

The Purpose of the Church

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Preached on: Tuesday, October 15, 2019

Truth Community Church

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

As you know, we're in the middle of a series teaching on the doctrine of the church and I'm gonna teach on the church tonight and on Sunday and then we'll be done with that and we'll move on to other things. We're doing this in part in preparation for our upcoming church membership class on Sunday. You're all still invited to that and we would encourage you to attend that, to sign up for that if you would. We would love to have you be a part of that even if you're not quite ready to become a member, it would be a great time for you to get to know us better.

So there's that aspect of it, but it's also good for our existing church body to be refreshed on these doctrines about the church and the reason that the church exists, and to just have a refreshment in our minds about the fundamentals of the church. And so we've done that and we've seen preeminently that the church belongs to Christ; that true believers are the ones that make up the church, the church isn't a body, it's about people; and on last Sunday, we saw the attitude of love that permeates the entire existence of the church. Christ loved the church and gave himself up for us and we saw that in response to the love of Christ, Christians give of themselves to a local body, they give of themselves relationally to one another in a spirit of love, and we looked at 21 different "one anothers" very quickly that Scripture outlines in the ways that we relate to one another in the body of Christ in that spirit of love.

So this has been very refreshing to me and it has just renewed my appreciation for all of you. It has given me a fresh sense of appreciation and gratitude to God, to the people that he has brought here, every one of you, even if you're just visiting here recently, we're glad to have you with us, and I've thought about something and they're kind of tied into things that I'm going to say later. If you think about it, for many many many of us, maybe 60-80% of us, five years ago we didn't even know each other and here we are gathering together around the word of God and worshipping together and learning to love one another, we're growing together, we are learning things together, we're helping each other spiritually. It's just a wonderful dynamic and this has all happened rather quickly in the span of time. Five years ago, we were meeting 30 miles down the road in another place, in another location. We relocated the whole congregation 30 miles up the road to a different church building and that's just horribly disruptive and yet here we are and God has blessed us to bring us to his word, to bring us to each other, and we have this wonderful thing that God has given us, this fellowship of fellow believers, and it's just a

really really sweet sweet time all in a rather short matter of calendar years in which this has taken place.

So it's just made me appreciate afresh everything that God has done and everything that he is doing, to appreciate afresh every one of you that's here this evening, and hopefully what I want to do here tonight is to refresh your own mind about why we do what we do, what the church is supposed to do, what is the purpose of the church, and also to just give you a sense that, you know, for lack of a better word, that your pastor is very proud of you and is just very encouraged by every one of you and what God is doing in our midst. I think it's a very sweet special thing and I am eager to cultivate that, to watch it grow and develop still further, and also to do whatever I can in the position that the Lord has given me to protect that and to protect you in the midst of it from those who might see things differently and so that's what we're going to do tonight.

When we consider the fact that Christ gave himself for the church in love at the cross, he gave himself for us, for you and me at the cross, when we consider that Christians are to give themselves for one another in the church and not approach things selfishly and what's in it for me, it leads to this question, then. We're gathered together in a spirit of love, responding to the love of Christ and developing love for one another, well, one thing that that does is we are immediately confronted with prior selfishness and we're delivered from it; we realize that we don't have to have our own way in a church body, that that's not the purpose of the church, and we're delivered from that self-focus and into a realm that is really foreign to the world. To love Christ and to love each other around his word? The world knows nothing of that and so it leads to the question, then: why does the church exist? What is the purpose of the church? And as I've done throughout this brief series on the doctrine of the church, I'm not going to say anything new here but rather to stir you up by way of reminder, and now that God has saved us by grace, what are we to do corporately? What is the purpose of a church's existence? What is a church to do corporately now that we have been brought into this relationship with Christ and with one another?

Well, point 1 tonight: the church exalts God. The church exalts God and when you remember that the church belongs to Christ, this is a very obvious point to make. Our purpose is to worship and to bring honor and to glorify the one who brought us into existence. The church belongs to him and therefore the church is to respond to him, and with his exalted deity, with his exalted glory, we respond to him in a spirit of worship. Jesus Christ brought the church into life. Jesus Christ is the head of the church and therefore we exist preeminently not to serve society, not even preeminently first and foremost to serve one another, the church exists primarily to honor the one who gave life to it, to give glory to the one who gave life to it. Christ owns the church, we belong to the church therefore we belong to Christ and we honor the one who has given us life.

