**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

***God In His Creation – Makes The Believer’s Church Alive***

**Ephesians 2:1-22**

**November 18, In the Year of Our Lord 2018**

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**(Unless otherwise noted, CSB17 text is quoted)**

 Stephen, the table server (deacon) stands, full of the Holy Spirit, in Jerusalem in Acts 6 and speaks about Jesus’ Message. He is falsely accused, like when Jesus was concerning destroying the Temple and wanting to overturn the teachings of Moses. The crowd is whipped-up by Jewish-legalist in anger, and they stone Stephen to death. Before Stephen dies, he gives a historical account in brief of the Jews and their relationship with God. This is most stinging but true. It is very challenging for people to have their true past brought before them. However, there can be great healing after sincere reflection.

This is the second sermon in our series about the C*hurch/Ekklesia*. Last Sunday, I announced the plan to preach through the twenty-one centuries since the Cross. Logically, there would be twenty-one sermons. However, surveying the course ahead, we will take additional Sundays to cover the centuries. Some may say, “Where is the Bible in this?” The person who asked that question unfortunately has not been enlightened to the fact that the Bible is at the center of history in Western man. The Bible, the indestructible Word of God, is the focal, the pivot point of civilization.

In the past, we have preached from the books of the Bible. Some may call this *expository* preaching. Our near future holds that we can refer to our course as *thematic* or *topical* preaching. Our theme or topic is the Church of God, of Jesus Christ over twenty-one centuries.

 All can rest-a-sure that every tenement of faith will come to light. Since all things start with God and He is The Word and the Word became flesh and lived with and as one of us, we can have the assurance that His Will comes through these lessons. Again, in Western history, the Bible is the foundation of civilization. Yes, other writings have influenced, but they are not the anchor. There is a reason that Moses and the tablets depicting the Ten Commandments are positioned at the East façade (pinnacle) of the U.S. Supreme Court building with the words, “Justice the Guardian of Liberty” etched beneath.

 The vast majority of the American people does not know from where they came and haven’t any clue what their future should be. People know the color of their skin and the texture of their hair. In a capitalist society, many people want their future to include driving a Bentley down the coast from their Newport house. Not a heritage many have, but, then again, this is in large degree the model-life to be attained. The “me first” and “if it feels good, do it” from the post-war 60’s Cultural Revolution of sex-drugs-and rock & roll; roll on.

There are at least two parts to heritage: physical and spiritual. We all have both. It is the spiritual that is the most important. We are all human beings at conception. There is nothing we can do about that fact. Within being human, we have the choice to surrender to God and be His servant. This is part of being a spiritual being; we have choices. This is where specific human cultures and politics enter. The culture and politics of a society are determined by what they believe, in what they have faith. Therefore, this is the battle ground. The battle ground for the faith of a people. This starts with the individual.

It is encouraging to see many advertisements for DNA studies. Many have sent in their swab of DNA and are shocked to see from where they came. Some Americans are surprised to find that great-great-great granddad did sneak under the buffalo hide of an Indian T-Pee. Surprise! Family reunions are always more interesting after a DNA test. So, all this proves that there is a yearning to know the past. It is the question of the past we seek. The mass agenda of the political left do not want children to know their Christian heritage. This is where Christians enter.

There has been an ongoing cultural and religious war to erase the historical past. We know that the religion of atheistic secular humanism invaded the school house long ago, before my life time, and has whittled away foundational pillars that make a civilized society to where many public schools are lock-down facilities and some have become campuses of mass shootings. Children are not taught that they are created in the image of the eternal God in order to have a relationship with Him. Parents should be the front line of education. However, there are obvious failings in the parenting department. (Another sermon series for another time.) There is a vicious cycle of malaise. Failure in parenting, schools, churches, government. Children see a world where all the principal authorities are ill and at odds with each other. The evening news highlights this truth nightly. The bottom line - when you remove a child’s purpose for life then there is chaos, anger, a maddening that lashes and destroys others and then themselves. This is why America has the highest prison population in the world. The answer that the American capitalistic society has is to dope as many as possible with prescription drugs or illegal drugs and sell entertainment to addiction levels.

The Answer – From an Evangelical response, salvation. From a response of acknowledging where most people are actually at spiritually – They need to know God’s relational history with man through His Word. Therefore, God chose to work through bodies of Believers to redeem this fallen world.

