

Regularly, we are asked where we stand as a church, in regard to our Provincial Health Leaders Orders. More specifically, how do we align with the minority who are choosing civil disobedience rather than abide with the orders. Our response has been, and always will be, rooted in the Bible. We believe it provides the pathway and architecture of our faith, as we follow the way of Jesus. And, in particular, how that teaching informs and influences our posture today.

The Church will always Exist

Jesus said, "I'm going to build it (the church)" and He has never stopped. In this generation and the next, we're simply showing up and participating with Him. When we follow Jesus, we imitate His posture. Philippians 2:1-11 states loud and clear that we look far more Christ-like when we serve others rather than ourselves. Not demanding our way but giving our lives away. If we are His body, His hands and feet, this posture should describe us as well. Our greatest witness to those outside the church building walls is leveraging our resources for someone else. The best thing for us isn't always the best thing for everyone else.

Further references: Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:35; Galatians 5:13-14; Mark 10:44-45

The Church as a Conscience

It is time for the (global) Church to regain its position as a conscience for the nation. In recent years, the Church has often looked like a political tool fueled by fear or the loss of something, rather than holding fast to the centrality of the gospel. Specifically, that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and that we all need a Saviour. And that Saviour is Jesus, God's Son, who came to this earth as a servant, died for our sins, and conquered death by rising 3 days later. The Church is to provide a conscience and commentary on culture that is lived out in the character of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5).

Further References: Romans 3:23; I Corinthians 15:3-4; Ephesians 2:4-5; Philippians 2:4-6

Where does God "Live?"

In the Old Testament, we find the people of Israel, after escaping Egypt, were called to build a temple; the place for God's presence to inhabit. Fast-forward hundreds of years to the New Testament and the life of Jesus. Jesus' last words to His disciples were "Go... and surely I am with you always." (Matthew 28:19-20) Today, we have access to God through the Holy spirit by acknowledging the sacrifice of Jesus. The apostle Paul reiterates the point in I Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?", which means if your spirituality is building-based, you're living in the Old Testament. Foundational to Christian theology is that God precisely does not dwell in particular buildings, rather, we take God with us into every space and place we go.

Further references: Acts 16:13-15; Ephesians 2:22; I Peter 2:4-5; John 14:16-17

The Mission of Jesus

This central event and cornerstone of the Christian faith is the resurrection of Jesus; the fact that Jesus decisively conquered death. It was not about Jesus instituting meetings. Therefore, a most basic ethic of a Jesus follower is to actively oppose any forces of death – whether "the death" is of our spirit, or mental health, or of our body. Gathering together is an integral part of the story, but it falls under a greater mandate to oppose forces which bring death, harm, decay or chaos. COVID in particular is such a force.

Further references: John 3:17; Luke 4:18-19; Colossians 2:15; John 11:25-26

Human Essence

In Western thought, it is commonly understood there is a division between our spiritual reality and our physical reality (Plato). It is not a new problem. Ancient Gnostic Christians were a large and influential branch of the early Church who believed that the physical world was a lower, less perfect creation than the high, pure spiritual world. This does not align with the Bible. Thinking Biblically, the spiritual and the physical are far more integrated than we often believe. Jesus Himself is the most profound representation of this framework, "the Word became Flesh." Humanity had a deep spiritual problem that God met in a deep physical fashion (Hypostatic Union). Some argue that churches should continue to meet, because spiritual needs eclipse physical needs. No. The physical is spiritual, and the spiritual is physical. We are whole beings.

Further references: Luke 10:25-27; Psalm 63-3-6; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 2:10

The Rights of a Christ Follower

From the Sermon on the Mount to the foot of the cross, the entire story of Jesus (God's Son) is about putting aside His privilege and status in order to serve all people (including His most prolific enemies) in self-sacrificial love. Jesus implores His disciples to "deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me." To find an example in the Bible of someone vehemently insisting on their own rights as a characteristic to pursue is non-existent. To bring it home, Christ followers especially in the Western world, have been given immense power and privilege. To truly remain unstained from this world, we must close our mouths, open our hearts and lay our lives down, just like Jesus. Isn't that our calling?

Further references: Matthew 16:24-27; I Peter 2:13-17; Psalm 82:3-4; Micah 6:6-8; Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1

Leading with Love

Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love God, and that the second greatest was to love your neighbour as yourself. Similarly, He summed up His ethical teaching as: do to others what you would have them do to you. Let's think of it in our Canadian context regarding Freedom of Religion. As we are provided the opportunity to worship God as we please, so we extend the courtesy to those who choose to worship differently. Now, let's put it in the context of a pandemic: would we want other groups to commit to flattening the curve, or demand to be an exception, even if it increases the spread of the virus? The Jesus way considers others first.

Further references: I John 3:16-24; John 10:11-18; Mark 12:30-31