

I Will Build My Church

by Doc Greenway

Doc Greenway's sermon emphasizes the foundational role of Christ in building His church and the diverse ministries that support its mission.

Duration: 39:48

Scripture: Isaiah 54:3, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:28, Matthew 16:17-18, John 14:26, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 4:11-12

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker recalls a prophetic message received during a time of prayer and fasting. The message stated that the group of believers would be scattered and sent to different parts of the world, but would eventually be joined together again in a distant land. The speaker then highlights the fulfillment of Jesus' promises, such as His resurrection after three days and the sending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The sermon emphasizes the importance of believing in God's promises, particularly His promise to build His church, which is described as a building, a body, and a bride. The speaker encourages the listeners to have a vision for a strong and active church, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

When Jesus asked the question which is recorded in Matthew chapter 16 and said to his disciples, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And the answers that he received were very revealing. Some say that thou art Jeremiah or the other prophets. Some say that you are Elijah.

They don't seem to know exactly who you are. But they know that you are someone out of the ordinary. That is very evident.

And then he looked at them and said, And whom do you say that I am? And there was silence for a moment and then of course it had to be Simon, who later was called Simon Peter, who barged in and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said, Blessed art thou, Simon bar Jonah. Well done, Simon, son of John.

Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee. It isn't religious conception that you've got, but my Father which is in heaven has revealed it to you. You have a divine revelation.

And this revelation is given of God my Father to you. And you know me to be the Son of the living God. And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, Petros, a boulder out of the quarry, and on this rock, on this

Petra, on the living quarry I will build my church.

And the gates of hell or the wisdom of Hades shall not prevail against it. And right away it seems to me that Christ sets the pattern before us. My church, my ecclesia, the called out company of God's people.

And I think before we begin to even look at the ministries of the Ascended Lord to his church, we ought to ask ourselves, Well, what is the church and what is it here for? It's a very important question, a very practical one. The church is a challenge to the world because its members challenge the motivating forces that seem to control the thinking and the actions of the world in which we live. They are diametrically opposed to all that the world holds dear.

A challenge to the world, to the flesh and to the devil. But it also is a channel for God, a channel of self-expression where God can reveal himself through his people, where the purpose of God is revealed and the character of God is reflected and God's plan is made known, his word is given. The church is not only a challenge to the world, but it is a channel for God.

But then that same church is a charge to the Holy Spirit because from the day of Pentecost until Christ returns again, we are living in the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. And every single thing within the compass of redemption is in the hands of the Spirit of God to be made effective in the lives of God's people. We do not have one single blessing that we receive as Christians.

It does not come to us because of the personal ministry of the Spirit of God. Into the hands of the Holy Spirit, Christ has committed all the affairs of this church and the Spirit of God is the sole administrator of Christ here on earth. The Holy Spirit is not our comforter.

He is not our advocate. He is Christ's advocate. Our advocate is with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

But the Holy Spirit is Christ's advocate with men. So the church is a charge to the Holy Spirit. And so when Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, it really meant something.

It meant, for instance, that behind the church is the will, the I will of Christ. I will, he said, that within the church is the work of Christ. My church, my very own church, it belongs to me.

And for the church is the wisdom of Christ. The gates of hell or the wisdom of Hades shall not prevail against it. My wisdom shall prevail.

Can we trust those words of the Lord Jesus? Can we take them to heart and say, well, praise God, I know, instinctively know that they are true. I know by a divine revelation given personally to me that Christ will fulfill what he has promised that he will do. Well, after all, when you think of some of the I will promises of Jesus and see how he has fulfilled them, it gives you a measure of confidence, doesn't it? Even though when you look upon the church you see such a variety of experiences and such a variety of people and such a variety of idiosyncrasies and funniosities and all the rest of it, and you say, well, how can there be a church when you have got this conglomeration of people, different nationalities, different backgrounds, different concepts, different desires and ambitions and all the rest of it? Well, think for a moment, did he not say that those who are weary and heavy laden, even if they come to him, he said, I will give you rest? Has he done it? Has he done it for you? Have you come to Christ and found that when you were weary and heavy laden and laboring, that as you came to him, he gave you rest? Well, praise God, I can say it

this morning.

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad. I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad. Yes, his I will of satisfaction has been proved.

Destroy this temple in three days, I will raise it up again, he said. Did he do it? Yes, thank God, on the third morning, he arose from the tomb. Death could not hold its prey.

Jesus, my Savior, he tore the bars away. Jesus, my Lord. And up from the grave he arose with a mighty triumph over his foes.

