

100% Employment: Christ's Plan for His Church I Timothy 3:15

This morning we are starting a year-long celebration of CBC's 80th year of ministry. We often refer to this church by three initials, the initials CBC stand for:

- **Calvary** (and hence the Cross up on the wall behind me, reminding us that Christ died for our sins);
- **Bible** (and hence the constant usage of God's Word in all of our ministries and programs, and every public worship service);
- **Church** (and that is the special topic we will be focused on as we gather to celebrate these 80 years)! And especially this year our goal and focus as a church family will be:

Becoming All God Wants us to be

What does it mean to each of us, individually, that we are part of Christ's CHURCH?

That is the challenge to each of us today—we should become all that God wants us to be in His Church.

To summarize the theme of this 80th celebration, and my vision for CBC that I shared with the elders every since we began to talk about our ministry here it would be: "100% Employment—Every Member in Ministry".

We have the current notoriety among all the states in America as being the most unemployed state in the Union. In contrast to that physical status, we should seek spiritually to become the most engaged and employed saints we can possibly be, in the ministry Christ left us to do as His children!

As we open¹ to Matthew 6:6 this morning, turn your minds towards one of the most amazing parts of our faith—being in Christ's church means that we have four incredible new relationships God has given to each of us.

- **We each have the Best Dad:** God is our Father (Mat. 6:6-15). **Have you thought of the implications of that truth?** We have a perfect, always-there Dad who loves us without any conditions, who will never change, pull back, leave

¹ Drawn from 080210AM/PM GEM-14 & 15

home, or divorce our mother. He knows what's best, gives us everything we need, stays in touch constantly, and goes with us everywhere we are.

- **We each have the Best Brother:** Jesus Christ has become our brother as well as our God and Savior (Hebrews 2:11-12). **Have you thought of the implications of that truth?** That means He knows all of our struggles, pains, weaknesses, and temptations—and is right there with us as we go through them.
- **We have the Best Home:** We live in God's house (I Timothy 3:15). **Have you thought of the implications of that truth?** We are His family members, so God's Word is the plan He has for us how we are to behave. God's Word explains all of our family duties, and we all can know and follow His plan for each of our lives.
- **We have the Best Relatives:** All of us in Christ this morning are brothers and sisters (I Tim. 5:1-2); and that even includes our children, our parents, and our marriage partners, if they are believers. **Have you thought of the implications of that truth?** That list of relatives extends up and down the streets of Kalamazoo, across the state of Michigan, from coast to coast in our country, and around the world. We have blood relatives in every part of this world. The key is, if they are born-again believers—they are our siblings.

This morning we are the house of God. Each of us are spiritual pieces of that building. We are built upon the foundation of truth that is in Christ Jesus. Listen again to what Paul said in I Timothy 3:15:

*"...but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in **the house of God**, which is **the church of the living God**, the pillar and ground of **the truth**." NKJV*

All believers are called saints. And those saints who believe right and behave right are "sound in faith". Thus we are all called to be saints with healthy faith, who believes truth and lives truth. Are you functioning as a healthy member of Christ's church this morning?

For just a moment remember that there are no less than twelve metaphors in God's Word for the Church². Each metaphor is a powerful way for us to see how God looks upon us who are Christ's church. Let me just list them off for you.

We are—**A family** (I Tim. 5:1-2); **The Bride of Christ** (II Cor. 11:2); **Branches on a vine** (John 15:5); **An olive tree** (Rom. 11:17-24); **A field of crops** (1 Cor. 3:6-9); **A new temple** (1 Peter 2:5) built with "living stones"; **A new group of priests** (1 Pet. 2:5), that can offer "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God"; **A building** (1 Cor. 3:9); and **God's house**: (Heb. 3:3), with Jesus Christ himself viewed as the "builder" of the house; **The pillar and bulwark of the truth** (1 Tim. 3:15); **A harvest** (Matt. 13:1-30; John 4:35); and **The body of Christ** (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

² Adapted from Wayne Grudem; *Systematic Theology*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, p. 858.

God uses these metaphors to help us understand our responsibilities as believers. He wants us to apply each of the truths revealed by these descriptions of the church into our daily lives. As we do so we begin to appreciate more of the richness of privilege that God gave us by placing us into His church. Stir up your mind by thinking about these truths as we turn back to I Peter 2:5, our theme verse for this 80th anniversary year. We often need to be reminded about:

Our Responsibilities to Christ's Church

We as members of Christ's church are:

1. His TEMPLE: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **God's new temple**—*should increase our awareness of God's very presence dwelling in our midst as we meet.*

*I Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built **up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices** acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

I am Christ's Temple. I should want to grow in my awareness of living in His Holy Presence. That is what happens as we read His Word if we bow first in adoration and whisper a prayer of seeking Him.

Have you personally sought your God, this week, in His Word? If so say **"Yes"** aloud right now! God wants us 100% employed in His Temple.

2. His PRIEST: Knowing that God looks on Christ's church as **a priesthood**—*should help us to see more clearly the delight God has in the sacrifices of praise and good deeds that we offer to Him.*

Hebrews 13:15-16 Therefore by Him let us continually **offer the sacrifice** of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. 16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

I am part of Christ's Priesthood. I should want to delight in offering the sacrifices He desires. Have you thanked God for eyes to see with, ears to hear with, feet that walk, a mind that still functions? Offer Him the sacrifice of thanks for sins forever gone, of hope that it endless, of joy that never runs out. And then pick someone to "do good and to share" with.

We all need to be spiritual Boy Scouts, each doing a "good deed" for others each week. And then, each day, and then all day long. God wants us 100% employed as His Priests.

And that is what God has been doing here for the past 80 years. He has been building His Church by saving lost sinners and placing them into this body to be mended and built up.

Next week we'll learn exactly what that means, but for now, we need to celebrate the great faithfulness of our great God.

Hymn #43 "Great is Thy Faithfulness"