDIVIDUAL STONES JOINED TOGETHER

- “Like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,” (1 Peter 2:4-8)
- Described by Paul as: ‘joined together’; ‘growing into a holy temple’; ‘built together’; ‘a dwelling place’;

### GOD’S DWELLING PLACE

- No longer in a specific place but in God’s people around the earth – the church
- ‘temple’ is a communal image depicting the presence of God in us as a people

### GOING FORWARD

### INCLUSION

- These three metaphors speak to inclusion not exclusion
- Images of belonging and acceptance
- All are enabled to become part of God’s family

### UNITY

- Not an organization but an organism
- A living, breathing entity
- A united, body in Jesus
- Not framed by statistics or budgets

### BELONGING

- The church as a community offers a place of belonging
- The world is looking for belonging/ acceptance
- We have something important to offer the world

### THE CENTRALITY OF CHURCH

- The church is not simply an option for believers – it is central in our journey of faith
- The journey is collective not simply individualistic
- This speaks to the new trend of 'nones' – those who simply reject Christ's church

Christianity in the end is a communal endeavour. We believe in it when community works, we stop believing in it when community and family break down.

Ronald Rolheiser