**CHURCH - The Believers Church – There isn’t any other kind.**

We remember that the English word *church* is a translation from the Greek word Ekklesia. We noted that there is a connotation between the two words that are distinctive.

The word *church*, for many, brings to mind a building with officials with robes and ceremonies with specific days to be observed. The focus is on the officials and how they conduct the ceremony and delivered the sacraments being the Lord’s Supper, baptisms and preaching. The power of the Cross is viewed as coming through them and then passed on to the individual. They became viewed as the conduit of God. This created more stationary movement. A person had to go to a place to encounter God and/or His Cross.

By the time the English word *church* was applied to the Greek word Ekklesia, there had been over twelve hundred years since the Cross. Below is an example of translating the Greek *Ekklesia* into English. Tyndale used the word *congregation* which more identified people. Wycliff (1382) translated from (used church) the Latin Vulgate 4th century (used ecclesia). However, with the popularity of the KJV since 1611 the word *church* supplanted the word *congregation*.

You can put this idea to the test. Say the word church and what thought do you have? Do you think of a building? Do you think of a group of people who have surrendered to the Lord?

**Tyndale TNT** **15341 Corinthians 12:28** And God hath also ordeyned in the congregacion fyrst the Apostels secondarely prophetes thyrdly teachers then the that do miracles: after that the gyftes of healynge helpers governers diversite of tonges. (1 Cor. 12:28 TNT)

**King James Version KJV 1611****1 Corinthians 12:28** And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. (1 Cor. 12:28 KJV)

**Wycliffe 1382** 12:28 But God set some men in the church, first apostles, the second time prophets [And soothly God put some in the church, first apostles, the second prophets], the third teachers, afterward works of power, afterward graces of healings, helpings, governings, kinds of languages, interpretations of words.

**Latin Vulgate VUL 4th century****1 Corinthians 12:28** et quosdam quidem posuit Deus in ecclesia primum apostolos secundo prophetas tertio doctores deinde virtutes exin gratias curationum opitulationes gubernationes genera linguarum (1 Cor. 12:28 VUL)

This contrasted the 1st century Believers gathering when the focal point was on the individual who cumulatively made the body of Believers. The Ekklesia. The focus of the power of the Cross worked through the individual not through the officials. The Cross had no intermediary. Therefore, the power of the Cross came together at a gathering, and then traveled with each person as they went their separate ways. The Cross traveled with the many Believers and the Gospel spread.

 **The Cross is the crossroads of all theology.** Study God’s Word long enough and a person will see that all roads point to and proceed from the Cross.

The Cross represents the life of Jesus from Spirit conception to opening ministry to the teachings to the test in the wilderness to challenging the religious leaders to His arrest, trial, crucifixion, the empty tomb and the resurrection appearances and ascensions.

The Cross launched the followers of Jesus to a life of witnessing. With all this, the resurrected Jesus Christ breathed His Spirit (John 20:19ff) into the disciples, and they then went forward in the face of great opposition on the Temple steps in Jerusalem and preached the Gospel Message to the Masses in Jesus’ name.

This is the formation of the Church in the 1st century. The 1st century was considered in Roman years being 753 years after the founding of the city of Rome.

**The year:** In the early days, Romans denoted years by the names of the two Consuls who ruled each year and that system continued long after other ways of denoting the year were used. Later they began to count the years from the foundation of the City of Rome. There is no single agreed date for that but a Roman writer Marcus Terentius Varro fixed the date as what we would call 753BC and that is the standard I shall use here. Romans used the letters AUC after these dates (in Latin *ab urbe condita* - from the foundation of the city). <http://www.web40571.clarahost.co.uk/roman/calhis.htm>

**The Function of the Church –**

**The Instrument God works through to redeem mankind.**

**Mankind is the Battle Ground for spirituality.**

**Spirituality can be viewed as the presence of God in people.**

**People make the Church. This is why it is the Believer’s Church. – The Body of Christ.**

Last week, we read Ephesians 2 for an eyewitness of what, and how, the Gospel of God went forward after the Cross. We also read 1 Corinthians 15 for a summation of the Gospel. We observed the Ephesians passage to describe what happens to the individual due to the power of the Cross. At the same time, the Ephesians text identifies opposing forces that are present in our lives here on earth that do not want people to surrender to God’s Cross. Satan is referred to as the prince of the power of the air.

