
RML Mark: the church weekend away

The story of the church

"I'd like to teach the world to sing, in perfect harmony..."
1980's

Coke advert from

"making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth...²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

Ephesians 1:9-10 and 22-23

What is the church?

The Gathering – *Ekklesia*

Acts 19:40-41 – what a riot!

What EXACTLY is the church?

Genesis 1-3 – The gathering in the garden

- Genesis 1:26-28 – God's united people living under God's blessed rule

- Genesis 3:10-24 – God's people divided from God and each other

⇒ Sin separates

Genesis 11 – The godless gathering at Babel

- One language, one location – self-promotion, God-demotion.
- Confused language, spreading out – God’s glory preserved.

⇒⇒⇒ Hearts divided

Genesis 12 – God’s promise to Abraham

- 12:1-3 – A great gathering to bless all the nations

Exodus 19 – The gathering at the mountain

- A gathered people
- A gathered redeemed people
- A gathered redeemed people living under God’s blessed rule

...but a church? Really? Yes really. Check out **Acts 7:38** and **1 Peter 2:9-10** (or Hebrews 12:18-29)

⇒⇒⇒ Eden restored? Yes and no.

1 Kings 8-10 – the gathering in Jerusalem

- A gathered people
- A gathered redeemed people
- A gathered redeemed people living under God's blessed rule

⇒ Eden restored? Exile to Babylon instead

How does it make you feel about the church knowing that it is part of such a grand plan?

What difference does it make to know your church is in line with God's people from the whole Bible?!

Ephesians 2:11-19 – The Cross: Eden undone

- In Christ reconciled to each other
- In Christ reconciled to God

Acts 2-4 – Pentecost: Babel undone

- Acts 2:11 – hearing the wonders of God in your own tongue
- Acts 4:32-37 – One heart and soul

Revelation 7:9-12 – The eternal gathering of God

- A gathered people from every nation – unity and diversity
- A gathered redeemed people from every nation
- A gathered redeemed people from every nation living under God’s blessed rule

A part of something bigger – the local church as an expression of the universal eternal church

How does this story of the church challenge our normal view of what the church is?

How should it shape our thinking about what it means to be part of the church?

How does this expand our view of the place of the church in our world?

The foundations of the church

The power of words...

The people of God gather around the Word of God

Let's see that again...

Eden: God rules by speaking

Gen 2:16-17

Sinai: God gives the Law

Deut 4:10

Jerusalem: Kings who rule by God's word

Deut 17:18-19

Post-Exile: A re-gathering around the Law

Nehemiah 8:1-3 (NB: it could say "church" where it says "assembly")

What about the New Testament?

Look at these different metaphors for the church. What place does the Word of God have?

The Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:25-27)

The Vine (John 15:1-11)

The Temple (Ephesians 2:19-22)

The Body (1 Cor 12:27-28)

The Flock of sheep (John 10:1-5)

The Family (1 Peter 1:22-2:2)

"The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." Article 19 of the 39 articles of the Church of England

"Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments (baptism and Lord's Supper) administered according to God's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."

John

Calvin – Institutes – IV.1.9

- Not Catholic (*Roman* Catholic that is!)
- Not Cultish

So what about the Lord's supper and Baptism then?

- Visible words

What does it look like in practice for the people of God to gather around the Word of God? Ephesians 4:11-16

Jesus gave gifts (v7-11)

To equip the saints for the work of ministry (v.12 and v.15)

To maturity/unity/stability/love (v13-14 and 16)

The unity of the church

Unity: everybody wants a piece of the pie!

Unity around Jesus and his word:

Acts 4:32-37; Ephesians 2:19-22;4:1-16; Romans 15:1-7

The cornerstone: The Apostolic proclamation of the resurrected Jesus Christ

Unity in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit:

John 14:25-24

- The Christian keeps the commandments/words of Christ (v.16;21;23)
- The Holy Spirit comes and dwells in our hearts (v.17)
- The Son comes and dwells in our hearts (v.20)
- The Father comes and dwells in our hearts (v.23)

...so the Triune God comes and dwells in our hearts!