Yes, he said, I will do it. And did he not say, I will send a comforter? Did he fulfill his promise? Praise God, yes, he did. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together with one accord in one place, and there came a sound from heaven.

Thank God it was from the right direction. There came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the place where they were assembled together. There was a general visitation.

And there appeared unto them clove and tongues like as the fire, and sat upon each of them. There was a personal visitation. There was also this sense of personal communion and fellowship with God which came when the Spirit of God arrived.

Jesus said, promised that he would send the comforter. And thank God on the day of Pentecost he fulfilled his word. Well, if he has fulfilled those I will promises, I can really believe in my heart.

He will yet fulfill what he promised when he said, I will build my church, and the gates of hell, the wisdom of Hades, shall not prevail against it. My church, the work of Christ, is within the church. There are three special figures of speech which I use to describe what his church is like.

The church is a building. The church is a body. The church is a brine.

And in each of those figures of speech you have a different relationship. In the church as a building the relationship is that of the submissiveness of the material to the head, to the builder rather. The submissiveness of the material to the builder.

In the church as a body it is the responsiveness of the members to the head. In the church as the bride of Christ it is the attractiveness of the bride to the bridegroom. But remember he said it, my church.

It is not yours, it is not mine. Hands off everybody. It belongs to him.

And if we are prepared to allow the Spirit of God who represents him to take control of our lives within the church and with everything to do concerning the church then and then only will we see that church which he desires to be known and to be made known in the midst of the people in this world. It is his church, his particular work. And also his wisdom is for the church.

And I think that part of that wisdom lies in the ministry which he has bestowed upon the church to bring to being what he himself has desired. And so in the fourth chapter of Ephesians you have a list of the gifts of the ascended Christ given to his church. As you know Paul has been talking lately about I don't mean the apostle Paul, I mean our Paul.

Has been talking a lot about the gifts. And he asked me especially if I would speak on this particular aspect of the gifts to the church. Well, I see by the time I've got an opportunity of touching just briefly upon these, but anyway if we can just have an outline it will be something to upon which to fasten our faith and our expectation for now and the days to come.

Verse 11, And he gave Here you have the derivation of the gifts. He gave them. These are the gifts of the ascended Lord.

Not given during his earthly ministry, but given after he ascended up on high as the context shows us and as Mark has read to us. You see, the Holy Spirit gives gifts to men in the church. But Christ gives men as gifts to the church.

I'll repeat that. The Holy Spirit gives gifts to men in the church. But the ascended Lord gives men as gifts to the church.

And you should never confuse those two. I know that they are complementary. And I know that those who are given by Christ as ministers to his church require the equipment and the accompaniment of the gifts of the Spirit.

I understand this. But don't confuse them. They are not the same, one and the same thing.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to men in the church. But Christ gives men as gifts to his church. The derivation, he gave.

The ascended Lord. And then the designation of these gifts. What are they? And he gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers.

Think of it like this. The hand. There's the apostle, the thumb.

There's the index finger of prophecy, the prophet. There's the evangelist reaching out further than the rest out into the world. And there's the pastor and the teacher with their supporting roles in the church.

So you've got the ministry of governing through the apostle because you haven't got much grip without your thumb. The ministry of guiding through the prophet. The ministry of gathering in through the evangelist.

The ministry of guarding the flock of God through the pastor. And the ministry of grounding the saints of God in the Word of God, in the will of God, for the work of God through the teacher. Governing, guiding, gathering, guarding, grounding.

And you accept this five-fold concept of the ministry which Christ ordained for his church. And then you have the possibility of a church according to his pattern, according to his own heart's desire. All right? Apostles.

The ministry of governing. Apostles, apostolos, apo away from, stelo to send, those sent by the Lord. And their ministry, it seems to me, is two-fold.

It is the ministry of aggressive pioneering and the ministry of careful piloting. Because if you will notice in the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul, for instance, went on his journeys, missionary journeys, aggressively pioneering the work of Christ, he returns later on to establish the churches and to set elders in every place

and so to build up the saints of God. Aggressive pioneering, careful piloting.

That's the ministry of the apostles. Of course, there's a lot more to it than that, but I'm just touching on it as I said. That's something of what is intended here.

Are there apostles today? I believe there are. They're not always discovered and identified, but I think that some of the missionary statesmen of the church are really apostles today. Not apostles as it may be in the New Testament sense of the word, but apostles in the sense that Christ intended for this day and age.

Oh yes, there are leaders of the church of God who have an apostolic ministry and would that we could recognize it and give these men an opportunity of doing the work to which God has called them, work which is truly their personal and unique vocation. Prophets. Here is the ministry that again is important to us as believers.