This is all very clear and very obvious, I would say, and if you'll look at the book of Ephesians 1, we'll see this in a Trinitarian setting, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the three persons of the one Godhead, and what we find in this passage that we've looked at many times over the years from many different perspectives is we see this emphasis on giving

glory to the Godhead. In Ephesians 1:3 it says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," so the focus is on the Father here, "who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love," do you see that word again? This is just woven throughout the Scriptures, these things of which we've been speaking over the past several times together, they're all woven throughout the Scripture and they just bubble forth incessantly. "In love He predestined us to adoption," verse 5 is where we're at, "as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will," here it is, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." God chose us, brought us into Christ, brought us into adoption so that we would exist under the praise of the glory of his grace. We, you and I, undeserving sinners, saved, loved by the eternal God, loved by Christ at the cross, purchased and redeemed by him at Calvary, we recognize how good, how kind, how gracious he has been and we praise the glory of his undeserved favor toward us. We give glory to him. We worship him. We exalt him. That's why we exist.

It goes on speaking of Christ in verse 7, the Apostle Paul goes on I should say, "In Him," meaning in Christ, "we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." Go down to verse 12 for the sake of time, "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." Worship in response to the work of the Father, we worship in response to the work of the Son and we see in verses 13 and 14 that we worship in response to the work of the Holy Spirit as well. Verse 13, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who," the Holy Spirit that is, "is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession," there it is again, "to the praise of His glory." To the praise of His glory. To the praise of His glory. To the praise of His glory. Beloved, we go over those words again and again and we see that ultimate purpose and it sinks into our minds the reason that the church exists. The church universal and a proper local church, we exist to the praise of the glory of the one who saved us. That is why we exist.

Now what does it mean to glorify God? Well, we honor his character. We speak about him. When we come together, we direct the attention vertically. We speak to sinners about Christ and his power to save them from sin. We speak to believers and we remind them of God's gracious work in their lives, his sovereign providential directing of every detail of their lives, the ultimate hope that we have to be in heaven with him throughout all of eternity, and we remind each other vertically of all of these wonderful truths that have been made known to us in the Scriptures, we're humbled by it, and we give praise to the glory of the one to whom Scripture testifies. We honor his character. We thank him for what he has done for us. We speak well of him. We honor his word. We teach his word. We obey his word together.

So in all of those things, we are ascribing honor and glory and praise and worth to the name of the one who saved us in such a great way. That's why we exist. It's why, you know, an unsaved person wouldn't stay around here too long because they know nothing

about those affections and passions. You know, we would want them to stay, we would love for them to be under the word of God, but you know, the purpose of a church and of Christians compared to the purpose of an unbeliever, I mean, we're on two different trajectories. They need a work of God in their lives or they're never going to see why we do what we do. But for us gathered together as Christians, that needs to be clear in our mind. That's why we're here. Glorifying God is our supreme and comprehensive priority. Everything else falls under that umbrella. Making him known to the lost, edifying each other, as we'll talk about later, all of it falls under that greater purpose of bringing glory to God.

Look at Matthew 10:37 with me, if you would. Matthew 10:37, and as you're turning there, I would say this: you should be able as you walk out tonight to be able to articulate a threefold purpose of the church in your mind that's very clear, that's very simple, that you're always able to replicate and to repeat easily because these purposes just fall out one upon the other, and we exist to exalt God.

Now in Matthew 10:37, this is a very searching passage, this is one of the more difficult sayings of Jesus. It deserves in the future a single treatment, I need to give a single sermon devoted entirely to this text in Matthew 10:37-39 and God helping me, one day I will do that. For now we'll just read it and get the basic thrust of it. Jesus said in verse 37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it." Christ comes and asserts his authority and his preeminence over the souls of every man and he tells us that we must regard him as the highest object of our affection or we're not worthy of him at all, and that follows and when you understand what Christ has done for us in salvation, you realize that it could be no other way. No matter how much you love your spouse, no matter how much you love your parents, no matter how much you might love that beloved son or daughter of yours, none of them died for your soul, right? None of them delivered you from your sin. None of them had the power to save you. Christ alone had that power. Christ alone did the work and therefore Christ alone gets the preeminent affection of your heart, and he says that someone who doesn't see that and regard him in that supremely exalting way is not worthy of him and of his kingdom. That's pretty searching. What is the highest affection of your heart? What do you love more than anything else? Well, Christ comes to us in his word and he says, "It's got to be Me." And the church, the true church embraces that and says, "Yes, Lord, of course, it could be no other way. I wouldn't want it any other way."

