

The Essence of the Church & the Work

by Stephen Kaung

The church is God's eternal purpose, built by God himself, and is the extension of Christ, an organism of the redeemed people.

Duration: 1:28:59

Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20, John 6:27, Acts 1:8, Ephesians 4:11-12, 2 Peter 1:12-13

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the ultimate goal of our work and service as Christians, which is to manifest God and bring Him glory. He reminds us that this is not a small matter and should not be taken lightly. The speaker encourages us to constantly remind and encourage each other in this goal, as it is easy to forget and become immersed in the external works of the church. He highlights the importance of discernment and returning to the Lord to be reminded of His vision and burden for the work.

Transcript

Sometimes because we're busy at work, there's a need for us to separate ourselves from work, to quiet ourselves and rest and return to the presence of the Lord, to look at the Lord. In my heart, I have a feeling, such as in 2 Peter, in Peter's old age, he was exhorting brothers and sisters, saying, I'm just here to remind you, not that you don't know, sometimes we need to be reminded. Because many times in the church, in our work, there's a danger to fully immerse ourselves in work, to the extent that we forget what God wants to accomplish and wants to gain in the work and in the church.

In the beginning, we might have some vision. In the beginning, we might have some burden. But because we immerse ourselves in work in the church, and all the external works and labor occupy our heart, to the extent gradually we become blurred to the vision, to the burden, and to our path.

So we do need to take time out, to quiet ourselves, to return to the Lord, to lay what we are and what we do in the light of the Lord, to allow Him to enlighten us and remind us again, to allow Him to encourage us again. Because sometimes in the services of the church, in the work, we would encounter much difficulties. Sometimes because of the difficulties, we lose heart.

We become discouraged. We withdraw. Sometimes because of these difficulties, we would compromise to minimize the difficulties.

So there's a need for us to gather before the Lord, to encourage one another. This is the reason for our gathering this time. So I hope brothers and sisters will not feel that there is a leader leading this meeting.

Rather, all of us would come before the Lord, and all would wait before the Lord together, and all would quiet ourselves before the Lord. And also we would all fellowship to each other, with each other. We would like to share what the Lord has given us in the way of grace, in the work, in the church.

Also to share with each other the difficulties that we have encountered. We fellowship so that we can receive help from many brothers and sisters. Because of this kind of gathering, there needs to be a scope.

If there's not a limitation, because we only have two days, and I would like to say that the limitation for this time is this. In the morning, we would look at the Word of the Lord. In the afternoon, we would devote totally to fellowship.

That is to concentrate on the topic that we fellowship in the morning. And in the evening, we would devote the whole time in prayer. So I hope brothers and sisters would feel free, and do not feel we are here to meet.

We are not here to meet. We are here to gather before the Lord, and to have fellowship with each other. As I waited before the Lord, inwardly I had such a feeling.

That is I hope in this morning we would fellowship a little bit about the essence of the church and the work. What is the essence of the church? And what is the essence of the work? We would like to fellowship on that. And these are just a review.

I believe brothers and sisters all are well aware of these things. But we would like to just take advantage of the time. For tomorrow morning, we would hope to fellowship something about the relationship between the church and the work.

What kind of relationship does the church have with work? And these are the scope of our fellowship. This morning, I would like to share with brothers and sisters concerning the essence of the church. What is the church after all? Many times we use the term church loosely.

Unbeknownst to us, we would become blurred concerning the essence of the church. Even to the extent we mix up the church and the work. So I think there is a need for us to review the essence of the church.

I believe brothers and sisters all know that the church is not just a gathering of men or the product of history. Many times we think the church is a totality of the opinions of men. Men express their thoughts and their opinions.

And according to their concepts and opinions, they come to set up a church. These are the opinions of men. Or other times we look at the church and we think the church is merely a product of the history.

In history 2,000 years, the church began on the earth. And through the transition of the 2,000 years, the church also has undergone transformation alongside of history. It seems the church has transformed alongside of history.

That in each epoch, there is a kind of church that matches the history of the time. So sometimes we think the church becomes a product of the church. I believe brothers and sisters all know the church is not such a thing at all.

