



Glyfada Christian Center



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Preacher Brian Van Deventer; Stavros Antoniadis

Series The Church

Service Sunday Service

Passages John 3:5; Mark 1:15; Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 50:5; Ephesians 5:30-32; Acts 2:41; Ephesians 4:11

The Kingdom of God and the Church – Part 2

I have to begin with an apology this morning. I don't know why I'm apologizing actually; I started losing my voice on my way to church. So, if I struggle through the morning, you'll just have to bear with me and help me. God is faithful and He is calling George at the moment, I think. Must have a word for him.

It's a good day to be in the house of the Lord today. And we're just going to begin to worship and allow His presence here, so that when others come in, they can just join us right into it Amen. I do want to give you greetings today

from pastor Gail. If the airlines co-operate, she'll be back at the end of this week. But she still has a lot to do where she's at, so please keep her in your prayers. She's not adjusted well to the time change, she's not resting well, so she really needs some prayer for that. So, she can adjust quick enough, so that when she comes back to Greece she can re-adjust. When you're in that 7-8 hours' time difference it's just long enough to be really problematic and not long enough to get you to a better place. We want to keep Cecilia in our prayers; she's ministering to churches in the US today. Anton, who is in South Africa doing his thing. Billy and Eva-Lena who are ministering in churches in Sweden. We want to remember Trudy on the island; I know she's with us already. We'll remind ourselves a little bit later but remember that we have an outreach getting ready to happen on the island of Kefalonia. Remember Leto who's in Cyprus today; Stavro who has to do life on his own, so if you want to cook for him just let him know. It looks like the summer is upon us already. Feels like things came a little early this year. I feel like things came a little early this week as well, but certainly this year. It's the middle of June and our family is dispersing. But wherever we go, we are the Church. We are the Glyfada Christian Center and I know we have many others travelling; I can't think of everybody at the moment. Leonardo and his family, I can look around the room and I think some of the Sri Lankans have gone back to Sri Lanka for a bit. Who else Evy? Oh yeah, lots of people out sailing, those that work on the boats all of them. And we want to not just remember them but keep them in prayer for safety. And we want to pray for one another. So, why don't we do this, this morning. If you don't mind, just gather up with one or two other people, and we're just going to pray blessings over each other, in this house today. The Lord's Spirit be with us, as He already is, and we'll just open our hearts to Him today. It's good to just rest in the wonder of God. Nice to see some faces we haven't seen in a while. Welcome everybody. I thought you guys were still gone. It's good to see you today. Hallelujah. Well, we need to greet one another. I won't make you get up and move, but look around the room, and smile at some people. You can get up, yes! It's allowed. We do want to remind you of some announcements. I'll save that one for the end. Don't forget, as always, we have prayer at 7 o'clock and Bible Study at

7:30. We do the prayer only on Zoom, the Bible Study does go to YouTube and Facebook pages. I can't tell you how it excites my heart when people come on Wednesday. During July and August, the schedule will change a little bit. We will continue to have prayer at 7 o'clock at night, but we will have no Bible Study. And we will probably concentrate a little more on worship and prayer during those months. And then we will return to our usual schedule in September.

This Saturday, we have men's breakfast at Stavro's house. So, guys we invite each of you to be there for good breakfast, and a good time of fellowship. We want to remind all the church that in July we do have our outreach to Kefalonia. I think I saw in a note from Anton that our spaces are just about full, but especially you young guys, if anybody wants to go to Kefalonia for a 'nice time' and a bit of spiritual activity, but it's going to be good stuff. It's not difficult to hang out in a nice city center on an island, and meet people, and we do want to say, if you're worried about, (and this is to the parents as well), a cost, talk to us and we will see what we and the Lord might be able to do together.