A ministry of guiding, foretelling and foretelling. Because I don't think you can cut out the idea of foretelling in the ministry of the prophets. Foretelling, predicting events beforehand.

You've got it in the Acts of the Apostles. You've got it in the case of Agabus. And in other instances too where there were predictions made through the prophets.

And I believe that this is part of the ministry of the prophet in the church. Now don't misunderstand me. It doesn't mean that everybody who is able to prophesy and who has the gift of prophecy by the Holy Spirit is necessarily a prophet in this particular and unique sense.

For this prophet is one of Christ's gifts to his church. And official recognition is given to him in his function of foretelling and of foretelling. Is there such a thing as men of God being recognized as prophets who have this ministry of foretelling? And does it function? Does it really work? Well, of course it does.

It may not be so in the Baptist church up to the present anyway. We'll be still hopeful. But certainly I believe that in the church that this ministry is to be effective.

I can remember years and years ago when I was just a young fellow, there were three of us as ministers in a certain district in the north of England. We decided we'd have a time together in fellowship, in prayer, in fasting, and waiting on the Lord because we were so involved in the work that we were doing for the Lord. And I remember very well that one of these men was a prophet of God.

Time and time again the word through him had been tested, tried and proved. And on this occasion as we were coming to the end of our time of prayer and fasting after a few days of it, we were kneeling in prayer one morning and God began to speak through this man. And he said, I have gathered you together not only on this occasion but into this locality where you are serving me.

I have gathered you together and you have become involved and responsible for the work to which I have called you. But the day is not far distant when I will scatter you and I will send you to the uttermost parts of the earth and I will join you together again in a land beyond the seas. Well, that's a bit far-fetched.

I mean, after all, how can they get on here without me? After all, I was doing a very important work. And I suppose that some of the others felt the same way too. Even the man through whom the prophecy came was sitting there with his mouth open in the end, wondering what was happening.

In a very short space of time, I received a call to New Zealand. And so I left my homeland and came here to this country. And a little while after that, I was in Melbourne in a convention.

And as I looked around on the platform, here standing at my side was this prophet of God whose word had come in Darlington in the north of England. And alongside him was another man whose name was Thompson. He belonged in New Zealand.

And here we were, the three of us. And when we suddenly realized, well, here it is, I will scatter you but I will join you together again in a land beyond the seas. Well, talk about rejoicing when we realize that God had fulfilled his word, his promise.

Oh yes, there is foretelling as well as foretelling, telling forth the word of God in the line of Scripture and in accordance with Scripture. But don't forget that this element of prediction is also part of the prophetic ministry. Apostles, prophets, and some evangelists.

The evangelist is the one who gathers in to the church of God. You see, you must have something beside the church as a body because if you are going to get the idea of growth by addition, you need more than the body. You don't grow by adding an arm or a leg occasionally.

But if there is a principle of growth in the church, you need the vision of the body because if the Lord adds daily to the church, such shall be saved, thus growth by addition. And you must have the concept of a building before you have that idea in view, surely. And it is the work of the evangelist to gather in.

And it is a very special and particular work. I know that Paul said to Timothy, do the work of an evangelist. I know that every pastor and teacher and even every apostle and prophet should be doing the work of an evangelist.

I understand this. But this is something special. This is a ministry which is unique.

It is something different from the rest. It is a special thing that comes because of the Holy Spirit's dealing with some particular man of God and because of Christ's appointing that man to a particular sphere of ministry. And it is a very wonderful thing when the evangelist has an opportunity of doing the work to which God has called him without any hindrances, without any encumbrances, without any burdens, but to be free to evangelize in the way that God intended.

You know, in the Old Testament, we read about looking to the rock for whence ye were hewn. It seems to me that the work of the evangelist is to go into the quarries of sin and to blast the rocks free by the dynamite of the gospel. And when this happens, well, there is quite a demonstration, isn't there? But thank God, in Revival particularly, this is what you see.

For Revival brings into focus again the great and sterling value of the evangelist and the kind of work he is doing. Blasting rocks, if you like, doing work which is effective. I was telling the students the other morning at Faith Bible College that in the days of Revival in Wales, at the beginning of the century, I've heard men speak about this, there was a minister in London, a very important man, a very proficient and outstanding preacher.

And he came down from London because he had heard about the Revival. He was a bit skeptical. And at last he found a church in one of the little towns in Wales where the Revival was going on.

Of course, he didn't think of it in that way. But when he got to the church, he could hear the people praising God and giving him glory and rejoicing in the Lord and having a wonderful time. And the deacon was standing outside and he was having a wonderful time too.