Today we see in Christianity, there is much confusion in the church. It is due to the fact that they come out of men's opinions. Also it is due to the fact that men think the church is changing alongside of history.

And these cause much confusion. So we need to see that. When we mention the church, we must return to God's original thought.

Because the scripture shows us, before the creation of the world, God has ordained in his son. Within the Godhead, there is a mystery. This mystery was purpose before the creation of the world within the heart of God according to his will.

And this purpose was in his son. In other words, this purpose was for his son. God loves his son.

He would like to express his love toward his son. We know love is not merely a word. Love has to have an expression in reality.

And since our God loves his only begotten son, and he would like to express his love toward his beloved son, because of this, he would give the whole universe to his son. That in the midst of all things, God has a unique gift. And that is, he would give to his beloved son.

And that gift is the church. In God's explanation, that his son would inherit all creation, and that is not enough. God feels that his son needs a gift.

He needs a counterpart. He needs a group of people that can share his life, can share his character, and be filled with his image and character, so that his son can be comforted. So you will see that this purpose, this concept of the church, did not issue from men, nor was it a product of men's history.

This concept was ordained in eternity past, when God ordained for his beloved son. He would take a group of people, and make them one, in order that they would be the body of his son, and that they would be also his son's counterpart. So we know as God created men, he created them male and female.

Even in the process of creation we see, what he had created was Adam. He created men out of clay, and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life, and men became a living soul. And he called his name Adam.

But we also see that God said, it is not good for men to dwell alone, even though God had recovered heavens and the earth, so that men can have dominion and enjoy all God's creation. But God thinks, still, it is not good for men to dwell alone. So in Genesis, God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, and took something out of Adam, and used that thing, and built it, a woman, and brought her to Adam.

Adam said, this is the flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, and the two had become one flesh. So in typology, we will see that God had already ordained such a purpose in his son, in the beginning. He felt that to create all universe for his son, it is merely an external thing.

And God was not inwardly satisfied yet. That is why he created men, and he redeemed men, so that we, the redeemed, would possess his son's life, and can be conformed to the image of his son, and to suffer with his son, and to be glorified with his son, so that his son would be comforted in his heart. So we will see that this is the church.

The church is God's eternal purpose. But this purpose, in time, remains a mystery. In other words, what Ephesians tells us, it is the mystery of God hidden in ages.

Even though in the Old Testament time, we could see in typology, as we have said, Adam and Eve. In typology, there will be a hint to show us in secret what God's purpose was. Even though in Old Books of the Prophets, we saw the words of the Prophets, here a little, there a little, God was hinting to us.

But in ages past, it remained a mystery, hidden in God. God did not proclaim in public what was hidden in his heart, because the time was not yet. Up until the fullness of time, in Galatians 4, in the fullness of time, our Lord, the Son of God, came into this world, made of a woman, born under the law, to deliver us out of the curse of the law, so that we can have the sons, the sonship.

So we saw God's hidden mystery. When our Lord Jesus came to the earth, this hidden purpose, because of our Lord Jesus living and work on the earth, it revealed this hidden purpose. The Lord Jesus came to the earth when he was yet living.

He showed us that one manner of men are those whom God is looking for, but he could not find what God was looking for. So we saw that, and God caused a deep sleep to fall on him. In other words, our Lord, at the end of his life, was crucified on the cross.

He had to go through death, and out of him came blood and water. And through what God took out of him to build, to build his church. So we know that.

The church is not only God's eternal purpose. The church is a work that the Lord Jesus had accomplished on the earth. Since God had that hidden purpose, and yet without the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth, there was no way for the church to be manifest on the earth.

This is due to man's corruption. So we see the Lord on the earth, he had to shed his precious blood to wash our sins. And through death and resurrection, to impart his life to us.

And this way God would have the material with which to build his church. And that's why the Lord Jesus told us that on this rock I will build my church. The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

This rock is our Lord. He will build this church upon this rock, using his own material among men to build what he is looking for. So the church is not only God's purpose, the church is also the work of God's Son.

At the same time we see that even though the Lord on the earth had accomplished the work of redemption, but when he was on the earth, he said I will build my church upon this rock. In other words, when he was on the earth, he had not yet built his church. He will build his church.

