

SERMON NOTES

National Presbyterian Church
David Renwick, October 7, 2012
World Communion Sunday

SPIRITUALITY: YES? CHURCH: NO?

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

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
 - . . . *“in the past decade there has been a 22% drop in the percentage of adults attending mainline congregations who have children under the age of 18 living in their home.*
 - *Young adults (25 or younger) are 6% of the national population, but represent only 2% of all adults attending mainline churches.*
 - *At the other end of the age continuum, the statistics show that about one-quarter (27%) of American adults are 60 or older, but more than one-third of mainline attenders (35%) are 60-plus.”* (Barna Research)
- 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... and 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 “Twelve” Disciples (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) The Impossibility of Being 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 Putman, 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 1990s 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>