

Church Is

Loving and diverse

Galations 3:23-29 & Romans 13:8-10

Gal 3 Children of God

²³ Before the coming of this faith,^[1] we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. ²⁴ So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Rom 13 Love Fulfills the Law

⁸ Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. ⁹ The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet,"^[a] and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."^[b] ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

What is the church?...

Did Read the latest edition of eternity Magazine?

- There is a large piece on the the Uniting church turning 40
- On the state of the church now and the future of the church
- Its worth having a read, we get a brief mention in it, in a positive light
- But as I am reading this story in Eternity, I also hear that the manly daily
 - o Has a story about the Northern beaches losing their religion
 - o 34% state they have no religion
- We are at a point in our history when many people are re thinking
- What is church... what should church be...
- Have we lost our way some where along the line
- Because now for many Australians they would have never stepped foot in a church

In the eternity Mag, there was a story about a young mum in a church play group

- that said she wanted to Go to church
- but didn't know where to buy a ticket....
- Brett who coaches a u16 soccer team had hot crossed buns at easter
- One of the boys asked whats with the cross on the bun
- Brett asked 'you know why we have easter'?they had no idea

For me those stories blow my mind, how would you not know church is free and about easter?

- It like when you hear stories about
- a guy who thought knifepoint was a rough suburb,
- because people are always being held there
- or a man who thought Reindeer's were just a christmas related mythical animal, unicorn
- But its not strange or weird
- Its perfectly reasonable for people to know nothing about church or christianity

So for the next 2 weeks we are going to look at what the church is... what it should be

- What kind of Church that The bible calls us to be. What "church is..."
- And how we can better be how God calls us to be.

Galation 3 give us a beautiful image of What God is doing in the church

- V26
- Church is Family....

Family at the best of times can be a complicated thing

- We love em and we hate em, cant live with them cant live without them
- In the Us an entrepreneurial woman started a rent a wife company
- She would help decorate you house, buy u some clothes, balance your check book
- Some one propsed a follow us business she could do called rent a family
- They would come over, eat all your food, leave all the lights on, use all the hot water and leave dirty clothes on the floor
 - o Might be a hard sell
- But research shows that stable family relationships
- lead to healthier more successful people,
- connection to family builds resilience and support networks

This is God's vision for his church. That is not a club, like the rsl that u join up to

- Or a union where u have to pay your annual fee
- It's a family, where you will fight and annoy and make up and forgive
- A family that will celebrate the good times and morne in the bad times
- That you can call on for help when your in need. And ask for guidance when your lost.

I never had an older sibilng

- But through my church family I have had 100's
- Older people that I have asked advice of, that have mentored me
- and shown me about life, people who have encouraged me and given me direction

V27-29

Part of the miracle of the church is its diversity

- That even the most distinctly separated groups are now united in Christ
- The Jews and gentiles
 - o The Jews weren't to marry gentiles, eat with or even touch gentiles
 - o It was like the ultimate form of segregation
 - o But now the 2 have become one...
 - o This is like the Israelites and the Palestinians just saying, ok, let's be one people
 - o Let's create a new country called "New Canaan" and be one people
- No Slave or Free,
 - o This was what separated you from being a citizen or being property
 - o If you were a slave you had no right to your life
 - o You could be sold to the Colosseum games to be mauled by lions
 - o Or to try to fight a gladiator to the death
 - o You could be forced to work the fields or build the pyramids
 - o This distinction separated the humans from the property
 - o That is now gone
- No Male or Female
 - o Gender is a distinction that God has intentionally placed on us
 - o He created us Male and female, to be different
 - o You can choose to be Jewish or not,
 - o we as a society choose some to be slaves, some free
 - o But your Gender is what it is
 - o Without wanting to enter the area of Gender politics,
 - o It is a distinction given to us by God ... separating us as different
 - o Biologically, genetically, physically
 - o But now in Christ even that distinction is gone
 - o Even that melts away and becomes irrelevant,
 - no Jew/gentile, slave/free, man/woman

The miracle of the church is that in great diversity there is amazing unity

- By that measure, God wants his church to be diverse, he wants it to have people from all walks of life
- This is what makes it great, this is one of his miracles for us.

So church needs to be a place that welcomes diversity

- Something we probably haven't done very well over the years
- A long time ago I hear a stat that said about 40% of Australia has a degree or higher
- While the regular churchgoers it's about 70%
- That stat doesn't mean too much, except it hints at a lack of diversity
- That we are a place more welcoming to a certain type of person

- Educated middle / upper middle class

And often when you look at an average church you see a whole lot of similar faces

- But in age or ethnicity or walk of life
- Often we don't do very well at making the other feel welcome

AND yet..... this is one of the great miracles of the church,

- this is what makes the church, holy and set apart from the world
- that you have a place where old young, rich poor, educated un-educated
- Gather as a family, united in a way rarely seen in this world.

I believe this is our biblical imperative.. to seek to be a diverse people

In every group there need to be rules... The rule of Law in the church is this

- Rom 13:10 "love is the fulfillment of the law."
- There is a Law we are required to fulfil.
- Its not like in the OT, about working on the Sabbath or bringing sacrifices to the temple
- But this is the Law, to "Love your Neighbour"... not a suggestion, not a nice thought
- Here is the Law to Love one another... as Christ has loved us.

Paul puts it like this in V8

- *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another*
- Paul has just spoken about respecting government and paying taxes
- Saying that no debt should be left unpaid
- But Paul says there is one Debt we will never pay off...
 - o the debt to Love our neighbour.
- When you Get a Mortgage you see the loan amount in your bank statement
- -400,000 or what ever it might be.
- I remember looking at that amount thinking we will never pay this off
- But month by month that number slowly drops , the debt gets closer to being paid

But our debt to Love never moves, the number never drops

- We will never get to a point where we can say, debt paid,
 - o I never have to love my neighbour again, im all done
- No this is the debt we owe to a God who sacrificed himself for us
- That we love our neighbour as ourselves...

In a time where people know less and less about what church is....

- We need to try more and more to be the church God calls us to be
- To be a church that is diverse, where its people experience family, ruled by love

And if your thinking, yeah why isn't this church more like that, then Great

- You are just the right person to do something about it.
- It not the job of the leadership to be welcoming, loving and encouraging

- But all of our jobs, every single person here.
- Christ is the head, we are the parts, each one as important as the next.