He came for the church to prepare this way, the way of redemption. Because without Lord Jesus, without this way of redemption, there is no way for the church to begin. So as the Lord was on the earth, he called a group of disciples to follow him.

To receive his light. To know him. To learn from him.

To understand what kind of Lord he is. To know his image of what sort it is. To know his character of what kind it is.

So through the light he gave us, that in our character, we can fully match him. And also to become his counterpart. This matching has to be in life and in character to be like him.

This is the work of preparation the Lord did. A foundational work. After the Lord's ascension, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out.

So Acts 2 shows us. On the day of Pentecost, when the 120 gathered on the upper room, the Holy Spirit descended. In one spirit they were baptized into one body.

1 Corinthians 12. There is only one body. Even though there are many members, there is still one body.

So also the Christ. There is no longer Jews or Greeks. We are all within one spirit and baptized into one body.

And drink of the same God. So the time of the church's appearing was on the day of Pentecost. The church appeared.

The Holy Spirit baptized these 120 people into one body. Formerly they were individualistic. They all were saved.

They all loved the Lord. The 120 can be said to be the outstanding ones among the disciples. But as they gathered together, there still were just a multitude.

Until the Holy Spirit came and baptized them into one body. These 120 became the 120 members into one body. Became a living organism.

And on the same day 3,000 were saved. They were also baptized into the Holy Spirit into this one body. So we see, when the Holy Spirit came to the earth, during the 2,000 years, He was fellowshiping the accomplished work of the Lord Jesus to us.

Because of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the church can grow and mature and possess the fullness of the stature of Christ. And in the epistles, Paul shows us that this mystery hidden in ages, through the Holy Spirit today, has been revealed to His apostles and prophets. So that this hidden mystery has become an open mystery.

Today we can know what is the church. Today we can know the source of the church. We can know the church is in the Triune God.

In the cooperation of the Trinity. It is because He has revealed this mystery to the apostles and the prophets. So brothers and sisters, I believe we need to review this lesson.

We need to see that the church is not a product of man's conception. Whatever is issued from man's concept is not the church. The church is not a product of the history.

Whatever comes out of history is not the church. We need to trace back to the source. We should never forget the source of the church.

The source of the church is the Triune God. God's purpose, the redemption of Christ, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Only this can reveal the church.

So I think we need to often remind us with these. Because many times in our work, in the busyness of the church, we can forget this. And the second point, I think we need to review.

And that is what is the church? Of course we know. The church is not a material building. We all know.

The church is the redeemed people. That's why it's ecclesia. God called out many people out of the world, out of many tribes and tongues and nations.

He called a group of people out and gathered them together. This is the church. That's why we often say the church is not an organization.

Neither is the church a system, nor is the church something outward. The church is an organism. It is God's people.

It is the redeemed gathering together, becoming one body, with Christ being the head. This is the church. But we can further say, we cannot merely say the church is the totality of all the redeemed.

If that's the case, we will see. That since the church is the totality of the redeemed, in this totality, you will see. Not only within each one of us, we have Christ and the life of Christ.

The life of Christ is in us, but each one of us still carries with us our natural being, our flesh, still carries ourselves with us. And when we gather together, we see that. Inwardly we gather and outwardly we gather.

The life of Christ in us is gathered together. Outwardly, the former manner of life, the old man, the self, also come together. And if you call this to be the church, then the church would have much blemishes, would have much spots and wrinkles, much incompleteness, much problem would crop up.

So strictly speaking, today before God, the church is glorious. But in our eyes today, we see the church is full of blemishes. So strictly speaking, what is the church? This is what 1 Corinthians 12:12 shows us.

He says, there is only one body and has many members. Though there are many members, yet we are still one body. So also the Christ.

As we read the scripture, I believe in the beginning we have the same concept. We felt that Paul made a mistake in this verse. Because since there is one body with many members, there are many members, there is still one body.

Therefore, we should say, so also is the church. So this is the church. Apparently this is the church.

How could Paul say here that so also is the Christ? The reason is this, that before God, the church in God's eye is only Christ. Whatever is outside of Christ, all need to pass through the cross and be terminated by the cross. So whatever remains, it is the Christ.

