

Olive Drive Church

Lesson 66: Thursday, Jan. 5th, 2016

**HANDOUT**

**Q100. What is the *universal Church*?**

The universal Church is all the members of the body of Christ, made up of people from all around the world. It is all who are called out of darkness, regenerated, and set apart by God’s saving grace. It is all the genuine believers in Jesus.

Let me make some clear distinctions before we dive in. The local church is the group of believers that you do life with and submit to its leadership. We must be committed to a local church where we serve, grow, and do life together. The universal Church is different in the sense of location and how we do life together. It would be impossible even in our day and age of social access for me to do life with all true believers everywhere in the world in the way I do life with you here. So, when we talk about the universal Church this is one of the ways that it is different from the local church.

Believers around the world belong to different local churches, however, if we are true believers, truly saved by God, then we all belong to the one universal Church- the one body of Christ.

**P: 1 The universal Church is all the members of the body of Christ**

**Ephesians 4:15-16** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

**Galatians 3:27-29 ESV** [26] for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. [27] For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

The universal Church is one in how it was saved and one in whom it belongs to. There are not two peoples of God and there are not many ways to be saved by God. God’s people are not a single ethnicity; God’s people are the ones whom God saves from every tribe, tongue, and nation. God’s word says that if we believe, then we are offspring of Abraham because of the promise God made to save His people through Abraham’s offspring. The implications of this truth are innumerable!

The context of this verse is that God saves all His chosen people and your race or sex or social status has nothing to do with God’s sovereign choice. This does not nullify the God-given roles of men and women and it does not nullify the clear teaching of scripture on sexuality and God’s design for it. We must be careful not to use scriptures out of context to satisfy sinful desires.

**Romans 12:2 ESV**-Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

God is a God of love and He is after your supreme joy, your everlasting, eternity-filled, blood-bought joy if you belong to Him. Is there a chance that this thing you think would make you happy could end up letting you down? Have you ever been wrong before? Has God?

**Jeremiah 17: 9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

The answer to the question Jeremiah poses in this passage is God; God is the one who understands the heart- not man. So instead of trusting your deceitful heart and changing God’s words so you can pursue something that leads to eternal consequences, trust the One who has never been wrong. Trust God, not yourself or the world around you.

**1 Corinthians 12**: 12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

13For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

19If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,

25that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 27Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

There are two key points here. First, we belong to a bigger body of Christ and second, we are individual members. So, we have personal responsibility and global responsibility. Don’t miss this. This is a perfect lead way into my next point.

**P: 2 The universal Church is made up of people from all around the world**

**John 10:16** “And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.”

We must see clearly that God’s people are not just an ethnic group; rather we are set apart as the body of Christ. Since the first person was redeemed unto salvation in the Old Testament, all the way until the final elect human is saved: we are one people. The universal Church is Christ’s body and together we are one from all over the world.

**Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

God has commanded us as He commanded the disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations. God’s design and command to bring the gospel to all of His elect all over the world is given to us here in this commandment from Jesus. We are to make disciples of all the nations. This is what has happened today for us who are alive 2,000 years after Jesus and live 7,400 miles from where He did His ministry.

If faithful men and women of God had not obeyed through God’s power, we would not have the gospel here and now. This should well up in us a gratitude for those believers who were faithful and for God’s sovereignty to make certain that this would happen.

This is a quote from the Joshua project: “It is estimated that of the 7.1 billion people alive in the world today, 2.91 billion of them live in unreached people groups with little or no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

**2 Peter 3:1-10 ESV** [1] This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, [2] that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, [3] knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. [4] They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.” [5] For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God,

[6] and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. [7] But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

[8] But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [9] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. [10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

[11] This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, [12] that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

First look at WHO this passage is being written to, it is being written to the beloved. We know that this is an affectionate term used to describe believers or God’s beloved. This is written as a reminder to the beloved to remain steadfast and trust in the predictions of the prophets and the commands of the Lord and Savior. Well, why do they need to be reminded to trust in God and what has been taught to them through the Apostles? Verse [3] knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

There are a people called scoffers and they will scoff because they are following their own sinful desires. Well, what type of scoffing, what will they say?