**The prince of the power of the air is present**. Ephesians 2:2

**Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,**

 **2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.**

This verse answers the question about Satan being alive and well on planet earth. The presence of evil in the world is a reality. We also read in Job:

Job 1:7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."

 This presentation of Satan may be confusing to people looking into God, into being a Christian. However, regardless of the spiritual pursuit, be it whatever religion the acknowledgement, the awareness that there is good and evil, that there are opposing forces in the world is a good thing. It is a good thing that people see good and bad forces operating on earth. My view is that this makes them make a choice. There isn’t any sitting on the sidelines. Jesus teaches, "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.” (Luke 11:23 NAU) There is a reality in the world that is inescapable. People can ignore it, but, in the end, there isn’t any escaping that people have a choice to make. Refusing to make a choice is a choice not for God.

Paul states later in Ephesians 6:12

 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

**John12:31** Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. [John writes that the ruler of this world will be cast-out.]

 Rather a gloomy reality for those who want to stay on their perceived sideline. In case a person has not noticed, everyone dies here; there isn’t any escaping death. We have noted before baring Jesus, Enoch, Elijah, all ~~ells~~ have died a physical death. So, what makes sense of this death-fallen world?

 I see there a responsibility to each and every Believer to be able to explain life and death and why these two exist.

So, ok this is a fallen world. Death reigns.

**The Explanation: What we tell others**

God allows death to function here**,** because God gave us “free will choice.” We are not made or programed to choose God. We are called to make a choice for God. The Holy Spirit brings conviction to the hearts of people (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit works in people’s hearts and minds. This is a person’s conscious calling when they are planning to do and/or doing something contrary to God’s will in their life. With this conviction**,** there is an opportunity to surrender, thus allowing God to indwell us and give us the power to repent and make a choice for the Lord to be the ruler of our lives.

Therefore, the choice opposing God exist**s** for us to choose as Adam and Eve did. Some do not want to face this reality. If the creation and all life are left to its own**,** without a choice for God**,** the creation implodes on itself. The value that changes the chaos into life is God (Gen. 1:1-3). God made the decision to enter into the chaos, into the formless and void creation He created. What purpose did God have in mind for this kind of creation?

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

 2 The earth was formless and void,

 and darkness was over the surface of the deep,

and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

 3 Then God said,

 "Let there be light";

and there was light.

 4 God saw that the light was good;

and God separated the light from the darkness.

It is evident in the Genesis account that God wants us to be aware of the creation that He created, but, unless He orders it, there is chaos; there is no form, and it is void. Many are hung-up on making Genesis a scientific statement. However, we dare not miss the spiritual message that is clearly spoken. The Hebrew words *thohwu* (without form) and *bohewu* (void) have the meaning of an existence that is chaotic, without rule, and as in Jeremiah 4:23 (a land under judgment). God brought His order (His Spirit) that sustains life as He had planned. God has brought His Spirit to bring salvation to a dark world that He created. Once His Light was in place, He said it was “good.” God did not call the darkness “good.” Without this intervention, there cannot be sustained life. God purposely created this world to be dependent on Him or death will rule. God calls for us to recognize this fact of His creation.

Some may say that God messed-up when He created the world. Why did He not create a flawless world? God created a world where bad things happen to good people. If a good person jumps from an airplane without a parachute at ten thousand feet, good person or not, they are going to die when they come to a sudden stop in ten thousand feet.

**The Answer is in the Bible.** The short answer is that love is a choice. Therefore, God created a world with a choice for love. For there to be a choice for love, there has to be alternatives to choose. Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 demonstrated that there is a choice for the opposite of God’s love. They chose themselves over God. We can say they “loved their choices” over God. The classic case of human pride. God made this possible, because there was also, at the same time, the choice to pursue all of His provision in the Garden. We all have the same choice.

**Who is the Creator God?** 1 John 4 describes God as “love.” God is love. God is love, so He created a world with love. This is who He is. This is the genetic code from God. The world’s DNA has “love” imbedded in its core. But there is one element of “love” that is eternal. Love is not forced and cannot be bought from God by mankind. Love is freely given by God. Love is a spiritual condition of the heart. Therefore, God seeks a spiritual reply from us. God desires us to love him back. Love is a gift and a choice. You do not buy a gift from someone, or it would not be a gift. This is grace. God offers to everyone who has ever lived His grace and love. God has made Himself known through the creation from the beginning (Romans 1:18ff).

