

“How to Make a Great Church Even Greater”

Dr. Jerry Keene

2 Chronicles 7:14

November 4, 2012

Order of Worship for 11/4/12, Communion, (this will come from Dr. Keene)

Invocation:

Psalm 111

Message:

Title: “How to Make a Great Church Even Greater!”

Scripture reference: 2 Chronicles 7:14

****Dr. Keene would like “Trust and Obey” sung at some point during the service****

Opening Song:

“We Have Come into His House” Song # 224

Invocation:

Psalm 111

Welcome and Announcements

Preparing the Heart in Song:

“I Believe” Overhead

Introduced by Hosanna Girls Choir

“The Power of His Love” Overhead

“The Church’s One Foundation” Song # 401

Offering Offertory:

“Amazing Grace”
James Kinnamont

Message: 2 Chronicles 7:14 Dr. Jerry Keene

“How to Make a Great Church Even Greater”

Response to the Word:

“Trust and Obey” Song # 571

The Lord’s Supper

Coming to the Table:

“You Are My All in All” Song # 583

Invitation to the Supper

Prayers of Confession and Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Parting Word of Grace

Sunday Evening in the Word:

Cancelled due to Pastor’s study leave

“The Prayer Closet”

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”

(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

Ian Carlisle and the Ambassadors of Reconciliation Ministry: the Holy Spirit will guide his conversations with: 1) inmates and ankle bracelet releasees in the Butte County Jail, to bring them to repentance, faith and growth in the Lord, and 2) other Christians and churches, to encourage them to come alongside ARM with their time and finances, to multiply the ministry to inmates and their families and transform our community

President Obama: the Lord enables him to see accurately the moral quality and character of those around him; the Spirit instill an insistent desire for the truth in all things; the Father draws him daily to Jesus

Youth Ministry—Mexico Missions Trip: for the Lord’s blessing on the preparations and for work projects to become available for fundraising; for unity amongst the team and for the hearts of those being served

Military or Public Service Personnel of the Week: Caleb Hammonds, National Guard, (son of Tom & Cindy): PRAISE - Caleb is working right now and his truck is running! Please pray that he is able to build endurance to be able to pass his PT test and for safety while at drill this weekend

Young Adult of the Week: Kate Finn, Azusa Pacific University (daughter of Sean and Penny): please pray for endurance in the doctorate program for physical therapy; running a marathon next week in Texas, please pray for safety and no injuries.

Please pray for the health and recovery of our church family: Carol Bernerd, Bob Boettcher, Randy Bowen, Volker Ladendorf, LaVerne Lee, Dick & Jane Miller, Phil Peterson

(please call the office to request updates to this list)

Intro: If I may be so bold as to say so, This Church is a great church! It is a shining light in a dark world. It is a great church because it is built upon the solid foundations of the Word of God, the will of God and the ways of God. It is a great church because we are not ashamed of our past, our convictions, our worship, our standards or our Lord. It is a great church because Jesus Christ is honored by the people who attend this church.

It is a great church because we are not looking for a new hymnbook, a new rule book or a new good book. This is a great church because it is a place where the Savior is exalted, the saints are edified and sinners are evangelized.

When I came here, I was wondering what kind of church I would find. Now, almost a year and a 1/2..... later I can tell you what kind of church I found. I found a church solid in its doctrine, secure in its direction and sold out in its devotion. I found a church that was hungry, hopeful, healthy and happy. I found a people who were ready, willing, and able to go where God wanted to take them. I found a great church, made up of great people, serving a great God. I will say it again: This Church is a great church!

Today, I want to share with this great congregation from great passage of Scripture. I want to share a great thought that has gripped my heart in these days. (Difficult days are here, 2 Tim. 3:1-9, Neh. 1:3) I want you to know that as great as this church is, it can be even greater! This verse teaches us the simple steps that tell us

How To Make A Great Church Even Greater.

(Note: The context of this verse relates to the dedication of the Temple under King Solomon. God has just finished demonstrating His acceptance of the new house of worship by sending fire down from Heaven to consume the sacrifice which was upon the altar, **7:1**. He filled the Temple with His great glory, and the people worshiped their God with praises, humility, sacrifices and several days of celebration, **7:2-11**. Then, God comes to speak to Solomon, **7:12-22**. God tells Solomon that He will bless Israel if they will honor the Lord; but if they refuse, there will be serious consequences, **7:12, 19-22**. However, our text promises them that God will hear them, heal them and help them if they will return to Him in humble repentance. This great promise to Israel has a great message for us this evening. Let's examine its words and learn

How To Make A Great Church Even Greater.)

I. ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR CONNECTION TO GOD- Relationship

- A. **It Is An Intimate Connection** – “*My people*” – God claims those who are in a faith relationship with Him, **Heb. 11:16**. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. He purchased them and He owns them, **1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 Cor. 6:19-20**.

There is an intimate relationship that is acknowledged here. The relationship we have with God is far more intimate than that of a Master and his servant. The relationship we have with Him is as intimate as that of a Father and His sons. After all, those who are saved are in this very relationship with God Almighty, **Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; 1 John 3:1-2**. There is a very close and intimate connection between God and His people! He is covenant keeping God, and we are His people 1 Peter 2:9-10.

Praise the Lord for this intimacy that we have with our heavenly Father! The fact is, it's a wonder greater than our ability to comprehend that He would love us in spite of our sins; that He would save us by His grace; adopt us into His family; bless in more ways than we can imagine in this life; and then take us home to His heaven when this life is over.

- B. **It Is An Identifying Connection** – “***Called by My Name***” – These people who have been redeemed by the Lord are also identified with Him. They bear His name before a world that does not know Him. They carry with them, with every step they take, the responsibility of living like they belong to Him. They are to live and conduct themselves like they are the children of God. Are you plugged into God's 2:20, power source...That is the responsibility of every child of God, **1 John 2:6; 1 Pet. 2:21**.

The first step in making a great church even greater is for us to acknowledge our connection to the Heavenly Father. We are His by the new birth, and we have a responsibility before Him and before the world to carry His holy Name in a manner worthy of Him and His glory, **Eph. 4:1**.

II. **ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF GOD-Rededication & Repentance**

- A. **It Is A Challenge to Be Dependent** – “***Humble themselves and pray***” – In the context, Israel was to come to the place where they admitted that they could not help themselves out of their problems. They were also to turn away from their idols and false gods and admit that they could not help them either. They were challenged to admit their total dependence upon the Lord Jehovah. Jehovah Jire' ' my provider.

That is the same challenge that we face today! If we want the Lord's power on our lives and on our church, then we have got to come to the place where we readily admit that our **rituals**, our **abilities**, our **organization**, our **feeble attempts** at worship, etc., will never get the job done for the glory of God. We have to come to the place where we humble ourselves before God, and admit to Him that we can do absolutely nothing without Him, **John 15:5**.

Let's face it; there are times when we think we can actually do it ourselves. We might not admit it, but that is how we feel and that is how we act from time to time. Well, I want to let you in on a little secret: you can do nothing without Him!

But, when we fall before Him; humble ourselves at His feet; admit our total dependence upon Him for everything we are, everything we have and everything we do; then we will see Him bless! Listen to His promises: **James 4:6-10; 1 Pet. 5:6.**

Phil. 4:13. If we could ever get to the place where we understood this truth: I can't, but He can; then we would see God moving in great power in these days! When we acknowledge our own weakness and we express our faith in His greatness, we will see God use us in greater ways.

- ***When we humble ourselves before Him, we are admitting that we have no faith in our own inability.***
- ***When we call on His name in prayer, we are proclaiming our faith in His ability.***

(III. Moses: He was expressing his total dependence upon the Lord.) When Moses was backed up against the Red Sea, **Exodus 14:13-14...**The Lord will fight for us while you keep silent!

- B. **It Is A Challenge To Be Devoted** – “***Seek my face***” – This expression is translated from words which mean, “***To seek with care, inquire, to frequent a place; to seek deity in prayer and worship.***” These words imply “***a yearning, a frequency of inquiry, a desire to enter into the presence of someone!***”

Not only are we to humble ourselves before Him, but we are to live our lives with a hunger for Him! The idea here is that nothing in your life or mine is to be greater than God. Nothing we are, have, do or think is to distract us from Him and from seeking His face. Our heart should settle for nothing less than all of His we can acquire!