Verse [4] They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.”

They will say, essentially, where is your God? The world is continuing the way it has since your ancestors have passed, and it will continue on in the same way. Your God is not returning because He is not real, or does not care, or whatever else a scoffer may say. Peter goes on [5] For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, [6] and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. [7] But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

They deliberately overlook the fact that God has created all things, has destroyed the earth with water (so to speak) once already, and that it is being stored up for fire, kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. Peter says be encouraged. Don’t be fooled. These scoffers are in sin and dead and though they know God, as Romans 1 says, by their unrighteousness they suppress this truth.

Peter continues in his encouragement to the beloved: [8] But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [9] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Beloved, even if scoffers mock and declare that our Lord will not return, if they argue that there has been too much time and He can’t exist or He isn’t coming back, remember this **fact**! The Lord’s timing is not our timing. One day a thousand years and a thousand years one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise. Do not be deceived by scoffers! **Here is the climax. Here is the point.** But He is patient toward you (you who? You the beloved!) not wishing that any (any who? Any of His beloved!) should perish but that all (all who? All the beloved!) should reach repentance.

Church, God has not returned yet because He is not done saving His beloved- these are the elect as we’ve learned in our previous studies.

Just think about it, how crummy is a movie that ends before the hero saves who he intends to save!? This is not a movie. This is real life. Almost half of the world’s population does not have the gospel! If you have ever cried come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, then what are you doing to reach these God’s beloved?!

**Matthew 24:31** “And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Church, do not lose heart. Remember, our God keeps His promises and if He does not return in our lifetime, remember the reason given; He is not done saving His people yet.

**P: 3 It is all who are called out of darkness, regenerated, and set apart by God’s saving grace. All the genuine believers in Jesus.**

We use a lot of words to describe believers. As a believer, we have been called out of darkness:

**1 Peter 2:9-10** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

I have said this many times- no one has lied to you more than you have. No one has hurt you more than you have! God did this so we could proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. You were saved from the darkness you lived in if God has given you faith; you were saved from eternal outer darkness where there will be gnashing of teeth and torment forever if God has given you faith. If you have been saved, you are part of a global body of Christians that share in this reality and the earth should shake with our praise to God for what He has done.

The blood-purchased people of God have received mercy! We are God’s possession and God says that is because of His mercy. I cannot think about this enough. I am not my own. I belong to God and I am a slave to God because God has been merciful to me. To give me up to my desires to leave me in the dark when I thought I was the Lord of my life- that would be God’s just wrath. Instead, I have received mercy.

Perhaps even more incredible than this is the fact that we are an intimate people of God. He makes us the bride of Christ and this language is used to show the intimacy of the relationship between God and His chosen people.

**John 3:29** “The one who has the bride is the bridegroom...”

**Ephesians 5:25** ...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Jesus gave up His life for His bride. He is the bridegroom we, the true believers, are the bride. We are the bride because Jesus gave His life to make us His bride. The work Jesus did was effective. Jesus will save all His chosen people. He is the perfect bridegroom and He came to lay His life down for His bride. The bride of Christ is the universal Church.

Application:

If the universal church is the one body of all believers who have been saved, then we who are a part of that body need to know how to do life in light of this truth.

Here is an obvious one: there is zero room within the universal church for racism of any kind. You and I who are true believers have been made into one person with every ethnicity that exists. The gospel removes this and because of the gospel we have even higher standards against this foolishness.

What about missions? If we have future brothers and sisters all across the globe, we must be on mission. We must be the hands and feet of God moving throughout our world to share the gospel so that those who are still in darkness may be moved to light by God’s grace.

If our command has been to go and make disciples of all nations, then we must be going to all nations. Let me be clear, not everyone has to go to a foreign country, but we definitely need people to be going. You must either be a person who is going or supporting, in some manner, those who are going. We are called to be on mission.

If you are not someone who is going out you must be making disciples here. Your mission has not changed. If you are here, you should be making disciples, baptizing believers, and teaching them all that God has taught us through the scriptures!

Remember we should pray for all believers. We should rejoice with them when things go well. We should mourn with them when things go bad. We are all part of one body in Jesus!