Then, on next Sunday, who knows what next Sunday is? Well, the spiritual people said "Pentecost." Eric said lunch, and both are true. Next Sunday is Pentecost Sunday, and we are just going to worship and welcome the Holy Spirit into things. But after church, remember, do not make other plans, we're having our Pentecost lunch as a family together. And just as on the day of Pentecost there were people gathered from many lands, we are people gathered from many lands, so, we have all being challenged to bring something that is native to our culture. Now, we do need to monitor this a little bit, because we don't want to have 15 kinds of native salads. So, we would love it if you could communicate either with Leto or Evy, who's standing at the back. We are planning to have a Brazilian, Sri Lankan, Greek, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, South African, Iranian, Polish, Ukrainian. We are going to have food from all over the world. I haven't decided what's coming from the US, I don't know if you've thought about it, Eric. It's hard to say we have a native food. I mean last year I did Hot Dogs, that's all. But do

everybody, please plan to stay and bring something and let's just have a great time together.

And we do want to remind the family, that not just on Wednesday night, we want to pray for you throughout the week. We invite you to send, it doesn't have to be long, just send your prayer requests to the church email address. It is, prayer@glyfadacc.org, or "prayer@gccenter.gr". So, if one of those is easier for you to remember than the other, it's private, we don't send those out, unless you communicate it to us to send it out more widely, it stays in our office and pastor Gail, myself and Leto pray through those. But we do also invite you if you're willing or would like for those prayer requests to go out to more people. Let us do that, because we want the body to be praying for each other.

Finally, we want to remind you of our commitment to pray for 15 minutes with somebody every week. I hope you have found somebody in the fellowship and hopefully not just your husband or wife or child. Hopefully, you're praying more than 15 minutes with them already. But we want to be sharing that ministry with one another. And on top of that, more prayer. We hope you're continuing to pray for your 5 people, every day. Even if it's just to lift their name before the Lord, those 5 people that you want to see changed by the power of Jesus Christ. We continue to believe for miracles. I've shared with you, that 2 of my people I've been praying for, for 30 plus years. But I'm determined that they're going to know Jesus. Hold on to that. Pray and let's believe in what God can do among us. Lord, we pray for salvations, in surprising numbers. Lord, from the people of our past, the people we meet today, the people we will meet tomorrow. Let us see many come to faith, Lord. In Jesus' name.

Lord, we have faith in your power to heal. Lord, we pray for those who are at home still, sick or recuperating. Lord, I am convinced that we do not need to live in the same circumstances at all times. Lord, we are praying to see the lame get up and walk. We are praying for those who are struggling with

sicknesses that keep them at home. Lord, we pray for those who are recuperating from surgeries and illnesses. Lord, we know Your power to heal. We believe for it in Jesus' name. And Lord, we know those who are suffering with circumstances, emotional, mental, material circumstances, Lord for those who are in difficulties, we pray that You raise them up. And Lord, for those of us that are well, that today, we'll answer and say, 'I'm doing good'. Lord, we pray to be taken to new levels, Lord, to rejoice in you. Lord, in all that You are and in all that You do may Your name be praised among us, and may we illustrate Your grace. In Jesus' name. Now finally, we have one more task, before we turn to the Word, this is not so much a Greek thing, but does anybody know what today is? Father's Day! Our Greek American is on top of that. Have your children been in touch with you already today? So, let's see today – fathers in the room, go ahead and raise your hands. We got a few here. And as we always say on Mother's Day, we'll count spiritual fathers as well, I hope I count there. I think we have something from our children today. So, again dads just raise your hands. Come on how cute is what we have just been given by the children. It's chocolate, I thought it was going to be a hard melon candy. Thanks to all the children, they may all go upstairs.

Brian van Deventer – Main message

We're getting ready to go to the Word. I hope that you have your Bibles with you. I came in this morning and George asked me, 'Do you have any Scriptures for the screen?' I said, 'No, we're going to go old school today. We're actually going to read from physical Bibles.' Or smart phones, I know. But I hope you have one of these. Before we go there, we sing the hymn, 'Well He's a name above all names. And how great is our God.' Now Lord, prepare our hearts, to receive your Word. To hear what You would speak to us individually and as group. Help us to be attentive to Your voice, Holy Spirit. We commit this time to you in Jesus' name. Amen. **John 3:5,6.** Remember the days in Church where the preacher would wait for us to find the Scripture? This is the story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus, "Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God

unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” Last week, we began this talk about the Kingdom and the Church. How the Church is part of the Kingdom, but it is not synonymous, they’re not the same. So, we gave a pretty basic definition, that the Kingdom of God is simply the reign of God, wherever He rules. We talked about how there is a ‘now and a not yet to that.’ Jesus told His disciples that, “The Kingdom is here. It’s at hand. The Kingdom has come upon you. The Kingdom is in you, it’s in your midst.” In other words, there are ways, places where the reign of God is existing now. But we know that, that reign, that rule is not in its fullness. So, Jesus taught us to pray, “Father, Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We know that as believers, the reign of God is in us. And through our good works, we can bring the Kingdom of God to places around us. And we enter that Kingdom in one simple way. Jesus gives the answer here, “You have to be born of the Spirit of God.” When you become a believer you enter that Kingdom Realm, and Christ begins His rule in your life. In [Mark 1:15](#), Jesus preached the Kingdom of God there, “The time has come,” he said. “The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” So, these verses show us that we enter the Kingdom of God by way of the new birth. You are a member of the Kingdom of God. You’re born of the Spirit. When you obey the message of the repentance, the Kingdom is at work in you. And that is not separate from the Church, because the Church is comprised of believers. We often talk about the fact that there is a universal Church, all believers everywhere in the world. And we differentiate that from the local church, like what we are doing here. I have a bit of interest in that definition of universal Church. And the reason for that is what I’m going to share with you today. It’s not that I don’t believe that all true believers are part of the Church. But that specific idea is never actually mentioned in Scripture. It actually speaks of the Kingdom in that manner. But there is something that differentiates the character of the Church, separate from that full wide definition. Last week I made this statement, then I saw some funny looks on some faces. That’s OK. I said that some people today in the world are trying to be Kingdom people, without being Church people. But that you can never fully participate

in the 'now' of the Kingdom, without being a participant of the Church. And then we have to remind ourselves, that the Church doesn't mean the building or the organization; it means the people. That's why I like the phrase, 'Worshipping communities.' But what are the characteristics of that that make it, 'participation in the Church?'

And so, this is where it gets a little bit interesting. I want to take you back to a couple of Scriptures in the Old Testament. You can put your finger in Jeremiah 50, and once you have that, turn back one book to Isaiah 62. These are prophetic Words that speak of an age to come, I would say to speak of the age, now. [Isaiah 62:5](#), said, "As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you." Now, I want you to keep that picture that the prophet uses, of a marriage to relate it to an age in which the 'Builder' would marry His 'Bride', the picture of the marriage. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah, prophesied of a covenant-based relationship.

There are 2 different concepts between a contract and a covenant. Contract is, 'I will do these things, you will do those things and as we both do them the contract is good.' But the Bible is not a book of contract. It's a book of Covenant, in fact that's what we call it, 'Old Testament or the Old Covenant' and the 'New Testament or the New Covenant.'

I was speaking about this one time and somebody said to me, 'Yeah, but God made a contract with Israel.' Because, He said, "If you obey My commands, then I will be your God and you will be My people." That kind of sounds like contract. But look at the history of it. God, in fact, never severed His love and concern for His people when they violated His commands. Though He allowed them to go through their cycles of problem, God has always maintained His Covenant with His people. His mercy, His grace, was always extended to come back. His love for them and over them never ceased to exist. So, when He said, "If you obey My commands, I'll be your God and you will be My people," He was speaking of enjoying the benefits of that relationship. "You

get to walk in fullness with Me. But I will never leave you or forsake you. And that is rooted in My character, because I am a God of Covenant.” Now look at [Jeremiah 50:5](#), concerning the Covenant, Jeremiah wrote this, “They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and bind themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.” So, both Isaiah and Jeremiah use this image of the Covenant to speak of the Day, when the Bride and the Bridegroom will be put together. Now turn with me to the Book of [Ephesians 5:30-32](#), and I want you to see how the Apostle Paul brings this into the New Testament: “For we are members of His Body. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the Church.” Now, look at 32 ‘this is a profound mystery, but I’m talking about Christ and the Church.’ So, v.30 is talking about the Church, we are members of His Body. V.31 gives us this famous quote that we use at marriages all the time. But then Paul is saying, ‘I’m not talking about the marriage, I’m talking about Christ and the Church.’