The Christ. That's why we say, the church is the extension of Christ. It is Christ himself.

If we can see this, straight away we see, we the redeemed need to come before the Lord and go through much afflictions, much training, much discipline, much need to be terminated. Otherwise, what God ordained, what God is looking for, what Christ has purchased with his precious price, what the Holy Spirit is trying to accomplish, the church cannot come out. Therefore, strictly speaking, what is the church? What is the essence of the church? What is the content of the church? In the church we cannot have any mixtures.

In the church there is nothing but Christ, nothing else. Therefore, we, if we truly have seen the church, before God we could only prostrate to allow the cross to do a deeper work in us. Otherwise, God cannot

gain this church.

We will never become his counterpart, because we have not been conformed to his own image. Therefore, when we mention the church, it is not doctrinal. When we mention the church, we see the church, its essence, its content.

To us, this is a great lesson. This is a great warning. We need, moment by moment, before the Lord to examine ourselves, that we will not bring ourselves into the church to contaminate the body, so that God cannot gain his heart to do that.

So, brothers and sisters, this is something we need to remind ourselves with, because often times as we serve in the church, as we busy ourselves in the work, it is easy for us to forget this. It is easy for us to mix ourselves into it. As soon as we mix ourselves into the church, we cause great loss to our God.

We need to often remind ourselves concerning the matter of building of the church. We know, today God has called us to work with him to build his own church. But in reality, the building of the church is not something man can do.

The Bible tells us, the Lord says, I will build my church upon this rock. This is something the Lord would personally perform. At the same time, in the book of Hebrews, we see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the city with foundation that they were waiting for, it is something built by God himself.

So, strictly speaking, the building of the church is not in our hand. The building of the church is in the hand of the Lord. Only the Lord himself can build his church.

Only God can build the church. Only the Holy Spirit can build the church. It is possible that we be used by God, but in reality, building is not in our hand.

Because of the preciousness of this, God would give to his son, the church, to be his eternal companion. It is so holy, so glorious, so perfect. Because of this, you will see that none of us is qualified to build.

Today, if men are the ones building the church, we can say, well, they are playing church. The result of our playing, it is the Bible, it is not the church. So, we have to confess, in order to build a church, it takes Christ himself to build it.

We are the workmanship in his hand. We firstly allow him to do the work in us. Then, out of our being, he would create the work that he wants to do.

Today, all of us are serving ones in the church, but in reality, it is not us. Through what the Lord has done in us, the Lord would do his work through us. This is something the Lord does personally, not us.

So, the real building, it is not us. We are merely used by the Lord. The Lord is the one that really builds.

So, whenever we want to come and build the church, straight away we see, problems will come. We must often remember, only Christ can build the church. We need to come to the Lord and say, Lord, this is your work, I cannot do it, but I am willing to yield myself in your hand, to allow you to do a work firstly in me.

We are the work in his hand. He has done it, and through us, this is something we need to review in the building of the church. Fourthly, as we talk about the church, we will notice the building of the church, or the commission of the church.

Today, on the earth, or before I say this, I would like to add an addendum. As the Lord builds his church, it is himself building. But how does he build? What is the procedure? How does it come about? So, if we return to the scripture, we see the method by which he builds, this procedure.

On the day of Pentecost, the church was born on the earth. So we see the method by which he builds, it is firstly in Jerusalem, to obtain a group of people, that within the same spirit they were baptized into one body, and they rise up to testify for the Lord. This is Jerusalem.

And then, we see, this group of brothers and sisters, if we read the first few chapters of Acts, we see that daily the Lord added to himself those who are being saved. It is amazing. When you read the scripture, in the Chinese version, we say daily he adds to the church.

In reality, it is not so in the original text. It is daily he adds to himself, added to the Lord himself. Because if we say, if we add to the church, we can consider the church to be an outward organization.

But daily adding those who are saved to the Lord himself, this is an organism. So, at that time, the believers in Jerusalem, male and female, there were probably ten or twenty thousand people. But as they gathered together, it was truly good.

They were unwilling to scatter. As a result, the Lord used persecution to scatter these people abroad. They went abroad to spread the gospel abroad.

