



ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A ministry of the Presbyterian Church USA
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SERMON STUDY & DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Church Series:

- #1 – Why are we a church?
- #2 – Are we becoming the church God calls us to be?
- #3 – From the past to the future
- #4 – What will becoming God's church do to us?

9.19.2021 – WHY ARE WE A CHURCH?

REASONS WHY WE ARE A CHURCH

OUR OWN REASONS

1. Traditions – Can you give examples of traditions/practices that directly influence our church?
2. Social and cultural likes – Our church may be existing simply because we know each other and have been friends from the Philippines. What other socio-cultural reasons are there why a group come together as a church?
3. Personal & family ties – Families and relationships are important. But if becoming a church is merely because of one or a few large families, how would that affect others who may not be related to them?
4. We copied others – Social and church groups tend to copy what others are doing. If a church's reason to exist is just that, what would happen if the "copying" does not lead to good results?
5. We were told, we did not question – When a group of people is told by others and follow what they say how to be and do church without a healthy and shared process of discerning and obeying God's will as its foundation, could the church last long without a well thought and prayed-for foundation?

GOD'S REASONS

1. God's Covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17:3-8
2. God calls His people to be a holy people, Ephesians 1:3-5, 1 Peter 2:9-10
3. God intends for His church to be a visible and truthful proof of His presence, Ephesians 3:4-6, 10-12
4. Christ build and owns the church, Matthew 16:18

SO WHICH IS RIGHT: OUR REASONS OR GOD'S?

1. If our church exists only because of OUR OWN REASONS, what usually happens?
 - a. Personal conflicts → chaos!
 - b. Just doing the same old stuff → we get tired, bored
 - c. Money issues → more chaos!
 - d. Blame, blame, blame → leave!
 - e. Comparing with other churches → leave!

2. If it is GOD'S REASONS, what would happen?
 - a. As God's chosen people, we live as good and holy people according to His Covenant
 - b. As humbled, loved, and forgiven people, we can love and forgive others
 - c. We are ordinary people called by God to do and show His greatness to others
 - d. We commit and work together to give glory to God

IS ST. JAMES PC DEMONSTRATING GOD'S POWER TO CHANGE PEOPLE'S LIVES?

IS ST JAMES GOD'S CHURCH, OR OURS ONLY? (reflections about the past to guide our future)

1. In the 80s, the Filipino congregation took over the aging white members. Why and how did that happen? Was the transition a process that both groups seriously talked and prayed for? Were good decisions made in mutually edifying ways?
2. Then, you had two Filipino pastors. Did St. James grow during those two times? If yes, what led the church grow?
3. The second Filipino pastor departed and Covid forced you to shut down for more than a year. How did the church function? Was there congregational care by the church leadership?
4. In February 2021, your church leaders thought of reopening the church. What may be the top 3 reasons why reopening was considered?

WHY DO WE NEED TO KNOW AND BE SURE WHY WE ARE GOD'S CHURCH?

1. Let me put this straight and simple to you...I would have said NO, if your reasons to reopen were not God's.
2. There could be many in your church who feel more of a "wait-and-see" attitude in the next 6 months.
3. But to those of you who have deep faith and strong hope in what God is now doing, I commend and encourage you!

My prayers for you...

1. May your reasons to continue St. James be the same as God's reasons.
2. May you humble yourselves before God and ask Him to bless your efforts.
3. May our Good and Faithful Savior Jesus bless all families in St. James to continue being the Chose, Faithful, and Holy people for His glory!

Closing Prayer:

Ephesians 3:14-21, NIV

...I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.