So, when we begin to talk about Church, we need to understand that it is rooted in the concept of Covenant. There are many other Scriptures that can confirm similarly the Covenant Relationship like that of marriage that is somehow identified as the characteristic that makes people part of the Church. We see that relationship between the individual and Christ, but in all of these situations especially in the New Testament, it is also rooted in what you find here in 30, that we are members together of His Body.^{[L] [SEP]} So, we enter the Kingdom of God, through personal relationship with Jesus Christ. When you accepted salvation, when you repented and were baptized, you were born into the Kingdom, but we enter the Church through the acceptance of and uniting with the Body of Christ. For we are members together. One is a personal decision; the other is a communal decision – a community of believers. And we see that exemplified to us in Acts 2, that after Peter preached his Pentecost sermon, and thousands accepted the call to repent and to be baptized. And the Bible then says, “Then they were added to the Church.” [Acts 2:41](#). Another Scripture says that the believers begin to

grow in favor and as they did, they added to the Church those that were being saved.

We begin then to see the picture of what that becomes in the beginning of Acts. That they are people who gather for teaching, and for worship; they gather to have the Lord's table; they visit one another's homes to break bread, and in fact in those days because of situation, they were so committed, they put all of their wealth together and allowed the community to take care of one another. It was a community activity. In other words, you cannot be added to something by yourself. You cannot be added in covenant, to something that doesn't actually exist in Community.

The Church, the Community of Worshippers, and this is what we say on our vision statement, 'The Glyfada Christian Center is committed to be a community of worshippers.' Because, we are committed to try and exemplify these things that make Church, us, Church, and that has to be rooted in our covenant with one another. In the same way that God never broke His covenant with Israel, we are called to come into relationship where we do not break that with each other. This is why we take the Communion, to remind ourselves that we are united with Christ and with each other. And if we are not in those kind of relationships with the community of believers, then we are not functioning as Church. And if we're not functioning as Church, then we are somehow removing ourselves from the fullness of how the Kingdom can be in us.

Remember when Jesus asked Peter, "Who am I? Who do you say I am?", "You're the Messiah, the Son of God." And Jesus says, "You've done well Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." The active element in that is the Church. Because Jesus always intended to build together communities of worshippers. Where people who are in covenant relationship, can push the values of the Kingdom. So, we could fundamentally say this, 'The entrance to the Kingdom is our covenant relationship with Jesus (Vertical), the entrance to life in the Church

is our covenant relationship with each other (Horizontal). I wrote down 4 things that identify a community of worshippers. Remember last week I said that the Church is not the end result, the Kingdom is the end. But as a community of worshippers in a covenant relationship, the Church is the carrier of the Kingdom message. We together should be preaching the Gospel. That Kingdom message was deposited in us. So:

The Church is the carrier of the message. The Church is the primary example of the Kingdom living now. People should be able to look into the Church, that's us, and see the best examples of what it looks like to live in the Kingdom of God. People should see the reign of God, in us.

The Church is the organizing structure, in the now. Let me say it this way, 'remember the now and not yet', the Kingdom now, in the earth now, is primarily organized through the life of the Church. Remember [Ephesians 4:11](#), "So Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip His people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up." So, the Church is the primary organizing structure of the Kingdom 'Now.'

The Church is the keeper and the one who administers the sacraments. So, Jesus told His disciples, on the night He was betrayed; we remember the story. Paul then brings that to us in the New Testament, and says, 'to do this, that when we come together.'

