

January Teaching Theme: The Church

讲员 Speaker: Pastor William R. Horne

题目 Topic: The Church as Embassy

经文 Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Monthly Theme: This month our teaching theme will focus on “The Church.” The Church as we know is not a building or place or even worship gatherings, but a multi-ethnic community made up of God’s people (Kingdom Citizens). If we don’t understand or grasp the robust vision the Scriptures have for the Church, we will be doomed to not live into our calling as a community. To start, this week we looked at understanding the Church as a Kingdom Embassy in the world whose chief ethic is reconciliation.

一月的证道表 - 主题：教会

January Teaching Schedule - Theme: The Church

3rd – 使馆教会 The Church as an Embassy (圣经神学 Biblical Theology, 哥林多后书 2Corinthians 5)

10th – 上帝的跨国大家庭 The TransNational Family of God (使徒行传 Acts 2:1-40, 以赛亚书 Isaiah 25:6-8)

17th – 圣灵的团契 Community of the Spirit (彼得前书 1 Peter 2:4-5)

24th – 神拣选在世的器皿 God’s Chosen Instrument in the World (提摩太前书 1 Timothy 3:14-16, 彼得前书 1 Peter 2:6-10)

31st – 基督的肢体 The Body of Christ (以爱为根基的合一多元肢体 Unity & Celebrated Diversity, Grounded in Love) (哥林多前书 1 Corinthians 12:12-13:13)

Resources:

[Sermon Video](#)

Sermon Manuscript w/ Translation Attached

PPT Attached

Discussion Questions:

- (1) Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 together. What observations do you make and what stands out to you? How would you summarize the passage?
- (2) How does thinking about the Church as an “Embassy” change your understanding of the Church? What new actions does this understanding of the Church call us to?
- (3) Reflect on the wonders of the gift of reconciliation with God we receive through Jesus. What does it mean to you that you can be reconciled to Creator God? How does this change how you live your life?
- (4) This gift of peace with God, made available through Christ, places an ethical demand on the Christian to be “peacemakers.” True Peace is not just the “absence of conflict,” but requires taking what’s broken and making it whole, in our own lives, relationships, and in our world. What are some ways we can practice being “Peacemakers” in our context?
- (5) True Reconciliation cannot exist without the practice of “Truth-Telling.” Why do you think “truth-telling” is often absent from our talks on “reconciliation”? What are some ways we can be better “truth-tellers”?

- (6) Just as God broke the barrier between God and Humanity through Jesus, we too are called to live with Barrier-Breaking Love. What are some practices you can take this year to cross relational barriers of the world and build authentic relationships?

Important Notes (Pastor Will):

Thoughts on Q2: Recall, that when we think of the Church as only a “private religious institution” and not a Kingdom Embassy, we are prone to divorce our religious devotions and doctrine from our moral and ethical action in the world. A good example of such divorce happening with the people of God can be found in Isaiah 58, where Israel thought their religious devotion pleased God, but their involvement in “exploiting their workers” negated their religious devotion. We as Ambassadors of Christ must represent the ethics and vision of the Kingdom in all areas of life. Again, how can we live in a way that makes spaces like “Heaven on Earth.”

Notes on Q4: Recall, that Biblical Peace (Shalom) is not the ‘absence of conflict’ but the pursuit of wholeness. Peacemaking doesn’t mean passivity but actively working for wholeness. True peace does not exist until there is justice, restoration, and forgiveness.

Practices Ideas

- Diving in Deep in your Relationship with God through the practice of Spiritual Disciplines.
 - Bible Reading, Fasting, Commitment to Community, Sabbath, etc.
- Examining where you have potentially broken relationships and doing the hard work for restoring those relationships to health. This could include forgiveness, truth-telling, confession to wrong-doing, etc. Don’t just seek “no conflict,” but work for the other’s good and benefit.
- Taking inventory of your physical health. God has created us as holistic embodied creatures who need to care for our physical self. Though we can’t experience the fullness of physical “shalom” in our own doing or life, we should seek to care well for ourselves. Eating right, exercising, good sleep, balance work-life activities, etc. The same can be said of our mental and emotional health. We need to take inventory of these things, which is a foreign practice to start but will do you wonders.
- Live in Non-Violence and refusing to promote violence and war. Find ways to creatively interrupt violence in our world.
- As a community, create a space and environment where people do not avoid conflict but speak honestly and graciously to one another. This is one of the core values of a healthy community. Maybe start this practice as a family unit.
- Refuse to participate in Gossip and talking behind people’s backs.

Notes on Q5: The hardest step to truth-telling is often our refusal to admit we are wrong. A good place to start practicing truth-telling is slowing down enough to listen and confess when you are wrong.

Practice Ideas:

- Confess and apologies when you are wrong.

- Take time to do some in-depth study of the history of the people and places you occupy.
- Practice the wisdom of the book of James - "Be Quick to Listen, Slow to Speak, and Slow to Anger."
- "Let your Yes be Yes and your No be No" - Matthew 5:37
- Tell the Truth, even when it might cost you.
- Spend the time to really examine what you believe to be true. Is it actually true?

Notes on Q6: We lament the division within the Church and should pursue just reconciliation across all the barriers of the world. Thinking about the racial-caste divides in America, Martin Luther King Jr. called out a heartbreaking irony in the Church, "The most segregated hour in the world is eleven o'clock on Sunday morning." Unfortunately, the application of this statement could go far beyond race and nationality, as we are often divided by a multitude of other things including politics, cultural differences, and socio-economic classes. Even, as Lexington Chinese Christian Church, though we serve a unique role in mission in Lexington, we must be creatively seeking reconciliation within our church and our city. But, even with the big picture in mind, reconciliation begins on a small scale. It must begin in living rooms and at dinner tables (maybe Zoom dinner table for a little while longer!). Reconciliation will never make its way into our church until it makes its way into our homes. When we make reconciliation our goal, we don't pretend to have it all together. Like the tax collector in Luke 18, who beat his chest saying, "Lord, have mercy," we begin our prayer for reconciliation with lament and repentance.

Practice Ideas:

- Inviting the neighbors you don't know well over for dinner. Maybe making it a regular thing to invite a few of your neighbors over for a meal. (Once, COVID is gone of course!)
- Begin buying some of your groceries from a local grocery shop of another culture than your own. Get to know the owner and workers.
- Practice radical hospitality to strangers, which includes being a good guest. Purposefully, enter spaces you aren't familiar with as a humble learner.
- Ask the next person who asks you for change to join you for dinner.
- Go to a home for the elderly and get a list of people who don't get any visitors. Visit them each week and get to know each other (Again, wait until the pandemic has ceased.)
- Go to a city council meeting. Pray. Speak as the Spirit leads. And get to know the workings and people of the city you live in.
- Read books by authors who are non-white and not of your own culture.
- Serve in a homeless shelter. For extra credit, go back to that shelter and eat or sleep there, allowing yourself to be served.
- Set aside 10% of your income to give to those in need.