

## SERMON NOTES

National Presbyterian Church  
David Renwick, January 12, 2014

Series: The Great Ends of the Church

### The Church: Why Bother?

1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Matthew 18:20; 25:31-46

#### GREAT ENDS OF THE CHURCH

1. The Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind
2. The Shelter, Nurture, and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God
3. The Maintenance of Divine Worship
4. The Preservation of the Truth
5. The Promotion of Social Righteousness
6. and the Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World.

### I. THE PERSISTENCE OF A QUESTION:

Can I be a Christian without going to church?

Can I be a good person without going to church

Can I be spiritual without going to church?

### II. A CHANGING SITUATION IN OUR NATION (and the West)

- a) The precipitous decline of Church membership and attendance (Barna Research)
  - *in the past decade a 22% drop in adults attending mainline churches who have children under age 18 living at home.*
  - *Young adults (25 or younger) are 6% of the national population, but represent only 2% of all adults attending mainline churches.*
  - *About 27% of American adults are 60 or older, but more than one-third of mainline attendees (35%) are 60-plus.*
- b) The decline of extended community (Putnam)
- c) The rise of individualistic spiritualities (Douthat)

### III. COMMUNITY AS THE WILL OF GOD

#### Our Jewish Heritage

- a) God's Love of Individuals: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob . . .
- b) God's Love of Groups (Families, Nation): The Twelve Tribes of Israel  
God promised Abraham: '*and I will make of you a great nation . . . by you all the families of the earth will be blessed*' Genesis 12:2,3

#### Our Biblical Heritage

- a) The Problem of the Printing Press: Personal Bibles!
- b) The Problem of English Translation:  
(New Testament Greek has two words for you: you-singular, *su*; and you-plural, *humeis*. In English, the one word 'You' can be singular or plural. We tend to hear it in the Bible as singular (me) when almost all of the time it is plural (us). That is, most uses of "you" in the Bible should be read as "yous"(!) or "y'all"(!)

#### Our Jesus' Heritage

- a) The Purposeful Number of Disciples: Twelve (Matt.10:1, Acts 6:2, 7:8)
- b) The Promise of Presence to "two or three" (Matt. 18:20)
- c) The Passion to Build a Team (John 13:1-20)  
"*As the Father sent me, so I send you all*" (John 20:21)
- d) Jesus' Prayer for Followers as a Church (John 17)
- e) The Im-Possibility of Being a Christian Alone (Matt. 25:31-46)

### IV. WHAT THEN IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY?

Jesus said:

"*You all COME to me, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28)

"*You all GO, make disciples of all nations*" (Matthew 28:19)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Resources:

Ross Douthat, Bad Religion, 2012. (*A comprehensive and readable survey of Religion in the United States today*)

Julia Duin, Quitting Church: Why The Faithful Are Fleeing And What To Do About It, 2008.

Robert Putnam, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, 2000.

Dean Hoge, Benton Johnson, Donald Luidens, Vanishing Boundaries: The Religion of Mainline Protestant Baby Boomers, 1994. (*The definitive 1990's report on the decline of the mainline church*).

Barna Report on Mainline decline (2009) <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/17-leadership/323-report-examines-the-state-of-mainline-protestant-churches>