So this glory of God, Romans 11:36 to just quote a familiar passage, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever." In Philippians 4:20 it says, "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen." 1 Corinthians 10 talks about whatever you do, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. And so everything that takes place within the realm of the church is directed to the glory of its founder, to the glory of the one who bought it, and the thing of it is, beloved, is that this is not a burden or an obligation to a true Christian or to a congregation that is comprised of true believers. This isn't a burden or contrary to our

nature. This is exactly what you and I want to do. If we are truly in Christ, we want Christ to receive glory through our lives and through our church because he has done for us what no one else could do.

Charles Spurgeon said this and I quote, he said, "He has done such great things for us and He has shown so much good will toward us, that to pay Him reverence seems not so much the call of duty as the natural impulse of love." This is just natural. This comes naturally to a Christian, to honor and praise the name of Christ, and if that's true of an individual Christian, then it should likewise on a greater scale be true corporately of the local church, that that is their supreme and surpassing desire. So the honor of God is a stream of refreshment and encouragement from which we continually drink. We are not diminished as we give glory to God. We are fulfilling the purpose for which he saved us and why he called a church like this into existence, it's because the purpose of the church is to exalt God.

Now, secondly as we move along through this little synopsis of the purpose of the church here this evening, point 2: the church edifies the saints. The church edifies the saints by which we mean this, the church is the realm in which Christians can grow spiritually. The church exists so that the lambs of Christ could grow into the mature sheep of his flock. Christ is the Great Shepherd. We are like sheep to him. Sometimes there's little baby lambs and the whole point of the church is that there is this place, this realm of sanctuary and love and instruction and care where God's people can grow and become the more mature saints that he intends them to be. It is a very great and a very grave error for a church to neglect this for the sake of simply wanting to be a center of evangelization to the world and to make that the exclusive focus on which they do. "Come in, come in, we want to bring all the world in." At some point there needs to be something central about a true church that recognizes that its mission is not simply to evangelize but there is this priority that Christ places on the feeding of his lambs to build them up in the truth so that they could grow in the image and reflection of Christ in their lives. Without proper instruction, that does not happen and you end up with distorted and deformed views of what a Christian is because they have never been properly instructed.

Go back to the book of Ephesians with me, if you would, Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4, beginning in verse 11, let's say, and we'll look at a more extended passage here. Ephesians 4:11, Paul describing some of the offices in the church says that, "He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers." Why did he do this? Why were those people given? Verse 12, "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." These men are given to the church so that the church, these individual believers who come together can grow up in Christ and grow from being babes into being young men and being mature saints, and this is the whole purpose of the church. Verse 13, "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

Beloved, let me ask you a very simple question of which the answer is obvious: if the church does not instruct Christians and build them up in the faith and teach them what

they need to know and bring accountability and love to their lives, where is that going to happen? Where are they going to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ? Shall they go to the bars? Shall they go to the sports stadiums and find this growth in Christ? Shall they find it on their tv programs? Shall they find it with their unsaved neighbors? Who will teach them? Where will they grow in Christ if it does not take place in the church? Would Christ save and bring babes, as it were, into his body and then leave them on the doorstep of the world to be abused and abandoned to suffer from malnourishment? No. Obviously not. He saved a people to make a people like himself and he's appointed the church to be the realm in which that takes place. He gives offices and officers to the church instructed with the responsibility to teach, to love, to illustrate Christian living. This happens in the realm of the body. The church exists to edify the saints.

So as it goes on in verse 14, we see this, "As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in," what? "In love." There's that word again. The church grows up, the church ministers, we minister to one another so that we can all grow up, that we can all be built up so that we would all better manifest this love which is the purpose of the church, and we edify one another to that end. You make your contribution, I make mine. We all play our part and we all benefit from each other, for lack of a better word, the synergy of those relationships coming together and we all benefit, we all profit from it, we all grow from it, and that is what is supposed to happen.

So it teaches us that church life is more than simply what happens in an hour on Sunday or an hour on a Tuesday or a Wednesday. Church life is more than that. Church life is designed to help each one of us grow in our Christian character so that we are more, becoming more and more like Christ in his character. So church life concerns who you are and who you are becoming and we do this together and we help each other along that path. That's our responsibility and so we meet to help each other pursue those lofty spiritual goals.