There is an interesting view comparing the animal kingdom to people. In the animal world**,** the system is sustained by animals feeding off other animals. This sustains their bodies**,** and they live for a short time. There is a defining difference between animals and man.

God breathed His life into people who are to manage the creation but are not to feed off other people. [Phil. prof. there are Animals – Animals animal and human animals] We**,** too**,** derive sustenance from the animal world but not each other. Of course**,** we see in history thatthis has happened**,** but it is not instructed by God. In the Bible**,** the practice of cannibalism is a result of disobedience to God. When it takes place, it is a self**-**inflicted curse upon people for not living in obedience to God’s covenant (Deuteronomy 28: 53 and following; Jeremiah 19:9). This brings to bear a clearer depiction to Paul’s statement that they *“were”* dead in their trespasses and sins. Life is dead without God! Does that statement make sense? How can you have life**,** if there is death ruling it? You cannot. This is a spiritual statement leading to a physical state. The backdrop for the Jew is cannibalism due to rebellion against God. The Romans witness the Jews boiling their babies for food (Josephus “Jewish War” (VI,193). This rebellion brought death which is a total breakdown in God’s order.

Obviously**,** this teaching is a direct reflection upon culture in America. Abortion *“on demand”* is a practice in America. In America, babies are not consumed to sustain the parent’s life as in the Bible. However, due to modern medicine, baby-parts (organs and tissue) are sold for profit. http://www.centerformedicalprogress.org/2017/12/planned-parenthood-baby-parts-business-partners-admit-guilt-in-7-8-million-settlement/

 The babies are consumed to depraved economic desires. They are viewed as their life being inconvenient, untimely, or their life will be unproductive and not worth living. However, Planned Parenthood found a profit center. Therefore, they are killed in the womb or during live-birth (Partial Birth Abortion) before they become a burden to society. Babies are given-up before or when they are naturally born. With abortion *“on demand”* ongoing, no one can deny that the prince of the power of the air is present and operating in the hearts and minds of some people and government.

**The Opposite side of Spirituality - Christ Makes Us Alive**

**Existence of life not death. We live to live, not die.**

**Ephesians 2:4-7** 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

 **Alive in life?** *You* ***were*** *dead in your trespasses and sins*! We do not talk this way today. However, the point is well-made in the context of Paul reaching-out to the Ephesians and to us. The statement is directed at people who have a resurrected life with Jesus Christ. This is why we can say we have been crucified with Christ and raised to a newness of life in Him. This is why Paul declares in Galatians 2:20 that he has been crucified in Christ . . .

**Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

. . . and it is no longer he that lives, but Christ lives in Him. Basically**,** he has been replaced by the risen Lord. This is the power enabling him to say he lives by faith in the Son of God and not in the flesh. This is supernatural life that powers us to overcome and accomplish what we, on our own, cannot do. He declares he is loved by Jesus who surrendered Himself for him. We Believers tell people that God, as Jesus, surrendered to a human physical death to pay the price for our sins, but then defeated human death by rising from the tomb. If you changed one word in the sentence to state “*You* **are** *dead in our trespasse****s*** *and sins*”**,** it would be directed at someone who does not know the Lord as their Savior. The tense is present and not past. Believers are all alive in Christ, not dead. The Believer’s life of trespass and sin is behind them. Believers may have a bad day but do not practice a life with the purpose of committing trespasses and sins. Our old self doesn’t exist any longer . We remember the old self bound in darkness, fearing each day with uncertainty in our behavior. Now, we are confident with our emotions not losing the battle for our minds and hearts. We are constantly putting on additional maturing layers of Christ.

 Paul gives the answer of the ages in Ephesians 2:4-7. Loving someone who is in rebellion against you is hard to do. Loving someone who is attacking you and persecuting you is hard to do. However, this is what God does with His mercy. His great love spoke from the Cross when He said to forgive them (Luke 23:34). God takes us the whole way. He saves us and takes us with Him for eternity. We have a bold witness to an undeserving world, but we are held captive by the love of the Lord who saved us and called us for His purpose and not because of our works but for God’s gift of faith working in us. The Lord has granted us a life with Him due to His mercy and grace (1 Timothy 1:8, 9).

This is the Message from the 1st century church. By the end of the first century, the Bible, the cannon, was complete.

 12 "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

 13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

 14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

 15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

 16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

 17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

 18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;

 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

 20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

 (Revelation 22:12-21 NAU)

AMEN

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