



ANNUAL FOCUS
September 2021-June 2022

Annual Focus: “My Church” 2021-2022

We often use the phrase, *my church*, to refer to the place we go on Sunday mornings. It's common to discuss what I like about *my church*, what I don't like about *my church*, how *my church* is changing, and what *my church* is doing or saying about a particular issue. Although this kind of language and commentary is pervasive enough to become background noise in most church foyers or fellowship halls, there is only one person who can truly say, “*my church*.”

In Matthew 16:18b Jesus says, “...I will build *my church*...” The church, forever and always, belongs to Jesus. It is his possession, not ours. In addition, Jesus is the one who makes and fashions the church according to his will, not ours. So what is the church according to Jesus?

Ecclesia, from which often gets translated by the English word *church*, means “to call out and gather.” In the first century, this referred to a group of citizens called out from their homes to gather and conduct vital community business before returning to their town. Being called out from the world to gather, and being called out from the gathering back into the world, is at the heart of the dynamic tension of what Jesus meant when he first said, “*my church*.”

In the New Testament the language used to describe the called out community of Jesus is that of family relationships. People are called to relate to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ (Rom. 16:14). Believers are adopted as children of God (Eph. 3:20). The church is described as the household of God (1 Tim. 3:15).

In addition to the rich relationships enjoyed by believers in the New Testament, the people belonging to Jesus' called out community also work together to announce the Gospel, the good news, about Jesus. They bring the Gospel's implications to bear on all aspects of life to all the nations of earth.

The church is Jesus' family on Jesus' mission. This brings together both the original meaning of the word, and how its usage is expanded in the New Testament. Our English word, church, comes to us from the Scottish word, “kirk.” It means, that which belongs to the Lord. Again, the church belongs to Jesus. It is his family on his mission.

Is this what we have in mind when we talk about *my church*? From September of 2021 to June of 2022, the Chapel family will seek to align its understanding of church with Jesus' intention for church. We will walk through eight sermon series that will call us to greater levels of understanding and obedience regarding the beauty, the worship, the location, the relationships, the “chosen instrument”, and the life of the church. These series will challenge us to engage questions like: What is the

church? Why is there a church? What does the church do? Where is the church located? What are relationships in the church supposed to be like? What kind of people does God use in the church? What characterizes the life of the church?

The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25b, "...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..." Jesus bought the church at the price of his own blood. We are stewards of something of inestimable value. In the coming months, may the Chapel family deepen our understanding of and our commitment to all that Jesus meant when he said, "my church."

Considering our Focus:

- "He who does not have the church for his mother cannot have God for his Father."—Cyprian of Carthage
- "It is time to inform our people that conversion to Christ involves both our *justification* and our *familification*."—Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church was a Family*
- "Whoever is too good or too 'spiritual' for the church (with all its weaknesses and faults) is too good or too spiritual for Christ, God who sent him, and the Holy Spirit who continues his work."—Shirley Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*
- "That they may all be one..."—Jesus Christ, John 17:21

Teaching through our Focus:

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- 9/12: "My Church" — Matthew 16:13-20
 - The church belongs to Jesus
 - The only one who can say, "my church," is Jesus
 - What does the Greek word, "*Ecclesia*," mean?
 - The dual nature of the church as called out from the world to gather and called from the gathering back into the world

(MINI) SERIES 1: THE BEAUTY OF "MY CHURCH"

- 9/19: "The household of God" — Ephesians 2:11-22
 - The church as Jesus' family
 - The importance that it is only when we are "built together" that we become a "dwelling place for God"
- 9/26: "Glory in the church" — Ephesians 3:7-21
 - The church on Jesus' mission
 - The church as God's chosen vehicle for his glory to be revealed in the world

SERIES 2: THE MISSION OF "MY CHURCH"