So, we see that in the process of building the church, he did it locality after locality after locality. He was building his church. In one locality, the gospel was preached.

People were saved. They came together. They lived for Christ.

They lived out of Christ. They manifested the life of Christ and the glory of Christ. They testified for Christ.

There was one in Jerusalem. They went to Samaria or Judea, even to the remotest part of the earth. According to Acts, the remotest part of the earth at that time was Rome.

Within the two thousand years, we see that he is doing that. Wherever the gospel reached, there the church was born. There they testified for the Lord.

The gospel was preached to Taiwan. We saw in Taipei, in Kaohsiung, in Tainan, all these localities. Locality after locality, region after region, we see groups of people met in the name of the Lord.

The Bible says, wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Wherever it is. Because we still live in the flesh.

We are limited by space and time. So, we must have a locality. It is not just one man.

It takes two or three. Because to represent the body, you need a majority. The smallest majority is two or three.

Wherever it is two or three, as long as two or three gather, it is a church. Two or three would gather in the name of the Lord. Their gathering is in the name of the Lord.

They met under the authority of the Lord. In other words, they hold Christ as a head. Therefore, there is a body.

There has to be a head before there is a body. If there are many heads, it is not a body. So, in the name of the Lord means that we take Christ as our head.

This way, they can represent on the earth the body of Christ. And the Lord said that I am in the midst of them. Wherever it is, wherever the gospel reached, there was a group of people.

The smallest two or three. Or as much as ten or twenty thousands like in Jerusalem. But, we see that.

It is under the head, Christ. Under the authority of Christ. In oneness, they manifest Christ.

God's presence was in their midst. This is the way of building. So, the Lord's method for building, it is through the way of locality.

It is not abstract. It begins in each locality. And at the end, we see, there is a universal church.

There is only one church. Because there is only one head. Christ being the head.

The church is his body. There is only one. This church, universally speaking, from the first church up until the day the Lord comes to him, repeated by the last saved person, are all within the same church.

Without the limitation of space or time. It is beyond time or space. All of the redeemed.

In the totality, we become his body. We are all in the body of Christ. This is what the Lord wants to gain, ultimately.

In order to get to the universal church, it begins from the local church. So, you see, this work is not abstract. This work is very practical.

Today, of course, when we fellowship in the afternoon, we would consider what is the local church. But according to the scriptures, for instance, in Revelation, in Revelation you see, in chapters 2 and 3, we see seven local churches. In Asia, there are seven local assemblies.

And our Lord is like a high priest. Because he is our high priest today. In the midst of the seven golden lampstands, he is walking.

He is building his church. He is illuminating. He is speaking.

He is correcting. He is causing us to repent. He is revealing himself to them.

You see, the Lord is speaking to seven churches. He is building each one of the local assemblies. When we come to Revelation 21 and 22, you no longer see the local assemblies.

There is none. You only see the New Jerusalem. There is only one.

New Jerusalem, there is only one of it. Descending out of heaven to the earth. Full of Christ.

In other words, in the beginning of Revelation, he is there building. At the end of Revelation, in the middle of Revelation, in the conclusion of Revelation, he has gained what he is looking for. That is the universal church.

So the way of building, the process, is very real and practical. Now we can talk about the church, the missions of the church, or the testimony of the church. When the Bible talks about the church, Revelation

tells us that before God, there are seven golden lampstands.

There are seven golden lampstands. In other words, today the church on the earth is like a lampstand. The lampstand is pure gold.

It is amazing. In the tabernacle, there are only two furnitures that are pure gold. One is the lampstand, the other one is the mercy seat.

There are only two that are pure gold. All the rest of them are wood overlaid with gold. Even the tabernacle, even the ark is the acacia wood, built by acacia wood, overlaid and inlaid with gold.

Typifying to us, the Lord in eternity is God. He came to the earth to become man, but he is still God. But there are only two items that are pure gold in the tabernacle.

Of course the mercy seat is pure gold. The other one, amazingly, is the lampstand. We always think the lampstand shouldn't be pure gold.

Because it typifies the redeemed ones. It should be wood overlaid with gold. That would be right.

