



Sermon Title: Doing Mission Through the Local Church

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. Describe your 'journey' with the local church. Did you attend a church as a child? What was your experience?
How long have you been at Centre Street Church?
2. Pastor Henry reported that 80% of Canadians say they believe in God; 70% believe Jesus is the way of forgiveness from sin; less than 21% of Canadians ages 15 + attend worship services on a regular basis. Did these percentages surprise you? Why? Why not?
3. When someone asks you how much CSC gives to global missions, what percentage would you say? What is the aim for 20 21?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. According to Pastor Henry, why does the Church matter? (two reasons)
When did church become important to you? Why?
2. Read Matthew 16:13-18. Clarify what Jesus was saying to Peter. Upon what is He building His Church? Why is it vital to understand that *Jesus* is 'building His Church'?
3. Read from a study Bible the topics for the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 – 7). Also, read Matthew 25: 34-36 and Acts 2:46, 47.
Review some of the historical highlights where the church has been involved in fulfilling Jesus' purpose.
4. In contrast, how has Christ been misrepresented historically and currently?
Pastor Henry said that even in these injustices, God raised up the right people to bring justice, truth and renewal to the Church. Christ continues to bring correction by raising up Godly leaders who call these people to account.
Discuss.
5. How does Matthew 16:26 emphasize the call of the local church to respond to the spiritual needs of the world?
6. How do the following verses underline the power of the universal Church working together? 1 Corinthians 12:27; Hebrews 10:24 and James 2:14, 17

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. How can we as individuals in the Church challenge one another, and ourselves in the practical actions of faith, such as investing our time and resources, studying the Scripture and forgiving others?
2. What challenge can you take from Psalm 39:4 as you enter a new week?
How can our Group pray for you?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

Resource:

The Rise of Christianity, Rodney Stark (1997)

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 16:13-18, 26

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ¹⁴They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. ²⁶What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"

Matthew 25:34-36

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.' ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Acts 2:46, 47

⁴⁶Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

1 Corinthians 12:27

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Hebrews 10:24

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,

James 2:14, 17

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?

This week's writers:

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The mission of Centre Street Church is to introduce people to Jesus and help them become fully devoted followers of Jesus. God calls us to do this through His church and through like-minded mission agencies – locally, nationally and internationally. We are committed to accomplishing this mission primarily through the local church.

According to national surveys, 80% of Canadians say they believe in God. Over 70% believe Jesus is the way of forgiveness from sin. Yet less than 21% of Canadians aged 15 and over attend regular worship services. Why do so many people have a positive opinion of Jesus, but a totally different opinion of the church He established? This week's sermon focuses on why the Church matters, as well as the global strategy of Centre Street Church.

Why does the Church matter?

First, the Church matters primarily because it matters to Jesus Christ. The Church was Jesus' idea. He established it and said he would build it. In Matthew 16, Jesus told Peter that it was upon Peter's profession of faith that Jesus would build His Church. Jesus loves His Church and one day He will return to bring it to Himself. To love Jesus but to reject the very church He came to establish is to reject Christ. If we are true followers of Jesus, we are part of Christ's universal Church and we are called to be fully engaged in a local church fellowship like CSC. There is no room for solo or private Christianity in Christ's kingdom.

Second, the Church matters because it aspires to reflect Jesus' life, character and values. The Church seeks to live out the virtues and values described in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). God uses us individually and together as his Church to first change us, and then to begin to change our relationships, to bring transformation to our community, our city and our world. We see this transformation in Acts 2 in the early church when believers sold their possessions and goods and gave to anyone who had need.

There are periods in Church history when hateful, misguided leaders badly misrepresented Christ and the Scriptures (the Crusades, the Inquisition and the Salem Witch Hunts). But even in these injustices, God raised up the right people to bring truth and renewal to the Church. He raised up Friedrich von Spree and Rev. Increase Mather to bring an end to the witch hunts in Europe and Salem, Massachusetts. The slave trade in the new world was initiated by members of the Church, along with Muslims in North Africa, but Christ raised up William Wilberforce to abolish slavery in Europe and Abraham Lincoln to end the practice in the U.S.

Whenever Christianity was lived the way Christ intended, peace, goodwill and justice reigned. During the two great plagues that swept through the Roman Empire in 165 and 251 AD, people would literally throw the sick in the gutter to die. It was the Christians who risked their lives to take them into their homes and nurse them. In the ancient world, people often abandoned their unwanted babies in the forest or threw them into nearby rivers. It was the Christians who rescued these babies and raised them.

Since the coming of Christ, the Church has insisted that every human being is loved by the Creator; is made in the image of God; has the value and purpose, and is destined for eternal friendship with God. In obedience to Christ's Great Commission, the Church shared the good news verbally and through their loving deeds. Christianity grew and churches were established throughout the known world. The churches established schools. Almost every modern college and university – including Harvard, Princeton and Yale, was established by the Church. Jesus' compassion for the sick motivated His followers to pray for the sick and provide them with health care. Medical centres and hospitals, which hadn't existed before the age of the Church, came into existence. Most food banks, world relief agencies and inner-city agencies that minister to the poor, have their origin and support from the Church.

In the midst of all the conflict that has raged down through time, there is a community where there is love, unity and peace. It is found in Christ-centered churches. The Church has challenged people to realize they have a God-given purpose. They are called to step out and use their God-given talents and gifts to become who God made them to be, and to make a difference in His Name. This great faith has motivated excellence in every field of endeavor, including some of the world's most profound art, music and science. That is why the Church matters. It aspires to reflect the character values, purpose, peace, justice and life of Jesus Christ. We are to pray for and encourage one another toward love and good deeds – to make the invisible Christ visible for all to see.

Many agencies are committed to fighting injustice and meeting the needs of people in poverty, but they don't offer any answers for the restlessness and emptiness within the human heart. Only God in Christ can give that.

When CSC provides financial support, sends school supplies, teaches people the art of sewing, etc, it is done through the people of our partner churches who live in their community. It is important the recipients see Christian people in their community who are generous, kind and have a relationship with the Lord. When children we sponsor through a local church are set free from the sex-slave industry; when families are blessed by the provision of food, clean water, clothing and shelter; we want them to remember there are a group of Christians who meet together for worship down their street who didn't just talk about God's love, but showed them God's love. That's why CSC is planting, supporting and doing relief and development through over 100 partner churches. We believe strong mission-focused churches should not only introduce people to Jesus, but also help build strong communities. This is the vision God has given us for impacting our local community, our country and our world.

Prayerfully consider the role God would have you play in helping us fulfill our mission as a church. Consider serving right here in our church and in our city. Ask God where He wants to use you and then step out and follow His lead. The Church matters and Jesus invites you to be part of it – for His glory, our growth and for the sake of the world that needs the Jesus we know and love.