- 10/3: "All that Jesus began to do and teach" — Acts 1:1-11
 - The Church is charged to continue Jesus's work in the world
 - Jesus gives the church power to fulfill the mission
 - The mission moves outward from Jerusalem (right where you are) to the very end of the earth
- 10/10: "Filled with the Holy Spirit" — Acts 2:1-21
 - The Holy Spirit empowers the church to fulfill God's mission in the world
 - The believers receive the Spirit together, while gathered, and not in isolation from one another
- 10/17: "They devoted themselves"— Acts 2:42-47
 - The practices and commitments of the early church
 - God's role in the process of church growth
- 10/24: "To this we are witnesses" — Acts 3:1-22
 - Practical demonstrations of the Spirit's power leading to proclamation of the Gospel
- 10/31: "They lifted their voices together to God" — Acts 4:23-31
 - Prayer, thanksgiving, and supplication in the church.
- 11/7: "There was not a needy person among them" — Acts 4:32-5:11
 - Sacrificial giving in the church
- 11/14: "A complaint...arose" — Acts 6:1-7
 - Issues that come from church growth
 - How to remain focused on the core mission as challenges arise
 - Dealing with complaints in the church
- 11/21: "A great persecution" — Acts 7:53-8:8
 - Persecution is what pushes the disciples to move from being witnesses in Jerusalem to being witnesses in Samaria
 - Note: the mysterious ways of God as Saul is introduced into the story of the early church

SERIES 3: THE SEASON OF ADVENT – THE WORSHIP OF “MY CHURCH”

- 11/28: “Enter the temple” – Luke 1:5-25
 - The Gospel of Luke begins and ends in the temple, the center of Israel’s worship
 - God’s people must be prepared to receive God
 - Elizabeth takes an intentional time of reflection to consider what God has done in her life
- 12/5: “*Magnificat*” – Luke 1:39-56
 - The response to God’s movement in Mary’s life is worship
 - What do the words of the *Magnificat* teach us about worship?
- 12/12: “*Benedictus*” – Luke 1:58-80
 - The response to God’s movement in Zechariah’s life is worship
 - What do the words of the *Benedictus* teach us about worship?
- 12/19: “*Gloria*” – Luke 2:8-20
 - Even the heavenly host’s response to God’s movement on earth is worship
 - What do the words of the *Gloria* teach us about worship?
- 12/24: (Christmas Eve) “*Nunc Dimittis*” – Luke 2:21-35
 - Seeing salvation
 - Shining the light of salvation to all people
- 12/26: Guest Speaker

SERIES 4: THE LOCATION OF “MY CHURCH”

- 1/2: “Babylon came to Jerusalem” – Daniel 1:1-21
 - The church exists in exile from its true home
 - The exiles of the Old Testament can help us understand how to live as exiles today
 - 1 Peter 1:1 confirms the location of the church in exile
 - Note: Chapel wide group study, *Surprise the World: Five Habits of Highly Missional People*
 - Connection to the study: chapters 1, 2, and 3—Living Questionable Lives, A New Set of Habits, and Blessing

- 1/9: “When you hear the sound...worship the golden image” – Daniel 3:1-18
 - Listening to God in the midst of exile
 - Connection to the study: chapter 5—Listen
- 1/16: “Taken into the king’s palace” – Esther 2:5-11
 - God is mysteriously at work, even in exile
 - The courage required to be obedient in exile
 - Esther’s shrewd use of banquets in her dealings with the king
 - Connection to the study: chapter 4—Eat
- 1/23: “The God of Israel by the Chebar canal” – Ezekiel 10:9-20, 11:14-22
 - God pursues His people into exile
 - Jesus is God’s ultimate rescuer for His people in exile
 - Connection to the study: chapter 6—Learn Christ
- 1/30: “I have sent you” – Jeremiah 29:1-14
 - God is the one who has sent us into exile
 - Living as a “sent one” wherever we find ourselves
 - Seeking the welfare of the city
 - Connection to the study: chapter 7—Sent

SERIES 5: THE RELATIONSHIPS OF “MY CHURCH”

- 2/6: Husbands and Wives: “The two shall become one flesh” – Ephesians 5:15-33
 - What the Bible teaches about a healthy relationship between husbands and wives
 - Christian marriage is a signpost pointing to the relationship Jesus has with the church
- 2/13: Parents and Children: “Discipline and instruction” – Ephesians 6:1-4
 - What the Bible teaches about a healthy relationship between parents and children
 - Christian parenting as a signpost pointing to the relationship between Jesus and the church
 - For children: what does it mean to “obey” and “honor” your parents
 - For parents: what does it mean to “not provoke” your children? How do we parent with “discipline and instruction?”
- 2/20: Brothers and Sisters: “The children of God” – 1 John 4:7-21
 - The relationship between believers should be as strong as, and be characterized by as much commitment as, and as much love as, that of brothers and sisters

- Christian brothers and sisters as a signpost to the relationship between Jesus and the church
- By faith we are born again and become children of God. If individually we are a child of God, it logically follows that every other child of God is your brother or sister
- 2/27: Believers and Authorities: “Remind them” — Titus 3:1-11
 - What the Bible teaches regarding a healthy relationship between believers and authority, both in the church and in the world
 - The relationship between believers and authority as a signpost to the relationship between believers and Jesus