Look at Hebrews 10. We meet, I said, to help each other pursue those lofty goals and we come not with a self-centered perspective, as I was saying on Sunday on what's in this for me, we come with a heart that's full of the desire to say, "Who can I be a blessing to? Who can I help today? I don't want to live in isolation. God saved me to help other Christians be edified in whatever role is given to me." So in Hebrews 10:23 it says, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Now beloved, apparently the writer of Hebrews was addressing that which is always a recurring pattern, a recurring danger, you might say, in a local church, that there are some

that forsake the assembling together, who don't place the priority, who don't order their lives in order for this to be a regular aspect of their lives, and what Scripture comes and what a blessing to be able to say and to affirm each of you here tonight, there's no rebuke in this to you tonight because you're here, right? The Scripture says don't be among those who forsake the assembling together. Don't be like that. That's the habit of some but don't you be like that. Instead you gather together, you join together, you meet together for the purpose of encouraging one another, stimulating each other to love and good deeds, and all the more as the day of Christ comes closer and closer together.

So when we gather together like this on a Tuesday, on a Sunday, beloved, the last thing that we're doing is going through motions. We're not checking a spiritual box. We're not just making an appearance so that we look good to others. This is the purpose, this is the reason in which we exist and it tells us, it tells us right there that we need to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, we need to grow in the faith, as it said in Ephesians 4, and I want to stop and park it right here. I want to land this helicopter view of the purpose of the church and I want to come down and just land on the heliport for just a moment and get out and look around for just a bit, if we can do that. I want to get out and I want to park it here for just a minute.

This purpose of edification says it's so that we will grow. Do you know what that means? It means that we need to grow. You say, "Well, that's rather kind of obvious." Well, follow with me here just a bit because I'm about to make a really important point that ties in with what I was saying at the beginning about the comparative youth of our church, okay? James Montgomery Boice makes a very crucial point in his commentary on Ephesians. Speaking about this topic of spiritual growth and the edification of the body he says this and I quote – oh, is this ever so important – he says, "Growth is a process. Growth takes time. The church does not become mature overnight anymore than we as individuals become mature overnight."

Beloved, you all know that I have a new grandson that was born a week ago on Sunday, nine days old, little Everett, and it's so obvious that it's just silly to even talk about it but here I am, I'll be silly for the sake of hopefully helping you understand something really important. We look at that little 8 pound bundle in our arms and there's no expectation for him to be anything other than what he is, a beautiful bouncing baby boy, and we love and appreciate him for what he is and we don't expect him to be somebody that he's not. We understand intuitively that it's going to take him decades to grow into the man that God's created him to be. We get that. You parents understand that intuitively about all of your children. But when it comes to a church, when it comes to a church maybe even individual believers but we're going to talk about it corporately here this evening because that's what we're talking about, the purpose of the church, it's hard for some people to see and understand this, to remember this, that what is true of an infant in the physical realm is also going to be true of a church in the spiritual realm. This is really vital for you to understand. And so what happens is inevitably is that people are familiar with long established churches that have decades of leadership and decades of building up together, they go into a church like that, they see all of the different things that are happening there, surely wonderful things that are taking place, praise God for it, praise God that

there are established churches that do so much for the advance of the kingdom, the problem is that people come out of a church like that and they export the expectations that were developed in a realm like that to a young church like ours, to a young church like ours and then they say, "You're not doing this, this, this, and this. What's the matter with you?" And they judge a young church like ours or a young church maybe like our friends at East Side Community Bible Church and the wonderful work that Nathaniel Pringle is doing over there, and look and say, "You're not, you know, there's so many things that are missing in you." But do you know what, beloved? Those same people would never expect a five year old child to show the abilities and maturity of a 50 year old man, now would they? They would intrinsically recognize how unfair that is.

Well, when a church like ours which started from absolute scratch, you know, less than a decade ago, less than eight years ago, yeah, we're not going to manifest all of the maturity and all of the accomplishments and everything that takes place at some place like Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California. That doesn't work that way. Grace Community Church over the course of 60 or 70 years has grown into that and they've had 60 or 70 years to do it. So there's a whole lot more that a mature church can do than a young one like ours can do. That's not a reflection that there is anything wrong with the body here, it's simply a reflection that we're still in the early processes of growth and I welcome that as the pastor. I praise God for that as a pastor. There is nothing about who you are as a congregation or what you are doing that I find any dissatisfaction with or any disappointment in. This church is exactly where God would have us to be right now and God helping us and the Spirit of God helping us, we'll continue to grow and we'll expand and we'll do more things and there will be wonderful things that happen, but we need time to grow into it. We need time for our men to grow. We need time for other things to grow.

