

THE PRECIOUS CHURCH

I like the word “precious.” A few years ago I stayed in the home of a dear brother who in his prayers would use the expression, “our precious Lord.” The word “precious” means, in part: “1: of great value or high price, precious jewels; 2: highly esteemed or cherished, a precious friend...” In 1 Samuel 3:1 we read. “And the child Samuel ministered? unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.” The marginal note in my Bible has the word “rare” for “precious.” So, something that is precious is rare, of great value and highly esteemed or cherished. It is right and good to think about why the church is precious.

The church of Christ is precious because it was in the mind of God from eternity. It is no afterthought, nor is it an accident nor is it a substitute for the kingdom. Paul, with the pen of inspiration, wrote,

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him” (Eph. 3:8-12).

That which consumes our thinking is of some importance to us. Likewise, that which has been in the mind of God from eternity is important to him. Since the church has been in God’s mind since before the foundations of the world, should the church not be on our minds constantly? Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matt. 6:33).

The church of Christ is precious, or rare, because Jesus Christ gave his blood for it. This demonstrates the value Jesus placed on the church. To the elect scattered strangers Peter wrote, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with

corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,” (1 Peter 1:18-20). Paul, in warning the elders of Ephesus, said, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28).

What one is willing to pay for an item depends on its value to him. In the recent mid-term elections a rare stamp may have been used in Florida to send in an absentee ballot. It was believed to be a 1918 stamp depicting an inverted Jenny, a World War I era airplane. The value of the stamp has been placed at \$200,000. Once the ballot box is sealed, by law it cannot be opened for at least 22 months. Since I do not value stamps, I certainly would not pay that amount for it, though I might be willing to sell it for that amount. Sometimes people ignorantly sell cheaply that which is of great value. I have heard of an individual or two who purchased an item at a yard sale for next-to-nothing and then sold it at a great price because of its rarity. If Jesus was willing to give his life for church, should not the church be precious to us as well?

The preciousness of the church can be seen in the inseparable connection between Christ and his church. A constant refrain back in the late 60’s and early 70’s, and even heard among some today, is “Give us the Man, not the Plan.” However, Paul wrote, “And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. 1:22-23). One cannot separate Christ, the head, from his body, the church. To be in Christ is to be in the church; to be in the church is to be in Christ; to be out of Christ is to be out of his church; to be outside of Christ is to be outside of his church. What puts one into Christ puts one into his church (Gal. 3:27; I Cor. 12:13).

The church or body of Christ is the fullness of Christ. Salvation is in Christ (II Tim. 2:10); and salvation is in his body, the church (Eph. 1:3; 5:23).

To attempt to separate Christ from his church is an attempt to behead the church. It is effort to divorce Christ from his beautiful

bride, the church. It is an attempt to remove Christ from reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords over his kingdom. It is an attempt to remove the Chief Shepherd and Bishop from being over his flock, the church. It is an effort to remove the precious cornerstone from the house of God. It is an effort to sever the Vine from the branches, the individual members within the church. It is an effort to separate the Captain of our salvation from the army of the Lord. It is effort to separate our Advocate, our defense lawyer, from his clients, the church. It is an effort to separate our High Priest from the house of God.

The church is precious because it is rare; that is, there is not another one like it. There is but one church. Jesus said “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:18). Years ago the denominational preachers were courageous enough to defend their convictions in public debates against gospel preachers. The two parties would debate such propositions as “Resolved: The church of which I am a member is scriptural in doctrine and practice.” Each would affirm the proposition as it related to his convictions. Truth won many victories, and the cause of Christ grew; but denominational preachers will not defend such today because they have nothing to gain and everything to lose. These debates emphasized the singularity of the church. Many preachers, even some who claim to be in the Lord’s church, could not debate this proposition today, because they teach that one church is as good as another. They do not believe in the precious church of Christ.

Is the church of Christ precious in your life? Does it consume your thoughts? Is it first in your life? Are you willing to give yourself for it? Do you make sacrifices for it? Do you understand that there is but one church (1 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:4-6)? If the church is precious to you, do you make it a point to be at all the services of the church (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25)?

Ben F. Vick, Jr. from *The Informer*

BIRTHDAYS

Jodie Lycan, 03-21; Joel Nelson, 03-24.

ILL

Sunday: Millie Robertson (PM). **Wednesday:** Steve, Lauren and Lindsey Brown, Gary Cole, Jeremy Keifer, and Allen Scott. Gary Cole is in Room 418 at Olathe Medical Center. Allen Scott will have a CT scan on Monday. Tom Tucker will have surgery at Shawnee Mission Medical center on March 23.

Those battling cancer: Jamal Abyad, Diane Cannon, David Cole, and Ledgia Campbell. Please remember these in your prayers, as well as: Meredith Greer, Millie Robertson, Allen Scott, and Ralph and Helen Franklin.

HOME BOUND

Bob Adams resides at Room D-4 of the Johnson County Nursing Center in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Gary and Melissa Cole were in Liberal, Kansas last week. Robin Brown was working out of town last week. John and Barbara James are vacationing in Yuma, Arizona. Ed and Verna Hanson have returned from Florida.

LECTURESHIP

On March 25-28 the congregation at Blue Springs, Missouri will host a "Home Grown Lectureship" on *The Plan of Salvation*. See the flyer on the bulletin board for details.

GOSPEL MEETING

On April 1-4 the Chipman Road congregation in Lee's Summit, Missouri will conduct a Gospel Meeting with Jerry Brewer of Elk City, Oklahoma.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 46; Sunday PM, 32; Wednesday PM, 30.

Those To Serve

March 18, 2007

BUILDING AND COMMUNION.....Thomas

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... George Thomas
SONG LEADER..... Joel Nelson
OPENING PRAYER Jeff Nemecek
PRESIDE.....Steve Brown
ASSIST.....David Parish
ASSIST.....Jared Nelson
CLOSING PRAYER..... John Carter

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER Gary Cole
CLOSING PRAYER..... John Cody Carter
LORD'S SUPPER.....Steve Brown

WEDNESDAY 21st

SONG LEADER.....Jeremy Keifer
INVITATION John Cody Carter

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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