And this minister came up to where the deacon was standing and said to him, what's going on here? Oh, he said the Revival is going on here. Revival, he said. What do you mean? God is working here.

God working, he said. What do you mean, man? Look at the sun in the sky. That sun came up this morning, didn't say a word to anyone.

Silently. Without any fuss at all or any noise whatsoever. That's how God works.

Look at the little daisy growing there. See? It's growing so silently, so quietly. It doesn't say a word to anyone.

It isn't perturbed. It isn't all caught up with emotionalism. Look at the little daisy there growing so beautifully.

That's how God works. Yes, yes, yes, said the deacon. But man, God isn't growing daisies in his church.

He is blasting rocks, he said. And so he is. And the work of the evangelists is like that.

To use the dynamite, the dunamis, the dynamite, the power of the gospel to break men free from the environment in which they've been living. To blast the rocks, if you like. And then some pastors, the work of the pastor or the shepherd, as you know, is to tend the flock of God, to feed the flock of God, to lead the flock of God, generally to care for his people.

And I think you ought to rejoice every day that you've got such a wonderful pastor in this church. I love him. I don't mind whether you do or not, but I love him.

I think he's a marvelous man of God. And I think, too, that God has given you a tremendous blessing in giving you such a man with a pastor's heart who loves you and cares for you. Oh, it's a great work, is this work of pastoring the flock.

There are many headaches and many heartaches, but there are many, many times when you realize that there are blessings, too, because if you're faithful, God will never let you down. Pastors and teachers, this work of teaching is grounding the saints, as I said, in the word of God, in the will of God, for the work of God. Now, some people say, well, pastors and teachers mean the same thing.

Well, all right. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. 1 Corinthians 12, 28 says, God hath set in the church first, apostles, secondly, prophets, thirdly, teachers.

They belong to a prophetic circle. And so, as far as I'm concerned, there's something distinctive about the work and the ministry and the function of the teacher in the body of Christ. Now, you'll say, what is the design of this ministry? Well, it is constructive.

Verse 12 teaches us this. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, for the furnishing of the saints, for the equipping of the saints. What for? For the work of the ministry, not the official ministry, but ministry in general, ministry of helping the saints of God, for the edifying, the building up of the body of Christ.

So this effect of a five-fold ministry, a comprehensive ministry, one of the effects is it will be constructive in this way, the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying or the building up of the body of Christ. Constructive. And then, its effect is progressive.

Verse 13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, The unity of the Spirit is already mean.

All we've got to do is to keep that, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But till we all come in the unity of the faith, is something to which we are striving, is something that we have before us as a goal. And this unity of the faith reminds us that this is really our faith in Christ, there are degrees of clarity and understanding and comprehension in faith.

And so to the end, that there may be a building up here, a progression here, then till we all come in the unity of the faith, these ministries are given to the church. And of the knowledge of the Son of God. The conjunction and, Chi, Chi is in this case to be translated even.

Even of the knowledge of the Son of God. And the word knowledge is epinosai. It's knowledge gained by experience.

Experiential knowledge. Not intellectual knowledge. But experiential knowledge.

And underlying this word is the thought that the person who is knowing is involved with a person known. Not simply to know that such a person exists, but the person knowing is involved personally with a person known. And this is a wonderful thing to know, isn't it? That we become part and parcel of the Christ whom we seek to know and to love and to serve.

And to a perfect man and to a mature man, and the measure of this is the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Fullness is pleroma. And it means the sum total of the attributes that are in Christ.

This is the measure. Those communicable attributes which Christ possesses. He longs to impart to you and to me.

And when he does so, when this takes place, then we understand how progressive the church can become in the sense of character building, for instance, and understanding and initiation, how progressive this ministry can become in the church. Then it is also protected, verse 14, that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slate of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive but speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ. That we henceforth be no more children.

It protects us from childishness. Childishness. Childishness is not a time of life, it's a state of mind.

And there are many people who may be forty or fifty years of age that are still very childish. Childlikeness is a marvellous thing, but childishness, the idea here is that this ministry appointed by the risen head is to protect the believers from this kind of childishness and protect it also from waywardness tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. That sort of thing.

And how much of this is going on today? Tossed to and fro, carried about by every wind of doctrine. When you have a ministry which is established according to a divine pattern, you have something which is

substantial that holds you and you're not taken up with these things that would lead you astray from the doctrine of Christ because there's a ministry that protects. The only way you can ever overcome error is by truth itself.