Unity in the church:

John 17:20-23

- One as God is one
- Diverse as God is diverse

- Loving as God is loving

Unity under attack – Reality bites!

The mixed state of the church

Matt 13:24-30

The mixed state of the heart

Romans 6-7; Galatians 5:16-25

The necessity of separation

Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Tim 3:1-9; Jude; 1 John 2:18-19; 2 John 7-11; Revelation 2:20

The necessity of discipline

Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5

Unity in eternity

John 17:24

The love life of the church



'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' (Ephesians 4:15-16)

One body with a variety of gifts - 1 Corinthians 12/Romans 12:3-8

- Given by God to the body of Christ through the Spirit
- Given for the common good
- Given with intended and necessary diversity
 - Bin your inferiority complex (vv14-20)
 - Bin your superiority complex (vv21-26)
 - Embrace your responsibility

Do you ever think of church as being like the cruise liner? How has this helped you see it more like the racing yacht?

What gifts do you have that you should be using to serve the body? (or what gifts do you think your neighbour has?) How might you use them for the common good?

(John 15:12,17; Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 16:14; Galatians 5:13-14; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 4:9-10; Hebrews 10:24, 13:1; James 2:8; 1 Peter 1:22, 2:17, 3:8, 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 4:11; 2 John 1:5)

- Responding to what God has done (Ephesians 2:14-15)
- Rolling with what God is doing (Ephesians 2:22; c.f. 4:30)
- Ready for what God will do (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)
- Following the example of the head of the body (Ephesians 5:2)

✓	✗
Genuine (v9)	<i>Superficial</i>
Brotherly affection (v10)	<i>Indifferent</i>
Outdoing one another (v10)	Slothful (v11)
Care for needs of others (13)	<i>Serve your own needs</i>
Rejoice with those who rejoice (v15)	<i>Envy when others rejoice</i>
Weep with those who weep (v15)	<i>Lack compassion when others weep</i>
Associate with the lowly (v16)	Be haughty (v16)

→ We must be involved in each other's lives

→ We should be ready for it to be hard work

One body with a real zeal for godliness

- Commands are almost always given to churches, not individuals (e.g. Ephesians 4-6)

... because God intends that we work at godliness together (Hebrews 10:24-25; see also 3:13; Proverbs 27:5, 6, 17; Colossians 3:16)

- An individual's sin affects the body (Mark 9:42-50; see also 1 Corinthians 5:6-7; Galatians 6:1)

→ We must help others with this and allow others to help us

In what ways have you experienced this kind of love? Can you think of any ways at the moment where you could be doing more?

Are your Christian friendships ones where you spur each other on to godliness? How could you do this more?

The mission of the church

“I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice.”

John 10:16

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb “Rev 7:9

Did Jesus leave the job half done?

The body of Christ – a light to the nations

Acts 13:47 (Matt 28:16-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8; 16:7)

Existing to proclaim

“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 marvellous light” 1 Pet 2:9

In partnership to proclaim

Romans 15:30-33; Philippians 1:27; Acts 13:1-3

Coming in

1 Cor 14:23-25; John 17:21

Going out

Acts 13:1-3; 1 Thess 1:7-8

What if I’m not an “evangelist”?

- The Evangelist: Eph 4:11 (Acts 21:8; 2 Timothy 4:15)
- Everybody else: 1 Peter 3:15 (Luke 9:60)

Pause and pray:

- let’s pray for ourselves as a church, that we would be a light to the nations in London
- Let’s pray for a friend each

The commission of Christ – Matthew 28:18-20

ALL Authority

Disciples of ALL nations

Obedience to ALL Jesus has commanded

Jesus is with us ALWAYS

The Pattern of Christ

Godly (Titus 2:1-10; 1 Peter 2:11-12 and 13-25)

Suffering (Mark 8:34-35; John 15:18-25; Acts; Col 1:24; 2 Tim 1:8; 1 Peter 1:6-9; James 1:2-4)

The completion of the church of Christ:

Ephesians 1:20-22; Revelation 7:9

We face a task unfinished...