But amazing, amazing, the lampstand is pure gold. Because the lampstand is the Christ. That's why all the wood had to be rid of.

There cannot be any wood. But remember, lampstand is not a purpose. It is merely a means.

It is not the end, it is a means to an end. We cannot treat the church as a purpose today. The church is not a purpose.

The church is for Christ. Christ is the purpose. So you see that, what is the lampstand for? Lampstand is to hold up the light, so that the light can illuminate the whole place.

Lampstand is not a decoration. The goal of the lampstand is to illuminate. Christ is the true light.

We hold up this light. This is the mission and testimony of the church. To uplift Christ.

So in Philippians, Paul says, we are in this crooked and perverse generation. We are the light shining. But we must see that.

This light is not us. This light is Christ. This is the mission of the church.

1 Peter also says, we are a kingdom of priests, royal priesthood. We are the chosen race. Our purpose is to preach the one who has accomplished the glorious redemption.

To preach Christ. So the church does not preach Christ. The church does not preach ourselves.

The church preaches Christ. The church does not take ourselves as the goal. The church is merely a vessel of the Lord on the earth.

So brothers and sisters, sometimes we discover that we have taken the church and made it a goal. All day long we say the church, the church. We forget about Christ.

And we have lost the testimony of the church and the mission of the church. So sometimes when we serve in the church, you will see. If all men can see is the church and not Christ.

If men cannot touch Christ in the church, we have failed utterly. So we must see. The church is only the means.

The goal is that the Lord will be gained. As we talk about the church, we must notice. Most of the time as we serve in the church, we pay attention to the activities.

We have not paid attention to the life of the church. I know a lot and I know a lot of activities. These are the things I don't pay attention to.

But the living of the church, we don't pay attention. There are much activities. There is very little living.

So what is the living of the church? The living of the church of course is to live out Christ. That is without question. This body is for the purpose of manifesting Christ.

So practically speaking, the living of the church, if we describe it with one verse, that is Acts 2.42. Those who are redeemed, they are in Jerusalem. They continually devote themselves to the apostles' teaching. This is the basis for living the church life.

These redeemed ones, not merely those who follow the Lord for three years, neither are those who are saved on the day of Pentecost. They continually devote themselves. They continued.

They fully devote themselves into the teaching of the apostles and in breaking of bread and in prayer. The teaching of the apostles, in the original language, the word apostles is plural, teaching is singular. The teaching of the apostles, in the original language, apostles are plural, teaching is singular.

So we see here, it is not that each apostle has his own teaching. Another one has his own teaching. We see that.

Even though there are many apostles, but they have only one teaching. They only have one fellowship. Why? Because the teaching of the apostles, it is something they receive from the Lord, and they teach that which they receive.

They have no teaching of their own. They receive teaching from the Lord, and they teach others. In other words, the teaching of the apostles is the Lord's teaching.

They can never have their own teaching. They can only teach what the Lord has taught them, what the Lord has revealed to them, what they have received of the Lord, and they teach the Lord's teaching to many brethren and sisters. So we see that this teaching is singular.

It is the Lord's teaching. Whatever the Lord taught, you must all teach, and I will be with you until the end of the earth, end of the world. So we, the redeemed ones, must remember.

We have no teaching, no new discovery. We merely faithfully teach what the Lord taught us. Whatever He had fellowshiped, we cannot fellowship only part of what He had fellowshiped.

We must fellowship the whole scripture, the whole of God's Word, the whole of God's teaching. We need to teach, for instance, we cannot be partial to any. We cannot take one truth and make it a center.

We must see it. All the truth has only one center, that is the Lord, Christ. Christ is the center.

The multiplicity of the truth are just like the spokes in a wheel. They are like the spokes. I like to use the picture of a wheel.

The wheel is God's work because the wheel can move forward. In the center of the wheel is the hub. The hub is Christ.

And those spokes are the different kinds of truth. All the teachings of the Bible are the spokes. The circumference, the wheel, is the church.

So you see that all the hub, all the spokes are opposite of each other. And they have the same length. They issue out of Christ and they reach unto the church.

You will never see. When you see the church, it has two sides. They are opposite of each other.