By the slate of men. Here's a term from the gambling scene. The slate of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

They've got loaded dice which they use against you, if you like. And they can deceive you because they are so cunningly crafty and they are designing all the time some way of tripping you up. There were two brothers that I knew in the old country.

They were brothers in the flesh and brothers in the ministry. Of course, they were Welshmen. And they were on one occasion passing on their journey through Aden, I think it was, and they stopped off there.

And some of the natives came on board selling things, the hucksters as they usually come to dispose of their wares. And there was one man, he had a cage and he had a little canary in the cage. And as he lifted the cage up and down, oh, that little canary whistled beautifully.

And one of these brothers, Jones Williams his name was, said to his brother Dan, I think Mary would like that. Mary was his wife. I think Mary would like that.

He said, I think I'll buy it. Now you be careful, said his brother Dan. You be careful.

He was older than Jones Williams. You be careful. You might be deceived, you know, in spending money like that.

Oh, he said, I think I'll get it. It whistled so beautifully. So he bought it and he took it down to his cabin.

And it was towards night time. And he began to manipulate the cage up and down like he had seen the man doing. Come on, come on.

Whistle a little bit for me now. Come on. Well, there was nothing to him.

He thought, oh, he's tired probably. It'll be better in the morning. So in the morning he got on the job again up and down with the cage and no response at all.

I know what's wrong, he said. We're too confined here. I'll take him up on deck.

So he went up on deck and started the same procedure, up and down, up and down. Not a murmur, not a twitter, not a chirp, nothing at all. Dead silence.

And he was so disappointed. And then there was one of these sudden rainstorms that you have in that part of the world. It came down soaking them and soaking the canary.

And when he looked the next time he saw that all the color had washed off and the canary was only a sparrow in the end. And there are people like this, you know, the truths that they promulgate. My word, when they manipulate them, they whistle so sweetly.

But you let the storms come on. And before very long you find that your canaries are only sparrows. No, no.

The devil is so cunning and he's got people like this that would deceive you by their craftiness. But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ. And then finally, this ministry is designed to be creative.

The source is there. The head is Christ. The whole body fitly joined together.

That's the structure. And compacted by that which every joint supplies. That's the strength.

According to the effectual working in the measure of every part with part proportionate to each part make an increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. This is the progress that is made. This is the ultimate design that Christ has of building up of his church which is his body unto the edifying of itself in love.

When you read in verse 15 speaking the truth in love it is really truthing it in love. The whole being, the whole personality the whole of the Christian growing in love like this until the ultimate is reached. The body itself is built up in love.

The love of God that loves the unlovely that finds a place for the unwanted that cherishes the polluted. This love which is to characterize the members of the church of which Christ is the living head. Well, I've only touched upon these things as you can see.

Just touched briefly. But I believe that it is God's intention that his son should be magnified and glorified through the appointment of those ministries which can bring about the effect which he desires. A church which is strong and effectual and active and vital and demonstrative and dynamic in a world which does not know that the church exists.

God save us from stately cathedrals and stale Christianity and give us instead a vision and a view of what can be accomplished if we are prepared to open ourselves up to the Spirit of God and allow him to dictate to us when we are so busy trying to dictate to him as to how he shall work and what he shall do and how he will proceed. He is the absolute dictator and if we are small enough to believe that he is great enough to meet our need well then we won't have any need at all to be concerned. I am sure in my heart that God wants to do some wonderful thing in the midst of you here as his people.

I am Presbyterian as you know. Sorry. But here I am amongst you this morning as much one with you as anyone.

Why? Because I know that my heart has been given to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because I know that for many years now he has led me and guided me and I have seen the vision of his capabilities and I know deep in my own heart what he longs to do in the midst of his people. How he longs that those men whom he has appointed in his will may find that their gift is making room for them.

And that at long last they are not being bogged down by church organization but are free to minister in the sphere and realm and dynamic of the Spirit of God. I know it is important that we should have business meetings but I know in my day, in my time as a full-time minister I used to get sick to death of business meetings. A place where you make minutes and waste hours.

I came to the conclusion in the end that boards were made to be sat on. But here it is. We have to understand that while it is necessary to have a measure of organization in the church, organization is not everything.

The thing we have to know is that the church is not an organization but a living organism. Instinct with the life of the risen, ascended Lord Jesus Christ. Instinct with the dynamic of the Holy Spirit himself.

A place where God can manifest his presence. A place where God can find through the church a vehicle of self-expression until the world will know that Christ is alive and in the midst of his people and when they come into the midst of that congregation they will depart saying God was there in the midst of them of the truth. Well, may God grant it shall be.

God bless you all.

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