

## To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . Be a worshipping community!

Ephesians 1:1-4

August 29, 2010

**Intro.** How easy it is for us as the church of the living God to forget who we are and what we are to do. It is so typical for us to speak of the church as a place we go, or an additional responsibility we bear, or as something we have a cautious commitment to embracing. A sense of belonging, community, effectiveness and passion focused on God is typically found missing in most of our thinking regarding church.

The church, the church that the Bible describes, is a beautiful, encouraging, loving and energizing group of people. This lively community of believers in Jesus Christ is remarkable because God has provided remarkable blessings for each member through Jesus Christ with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Various aspects of the church of Jesus Christ are described in word pictures to help us appreciate and value this work of God that he is committed to completing in glorious fashion.

Consider the unity and functionality of the church as it is referred to as the body of Christ. Enjoy the beauty, purity, and love seen in the transformed, forgiven people as the church is likened to a bride at her wedding. Notice the stability and safety of this community of faith as the church is said to be a building built on the foundation of Christ and the apostles.

With all that the scriptures teach about the church, it's purpose, glory, strength and beauty, it causes us to think seriously about both our understanding and behaviors as they relate to the church that Christ is building. There are considerable disagreements and variations among followers of Christ about the church. There is also distortion and misunderstanding about the church from those who are unchurched.

Church growth, renewal movements, emerging church, seeker sensitive, 'we are all about you' type brands, socially active, progressive, conservative, fundamental . . . the church, our church has to exercise great care to know and maintain a biblical understanding of who we are and what we do. The pressures of tradition, time and familiarity force the careless and casual into a shape that everyone is comfortable with but does not reflect the power of God or the beauty of Christ. The church can easily adopt the Home Depot motto . . . you can do it, we can help.

Similar trends were observed and noted over 60 years ago by a British preacher, Martin Lloyd Jones:

*Much of the trouble in the church today is due to the fact that we are so subjective, so interested in ourselves, so egocentric . . . having forgotten God, and having become so interested in ourselves, we become miserable and wretched, and spend our time in 'shallows and in miseries.'*

Our objective as we commit ourselves to a verse by verse study of the Bible book of Ephesians is to learn who we are as a church and how we are to behave in a manner that will reflect and communicate the enormous worthiness of our God. So much of our small thinking about the church can be traced back to our lack of understanding of who we really are, amazingly blessed by God in Christ. This morning we take a look at three views of the church to shape and motivate our thinking . . . we will begin at a distance to get a landscape view and then hit the button twice until we are real close.

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

Three views of the church to help us have confidence that we are a community to the praise of God's glory. These literally give us confidence that we are in the right place, doing the right things and therefore making a difference as we glorify God together. The absence of these marks from any view separates us from what God intends for us to be and do as his church in this community and world.

**From a distant perspective, Kossuth Street church should be people who . . . 1:1 – 3:21**

Note the larger landscape of the 1<sup>st</sup> 3 chapters of this letter. It is concentrated truth teaching us the core values and commitments of a biblical church community. A church is a community of believers who do the following because it is what churches that please God do.

- **Worship**                      **1: 3, 6, 14**                      God is genuinely praiseworthy.

Note this extended outburst, this complex eulogy, this repetitive declaration of praise/response to God for his saving our lives in and through Christ Jesus.
- **Pray**                              **1:15-23** (17-18)                      Continuous thanking, asking and seeking of God.

Continuous grateful prayer is the means by which we help each other know God better v.17b
- **Remember**                      **2:1-22** (11)                      God's grace and love define our new life.

Remembering what we were, what God did by grace in Christ and the new life we have now is essential.
- **Preach**                              **3:1-21** (7-9)                      Proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The gospel, the mystery of Christ, the administration of God's grace, the promise in Christ Jesus becomes the message that we repeatedly and faithfully announce.

These commitments are what churches do. Your struggle with church may be connected to your commitment to other things than these.

**From a closer perspective, KSBC should appear . . . 1:1-14**

Note these four clear characteristics the apostle used to identify the church as the church:

- **God focused.**                      A God centeredness that blows away any high thoughts of man.

By God's will    1,5,9,11                      For God's glory 6,12,14                      All God's work 2,3,4,5,6,8
- **Christ magnifying.**                      Exalting Christ as the beloved Son of God in whom we have new life.

Christ 15x in 1-14; in Christ 11x                      agent, source and content of all blessings from God
- **Spirit led.**                              Dependent on the help and power of the Holy Spirit for our new life.

Of the Spirit blessings 3                              Seal and guarantee of our sonship/inheritance 13,14