You cannot. If you have one truth that is stronger than the other, this wheel will be paralyzed. If you see certain truth to be longer, it surpasses the circumference.

There is not another truth that is shorter to the extent it doesn't reach the wheel. If that's the case, this wheel is weak. So you will see that.

This is something we need to pay attention to in our service in the church. We need to take what the Lord has taught us, what we have received of the Lord, to teach others. The truth cannot become partial.

It possesses two sides, two-foldness of the truth. You cannot take any truth, any singular truth, to make it a center. We must take Christ as the center.

And all the truth are for bringing us into Christ. The truth are given to the church. But through the church, through the truth, we are brought to Christ.

Because Christ says, I am the truth. This teaching is not merely in words. This teaching is life.

It is spirit. It is life. Therefore, this becomes the teaching of the apostles.

And we see that Peter doesn't have his own teaching. Paul doesn't have his own teaching. We see that their fellowship is one.

So in 1 John 1, John tells us, we fellowship with the Father and with the Son. And we report fellowship to you while we fellowship with God. So we see that this fellowship is one.

It is a fellowship of Father and Son in the Spirit, in eternity. Today this fellowship, through the apostles, has come to us, causing us to be in this fellowship as well. So practically speaking, the content of the fellowship is Christ himself.

It is still Christ himself. This is the content of our fellowship. So the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, there is only one fellowship.

Because of this, we have fellowship one with the other. Because we have only one fellowship. If we can receive this in this way, spontaneously you see, our living will manifest Christ.

We can have fellowship one with the other. We can live out a body life. On two aspects we see.

It is very practical. One is in the breaking of bread. One is in prayer.

In breaking of bread, we remember the Lord. This is the living of the church. This takes the fellowship and teaching of the apostles and makes it a reality.

Because when we break bread, we fellowship with the Lord. And we fellowship with all of God's children. Because this bread represents the body of Christ.

On the one hand, he has given himself up for us. On the other hand, when this bread is broken, it represents the body that has been broken. At the same time, when we remember the Lord in breaking of bread, we return to the Lord.

So in the church life, the breaking of bread is very important. Prayer also is important. We need to come together for prayer.

Many times we see without church life, we don't have church life because we don't have breaking of bread and prayer. As opportunity allows, we need to take all the opportunity to gather for that. And this will give us the reality of the church life.

So this is our review concerning the church life. I say again, Brother and Sister all know already. I merely remind and review so that as we go forward to serve, we have some time left to talk about the work.

I believe many Brothers and Sisters here have participated in work. Some have accumulated many years of experience. Some maybe just starting.

But regardless how long you have served the Lord, I think especially those of us who have served the Lord for many years, we need to be reminded even more. We need to discern more. Because we have been so long in the work, it's like it has become a habit.

The result is we forget what are we doing our work for. So I think in this way, we also need Brothers and Sisters to review. First, according to the revelation of the scripture, God's work, there is only one.

Though God has done multiplicity of work, but in principle, God's work is but one. You remember in John chapter 6, the multitude were fed because of the five loaves and two fishes. And they followed the Lord.

They pursued the Lord wherever He went. And the Lord turned around and said, don't labor for the food that perishes. You are chasing after Me.

Your purpose is to eat and be fed. He said, don't labor for this, but labor for the food of eternity. As the Lord said this, they said, okay, so how do we do the Lord's work? You said we need to labor for the eternal food.

So what do we do? How do we do it? What is it to do the Lord's work? The Lord replied, to leave the one whom the Lord sent. That is God's work. It is amazing.

They were there asking, we want to labor, we want to work. What is it to do the God's work? In the original word, this is a plural form, works. But the Lord replied, same, believe in the one whom the Lord sent.

This is God's work. This work is singular. God has but one work.

God's work is that you believe the one whom He sent. You believe in the Lord to be the one God sent. This is God's work.

You see that in conception, man's concept is totally different from God's concept. Man's concept is to do many things. This is to do God's work.

God's concept is, you believe the one whom God sent. This is God's work. In other words, it is not for you to do something.

It is God who does the work. The work that He does is that you will believe the one whom He sent. You believe the one whom He sent.