So, we carry the message, we example the life of Christ, we organize the ministry of the New Testament Church, and we care for the sacraments. But all of those things are done in community. They are not individual events. We do them together as the Body of Christ. Where we know that one cannot say to the other, 'I have no need of you.' Because in this covenant relationship, I look through those eyes and all I see are people who I have and want to say, 'I have need of you.' And when we encounter the problems of life in that, our covenant relationship says, 'I still have need of you.' And that makes me to not

want to break that, or allow it to break, because I have need of you, in covenant.

Some people say that the Church has 4 defining characters.

Fellowship

Worship

All of those things are meant to be done in community. Not because you cannot do them alone, I guess you can teach yourself; hard to do fellowship alone, some of us might try. Who was it that said, 'I don't worry about talking to myself until I start answering back; we can worship anytime anywhere, but not in fullness, because true worship is a communal activity; evangelism – I can evangelize, so can you, and should. But when Jesus first sent His disciples out, how did He do it? And what did they do when the returnees came back? When Paul and his team went out planting Churches, they did it in community. Sometimes, maybe got separated, but it always came back, and Paul would go back to Antioch and share with the community there.

In every example in the New Testament, it points to, it testifies, of the life of the community. Even Jesus, when He went alone to pray, it was always to be restored and come back to the life of the community. We enter into the Kingdom through the new birth, but we enter into the life of the Church through the covenant. This is why we reduced it for our purposes at the Glyfada Christian Center to 3 words, 'Worship, Grow, Serve.' All of those are community.

Now, why have we been talking about that? I said last week, and I want to remind us again, because, if we are going to live the fullness of the Kingdom, to the extent that it can be done now, we have to revive our knowledge of and of our sense of covenant. That we are here, with each other and for each other in committed relationship. That, when one cries, we all cry, and when one laughs, we all laugh. And when one falls, we all pick up. And when one prospers, we bring others along. That when we fight, oh, never, we overcome it, we repair it. We push through it. That, when we feel unloved, we find love.

Not one of us should ever feel alone. Or maybe I say this, at least you should never feel lonely. I'm often alone, but I'm never lonely. I always have somebody I can go to. There's always somebody at the end of a telephone. Or ready to receive me when I knock on the door, or comes to my help when it's really needed. We should sense that. Because, we will never see all of the breakthrough, that we want to see, this life in the Kingdom of God, until we are exercising our place in the Church of God.

So, last week, I ended us with a little reflection question. I'm going to do the same today. The leaders of this Church, we so badly want to see you prosper, and that doesn't just mean money, that means full life prosperity. I want to see a bunch of people full of joy, experiencing the goodness of God. Overcoming every tribulation, walking with confidence through life. With health, with mental ability, with freshness of life. Just experiencing the goodness of God. I know that's what all the leaders of this Church want. To get there, to the fullest extent that we can, we must be the Church. So, I'm going to ask you this question, just from our simple mission – 3 parts. I'm going to close my eyes, because I'm going to concentrate on this too.

*Where do I fit; where do I stand on the scale of being a community worshipper?
How committed am I to worship with other believers, in committed times and committed places?*

Where do I stand as a communal student, growing in Christ? Do I find all of my food, all of my teaching out and away from my Church, so that I don't participate in my Church? Whether that's Bible Studies, home groups, whatever it is that's going on. Am I committed to communal growth?

Where do I stand as a servant in this house? How do I serve my fellow brothers and sisters? And how do I work together with them, to reach the world, to serve the world?

So, where do I stand in the 'Worship, Grow, Serve' mission? There's a song that we have used for the last few years, and I'm going to end with this today. We're not going to sing it; I just want us to think these words. And Lord, let

this be a prayer that becomes reality. It says, 'One heart; One spirit; One voice to praise You. We are the Body of Christ.' It ends with these words, 'And to this we give our lives, in order to see You glorified. One heart; One spirit; One voice to praise You. We are the Body of Christ. I pray that that will rest on you today. I hope that you will sense, feel and know the love of God, and the love that we have for one another. I hope that you feel blessed, because you are part of a people. I hope that you feel honored to be of the Kingdom of God, and to be the house of God. May that rest on you today. In Jesus' name, Amen.