But the last thing I'm going to do is to go the next time I pick up little Everett in my arms, the last thing I'm going to do is look at him and say, "Everett, why can't you dunk yet? What's the matter with you? Everett, why aren't you swinging a ball bat? You mean you haven't learned to read yet, Everett? What's the matter with you?" That's perverse, isn't it? You know, if you were serious in saying that. That would be utterly perverse. Well, in like manner, in like manner Scripture tells us and teaches us to expect the churches are going to grow and growth takes time. People like you and me, you know, we stumble a lot. You know, we don't get it all, you know, and we've got a lot of acquired bad habits that we've cultivated over the years and the decades, and the fact that we're not all that one day we'll be now doesn't mean that we should think that something is somehow wrong. No. No. No. As the pastor I utterly reject that. I utterly reject that and I reject it not for my sake but for the sake of, I don't know how else to say it, it's what's in my heart of protecting you from people putting false expectations on what your church should be. I don't buy it. I'm not having it. You guys are growing in Christ. You guys are earnest believers who love God's word, who are learning more and more to love each other, many of you actively involved in evangelism and taking Christ to others. I'm not having any of that. No, this is a healthy young church. Got growing to do, of course. Sure, church with limitations. I want to tell you something, any church that's got me as its pastor is gonna have a lot of limitations but it's not an indication that something is wrong

or that on the basis of a false standard that our church should be judged by those who have perhaps other agendas. No. No, I'm quite confident that God is working in our midst. We give thanks to God for that and we trust him that just as he has started a work in us corporately, that he will complete that work until the coming day of Christ Jesus.

I have a friend who knows about our church and said he sees the blooms, just getting ready to bloom. Whatever the case of that may be, yeah, we're not all that we could be, we're not all that we should be, but do you know what? Praise God we're not what we were. We've come a long way and we're going to continue to grow and I'm excited about what the Lord has in that. One of the keys for us is to recognize that that growth happens as the church recognizes its purpose to edify the saints so that they could all grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and that's what we're trying to do to the best of our ability, recognizing our faults, recognizing our limitations but trusting the blessed Holy Spirit to do a work that transcends our abilities in order to bring about the desire that he wants for his people. So, yeah, as you might be able to tell, I feel that one close to my heart. People can criticize me, I won't have them criticizing you for who you are and that's just not gonna work.

So, thirdly, the church exalts God, the church edifies the saints, thirdly, the church evangelizes the lost. The church evangelizes the lost. We exist, another reason that we exist is to testify to the world about Christ, to testify to the unsaved about our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, his wonders and their need to be saved. In Matthew 28:18, it's familiar, you don't need to turn there although I certainly wouldn't forbid you from turning to Scripture when I read it. Matthew 28:18, "Jesus came up and spoke to his disciples, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" We proclaim to those who don't know Christ the authority, the glory, the Gospel of Christ. We introduce them to the Savior who has brought us into his family. We declare his glory. We speak to the realm of influence that the Lord has given us. We go out into the neighborhoods and hopefully in time more and more, I'll talk about this in just another moment, you know, that there might be an aspect of even worldwide missions that would mark our church in time as we grow into that and as the Lord gives us opportunity.

Now when it comes to evangelism, some of you are very natural in evangelism and not only do I commend you and thank God for you in that, I confess to a measure of extreme jealousy of you because that does not come naturally to me. Evangelism is just not natural to me like it is to some of you and I am very grateful that God has made you like that. I've often felt the weight of my limitations and lack in this area and my failures, quite frankly, in this area.

Well, Bruce Milne, a theologian, gives some balanced help and encouragement for those of you that maybe are a little bit more like me than some of our more naturally evangelistic brethren, and it's helpful to think about this evangelism in a corporate context, what we do together as a church, what we all share together in as a body, and

that... Well, let me just quote him, then. He says and I quote, "We discharge a basic part of our personal responsibility as Christ's witnesses in the world by throwing our effort, prayers and gifts behind the evangelistic program of our local church. This may be especially relevant to those who find personal witness particularly difficult." In other words, while you may be weak in evangelism like I am, you can be aware of the evangelistic efforts that some others in our church are doing. You can pray for them. You can participate in that way. You can encourage them. You can ask them about what they're doing and share in the work even in that little way, sharing and contributing to that evangelistic work even if it seems like something that you fall short in. In other words, beloved, your prayers, your support, your involvement in a local church supports evangelism even if you find it personally difficult. You know, if you're standing alongside the evangelist and strengthening him and being a help and an encouragement to him, you're participating in his ministry even if you yourself are, you know, gifted in other areas.