SERIES 6: THE SEASON OF LENT — THE “CHOSEN INSTRUMENT” OF “MY CHURCH”

- 3/6: “He is a chosen instrument” — Acts 9:1-25
 - Picking up the story of the early church where we left off in the fall
 - God’s sovereign choice in who he uses for his purposes in the world
 - The Apostle Paul as a model for how we might think about ourselves as “sent ones.”
 - God’s ordained plan for Saul to carry his name before Gentiles, Jews, kings, and the children of Israel
 - Note: God’s pattern for Saul’s ministry is how the series is outlined
- 3/13: Before Gentiles: “He reasoned”— Acts 17:16-34
 - How Paul presents the Gospel to Gentiles
 - There will always be both points of contact between the Gospel and culture and points of conflict between the Gospel and culture. Paul masterfully affirms the points of contact and challenges the Athenians on the points of conflict.
- 3/20: Before the Children of Israel: “Brothers and fathers” — Acts 21:37-22:22
 - How Paul presents the Gospel to the children of Israel
 - This passage is a good example of what it means to be a “witness,” as Jesus charges his disciples in Acts 1:8. Most of Paul’s defense and presentation of the Gospel is him sharing his personal testimony of how he came to know Jesus.

- 3/27: Before Kings: “Listen to me patiently” — Acts 25:23-26:8
 - How Paul presents the Gospel to a king
 - There are several ways Paul indicates his respect for the king’s role
 - Paul again uses the method of personal testimony to proclaim the Gospel
- 4/3: Suffering for Jesus’ name: “We were violently storm-tossed” — Acts 27:13-38
 - Suffering will always accompany the Christian life
 - God often uses our suffering to carry the Gospel further
 - The fulfillment of God’s words to Ananias in Acts 9:15-16

(MINI) SERIES 7: HOLY WEEK

- 4/10: (Palm Sunday) “A ransom for many” — Mark 10:32-45
 - Jesus teaching humility on his way to the ultimate humbling experience on the cross in Jerusalem
 - What Jesus teaches here, he puts into practice in the way he enters Jerusalem
 - The reason Jesus is heading to Jerusalem is to give his life as a ransom for sin
- 4/17: (Easter) “Astonishment had seized them” — Mark 15:42-16:8
 - We all ask some version of the question, “who will roll away the stone for us?”
 - The cliffhanger ending to the Gospel of Mark as our invitation to respond to Jesus’ resurrection

SERIES 8: THE LIFE OF “MY CHURCH”

- 4/24: Worship: “Not neglecting to meet together”— Hebrews 10:1-25
 - The worship gathering is central to the life of the believer
 - The difference between worship in the Old Testament and worship in the New Testament
- 5/1: Membership: “Submit to them” — Hebrews 13:13-19
 - The responsibilities of members in the church
 - The responsibility and role of church leadership
 - Submission to church leadership and to one another
 - Note: communion for the month of May will be celebrated on 5/8

- 5/8: Communion: “Wait for one another”
– 1 Corinthians 11:17-34
 - The appropriate way to celebrate the Lord’s Supper
 - Principles for honoring Jesus and each other around his table for communion
- 5/15: Baptism: “Baptized into Christ Jesus” – Romans 6:1-11
 - What baptism means and why we do it
 - Ensuring people know that we are baptized into both the death and resurrection of Jesus.
- 5/22: Spiritual Gifts: “Many parts...one body”
– 1 Corinthians 12:1-31
 - The Holy Spirit empowers the life of the church
 - Spiritual gifts are given solely on the basis of God’s sovereign choice
 - The church is called to seek unity in the midst of the presence and practice of different spiritual gifts
 - The character of God is the basis for the unity of the church
 - The church functions best when it functions like a body whose members embrace their role in the body and offer their gifts back to the body, while simultaneously honoring the exercise of different gifts by other members of the body.

“MY CHURCH”: CONCLUSION

- 5/29: “The household of faith” – Galatians 5:13-6:10
 - The church is the family of Jesus
 - If the church is a family, how does that impact our commitment to and participation in the church?
- 6/5: “Ambassadors for Christ” – 2 Corinthians 5:1-21
 - The church must both gather and be sent out like ambassadors for Jesus
 - The conclusion of the annual focus: “My Church = Jesus’ Family on Jesus’ Mission”



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