This is God's work. In John chapter 5, verse 17, He said, My father worked till today, and now I work. God has been working since creation.

When the Lord Jesus came and said, I work, that the thing that He did was what God was doing. God said, I cannot do anything of myself. I see what my father does.

So you see, God's work is what the Lord has done on the earth. It is the same work. Then in John chapter 14, verse 12, the Lord said, The work that I did on the earth, you will do likewise.

So here it shows us, the Lord did God's work on the earth, the work of the Father. Today, what do we do on the earth? We do His work. We don't do our work.

We do the Lord's work. Then what is the work of the Father? The work of the Father is that we will believe His Son. That His Son will be Lord over all creation.

Because of our belief in His Son, allowing His Son to fill us, becoming our all, and regaining all authority in us, so that He will be glorified. And that we can be conformed to His image. And we can grow and mature to possess the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ.

And to become His body today. And as His body matures, He comes back to receive Him. This is God's work.

So brothers and sisters, we must see that God's work is one. He does many things. But those things are not unrelated, individualistic.

All these many things are for one work. That His Son will be Lord of all, and to receive one new man. So today, we who do the so-called God's work, do not forget.

We may have many different works. Some preach the gospel. Some do the edification.

Some do the work of visitation. Some do the other multiplicity of works. We have different works, but do not forget.

The principle of work, the purpose of the work, is one. If you are separated from this to work, you have made your work to be a goal. And separated from God's work, your work before God becomes wood-hating stubble.

God will not accept it. If your work, let's put it the other way. We preach the gospel.

The purpose of preaching the gospel is so that men will be saved. That's all. They will not go to hell, but go to heaven.

You will make this the purpose of work. We have failed the work, totally. We preach the gospel to bring men to Christ.

So that in Christ, he will grow and mature. Just like Colossians 1, Paul says. We are there to bring all men into Christ according to the power that works in us.

Preaching the gospel and get men saved is not the purpose. To edify Bronteus is not the center of the work either. The purpose of the work is so that the work of Christ can be accomplished.

So that you will see, we can do many different works, but our works are all united. They are all for God's work to be accomplished. So I think we need to be reminded of this often.

What are we here doing for? To cause a man to be saved? Is that all? Or to cause the Bronteus to understand the Bible? Is that all? Or even more? So that Bronteus can be richer in his spiritual life? Is that all? We will see that. This is not all. We need to see that God's work is to take each one of us and work ourselves into Christ.

So that Christ will be totally wrought into us. It is not individualistic. It takes all the Bronteus to become one body.

And this whole body in love will build itself up. This is God's work. Once you know God's work, straight away you see.

You will have a feeling. God's work, only God can do. We cannot do.

If you haven't seen this, you will feel that. We can do it. Once you see this, you will see that.

God's work, only God himself can do. We cannot do. Because work is the overflow of life.

We must have the overflow of life. Therefore we must allow the Lord to do a deeper work in us. If we do not have this deeper work of Christ, this life cannot overflow.

So the richness of life, the degree of life measures us, measures our work. How much of the life of Christ do you have has been constituted in you? Then you would possess as much outward work. This is the result that I talk about.

This is what God is after. Therefore Paul not only preaches Christ and his cross, he himself says, I am fearful and tremble. But I do not preach with man's wisdom in your midst, but by the Spirit and the power in the Spirit.

For instance, as we work there today, we must examine ourselves. Now whether or not we are working here by ourselves, we are bringing men to ourselves, or is our work out of God, out of his life, and brings men into Christ. This is something we need to be reminded often in work.

We also must remember, today as we work and serve, what is our ultimate goal? The ultimate goal is that God will be manifested. We must see how much God has gained. Can God gain his glory? Whenever God gains his glory, that is when his Son receives glory.

Then God is satisfied. So in the work, we just briefly mention it, hoping that all of us will remind and encourage each other with it. This is not a small matter.

Whether serving men, as we take care of chores, however big or small, whether serving our Lord, we are doing God's work. This is not something we can treat lightly. So I hope we will take opportunity to remind and review, and this is our fellowship this morning with all.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5215.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/stephen-kaung/the-essence-of-the-church-the-work/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net