Listen to what a couple of famous believers have said about this matter:

- **Paul** - “***That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;***” **Philippians 3:10.**
- **David** – “***One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.***” **Psalm 27:4.**

And – “***As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.***” **Psalm 17:15**

And – “***As the heart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?***” Psalm 42:1-2

Do you get the picture? Seeking the Lord’s face is about wanting Him more than anything else in this world! It is about taking time to spend time with Him in prayer and study of His word. It is about placing His face before you as the single most important motivator in your life. How devoted would you say that you were to seeking his face? Where your treasure is there your heart is also. **Matthew 5:21.**

C. **It Is A Challenge To Be Different** – “***Turn from their wicked ways***” – **Repentance...** Here: we are talking about the discipline of repentance. It is a challenge for the people of God to live clean and holy lives for the glory of the Lord. The people of Israel are told to “***turn from their wicked ways.***” Whenever you are turning away “***from***” one thing, you are naturally turning “***to***” some other thing. Doing a 180* turning from what hinders towards what helps!

The Idea contained in that phrase perfectly pictures what repentance is all about. You see, the word “***repent***” comes from a word that means, “***To return, to turn back, to turn away.***” God’s people are called **on to turn away from evil things and turn toward the Lord.** We are challenged to make an about face in our lives that causes us to walk in a totally new direction. Not like Lot, who left his heart in S.F. Sodom...

If we want the Lord to bless us like He can and like He wants to, then we are going to have to search our hearts and lives for anything that might be evil. We are going to have **to locate anything that might be leading us away from the Lord.** When a thing is identified, we are to turn away from it and turn toward the Lord in humility, a desire to seek His face and in repentance. Ephesians 4:22-23.

(III. Here is what you need to do. You and I need to search our hearts and lives to see if there are any “***Idols there which are leading us into sin***”? Here is a partial list:

- Money or Job • Possessions • Position or Status • Pride and Hypocrisy • A relationship or a person • Sexual immorality or Lust • Cheating or stealing • Hobby or a Habit • Or, any number of things that you and I may have put before God in our lives!
- If you have identified something in your life, the way to deal with it is in confession and then accept God's forgiveness and cleansing power, **I John 1:9; 2 Cor. 6:17.** You see, before the Lord can bless us, He must first change us! That is His mission!)

III. **ANTICIPATE THE CONFIRMATION FROM GOD-Results**

- A. **He Will Hear Us** – “*Then will I hear from Heaven*” – When we, God’s people, deal with this “*if*” situation; we are assured that God will hear us. We all know that sin terminates the lines of communication between the believer and the Lord, sin separates us from God and His blessings, **Jer. 5:25.. Psa. 66:18**. But, when sin is dealt with and our lives are pleasing unto the Lord, He will incline His ear toward our prayers. An unhindered prayer life is a thing of awesome power! It is a wonder to behold as God hears and responds to the cry of His child,
- III. Elijah prayed and it didn't rain for three years, and then he prayed and it rained again, James 5:16-18. David (III. **Psa. 84:11**, “*For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*”)
- B. **He Will Help Us** – “*Will forgive their sin, and heal their land*” – When we pay the price to honor our relationship to the Lord and accept His challenge to a dependent, devoted and different life; He will hear our prayers, forgive our sins and heal our land. What a tremendous promise! Not only will we be changed as a result of commitment to Him; but the effects will reach beyond the walls of this church and the world around us will be impacted for the glory of the Lord.

In other words, when we come clean with the Lord and we meet His expectations, He will bless us with His power, honor us with His greatness and thrill us with His glory. When we find that place before Him that honors Him, we will see Him take a great church and make it even greater!

Conc: I started out by talking about the church. When I speak of the church, I am not talking about bricks and mortar; lights and carpets; pews and hymnals. When I speak of the church, I am speaking about you! This Church is what it is because you are what you are. This is a great church because it is a church made up of great people.

But, as great as this church is today, it can become even greater. If you and I will pay the price to humble ourselves before God and pray, seek His face, turn from our wicked way, then He will hear from His throne in Heaven and He will forgive our sins and heal our land. In short, if we comply with Him, He will confound us with the way He will move in this church in power, for His glory.

Is there business that you need to transact with the Lord? Has He has touched an area of your life that needs work, take it to Him in prayer and deal with it. All I ask is that you be obedient to His voice! If you will, then a great church can be made even greater!

Applications: To Trust and Obey, for there is no other way!

Close in prayer....

Dr. Jerry Keene