

8 MEN, FIFTEEN MINUTE LECTURE SERIES: COMMUNITY OF FAITH

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An Introduction: The Christian Community of Faith

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There are numerous communities that exist in our world. Communities are brought together because of a common language, behavior patterns, message and goals. Communities exist because there is an idea or vision that has united them to such a degree, that to be outside that community is unnatural. Humanity has been created to exist not alone as a wandering nomad moving from one existence to the next. But humanity has been created to exist in relationship with others. Men and women have been designed to unite around a commonality for the benefit of all involved in that community.

Religious communities further demonstrate, persons from a variety of contexts can exist in some type of symbiotic relationship in which worship patterns, family maturation, the passing on of knowledge, and the highest honor is bestowed upon its founder. The religious community understands that they exist in a universe in which this life moves in the presence of a great and powerful shadow. It is with that understanding of living in the presence of one that is greater and the use of that knowledge to shape the community and the larger context we gather tonight.

The concept of community is not foreign to our faith. The God of Heaven and Earth existed in perfect community prior to the creation of all things. We understand from Scripture that Father, Son and Holy Spirit abided together in eternity. Out of this perfection, God determined create this tabernacle we call the heavens and earth, created mankind and with man, God was in communion. Communion with God was sadly broken as Adam our earthly father sinned against God and God justly banished Adam and his bride from His presence.

This would not be the last word though. As we see God actively setting the stage to reestablish what Adam decisively threw away. And so, God calls Abram, singling him out to be a blessing to the nations. God comes down and chooses Moses to rescue the descendants of Abram out of slavery to be his “treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” God peels back the veil and commands Moses to create a tabernacle based on the pattern he had seen. With this tabernacle, God arranges the Hebrews around all four sides and in this community of rescued Hebrews, God dwells in the midst of them. Later on we see, King Solomon build a temple and in that temple, God’s shekinah glory fills the place and once again at Jerusalem, God is in community with His people. Yet because of sin and rebellion, the temple is destroyed, the people are enslaved. God is gracious, the people return to Jerusalem, a temple is built...yet there is this anticipation of God visiting His people once more to fulfill the promise of

Ezekiel of new hearts and His Spirit dwelling with the people. The Old Testament pattern shows us that God is intent on dwelling with His rescued community.

The church or the ekklesia (called out assembly) is that unique rescued community and stands above all other religious communities. We rise above all other religious communities because our community is founded on who the Apostle Peter calls “a cornerstone chosen and precious.” The Apostle connects our community, this “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,” as one whose complete existence is dependent on the risen Christ. Peter applies the Old Testament declaration that was given to the rescued Hebrews out of Egypt to the rescued Church whose people are both Jew and Gentile. Therefore, we understand that the community of faith with her worship patterns, discipleship and declarations of God’s Excellencies, has as her center; the resurrected Jesus Christ. He is Emmanuel; God with us. And the Word became flesh and dwelt (tabernacled) or “lived” among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Tonight you will hear topics about Christ and how his presence in the church impacts our lives together as a corporate body, as individuals, as husbands, as wives, as a community that is to be engaged in our society and how the eternal Gospel of God is the necessary means in which God continues to shape this community.

Thank you,