So I just thought that quote to be particularly helpful to recognize that when we share together in a body, we're sharing together in all of the work of the body. Some out front in some areas, some out front with greater responsibilities in other areas. Together we're working together to accomplish the work that Christ has given to us as a local body to do. That's one of the benefits of a local church.

Now when it comes to overseas missions, sure, I hope that we'll grow in our ability to factor that more into our church life than what we currently do. I realize that some would criticize us on that score to which I just say, "Give us time, would ya? Give us time. The Lord know, the Lord loves us, the Lord accepts us. Where we will be in 20 years is not where we are now and we'll watch this unfold together as the Lord gives us opportunity." But beloved, even having said that and making that concession to things, I want to share one little thing with you. I hesitated but I think it's necessary for you to understand to put your church into a broader perspective of what's happening because there's no way you would know these things if I didn't tell you, and I say what I'm about to say to simply encourage you not to underestimate God's power to use us now in what we are doing, the right now what we are doing has a direct fulfillment of what Jesus said about going into all of the nations making disciples.

Last month's report for our online sermon distribution showed that the teaching of Truth Community Church had gone out to all 50 states and 77 countries. Just last month, and you see God blesses his word even if there is no human structure that is visible to the human eyes. There are things happening that we don't see. God uses us in ways that we don't always recognize and so we caution those who might say, "You ought to be doing more in this, this and this," and just say, "Well, you know, maybe you don't know the whole story. Maybe I don't know the whole story. Maybe God's doing more through us than what we recognize and what we see." Maybe, just maybe, beloved, maybe, just maybe, God is doing what he said that he would do when his word is taught, that he blesses it.

Look at Isaiah 55. Isaiah 55:10, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it." Do you know what? Maybe God's using his word more than we recognize, you know, and when it comes to evangelism and outreach, you know, without any conscious program all of you found us, right? Somehow the word got out to you. Somehow people are talking and somehow things are being shared that are bringing people in.

So we give thanks to God for that and we thank God that for all that he has done, most of which we don't see with human eyes, we thank him for what's to come and we're confident that he will bless us and bless our church and bless our ministry as we fulfill the singular goal of honoring his word and honoring Christ. I am confident of that and I'll go to my grave believing God for blessing what we're doing here together, you and I at Truth Community Church whether I see it with my human eyes or not. And I thank God that there are people like you to do this together with.

So what is the purpose of the church? Charles Spurgeon says, "The church is not formed to be a social club, a political association, or to promote its own opinions. It is a body created of the Lord to accomplish His own ends and purposes and it exists for nothing else." So the purpose of the church, what is it you should walk away with? Exaltation. Edification. Evangelization. I'll say it again: exalt God, edify the saints, evangelize the lost. Beloved, that's the purpose of the church as defined in the New Testament. Those are our aspirations as a local church. And I'll say it one more time: we thank Christ for what he has done in our midst. We confess gladly that we fall short. We know that. We feel it in our bones. But we trust the mercy of the one who shed his blood on our behalf to be gracious to us going forward just as he was in our sins, that he'll be gracious to us as we go forward as we look to the future and in humble dependence upon the work of the Holy Spirit, seek to fulfill the purpose that Scripture has outlined for the church.

Let's pray together.

God our Father, we adore Thee. We Thy children bless Thy name. Chosen in the Christ before Thee, we are holy, without blame. We thank You, our God, for saving us, for bringing us together into this local body. Help us to fulfill our purpose. Help us to love Christ preeminently. Help us to love one another. Help us to love the lost. And Father, what You have begun in the early sprout of what our church is, Father, may You by Your grace, by Your Spirit, by the love of Christ cause it to flourish, to grow. One day we trust long after I'm gone, Father, to be a mighty oak, a mighty fortress standing for the truth based on the early labors of love invested by so many that are here. We ask You, Father, that our work, that our love, that our efforts in the sake of Christ and in the name of Christ would not be in vain but that indeed You would bless us that we would fulfill what You would have us to be, and that we and that this church, more particularly, would exist long after we're gone to be a blessing to posterity in an increasingly dark world, that here somehow by Your grace Truth Community Church would stand as a lighthouse in

the fog of unbelief, a lighthouse in the storms of night and darkness and satanic blindness, Father, that there might be a lighthouse around which believers could rally and unbelievers could see light and come to the truth. Father, we ask You to make this a place like that in Your time as You cause us to grow together day by day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.