

True Church (9): A Church God Can Use

(Text)

I. Call to Worship (Responsive Reading: Psalm 138:1-3)

A. David expresses worship to God and promises to bow down

1. Have you ever noticed how many times bowing is mentioned in worship
 - a. That makes sense—the word “worship” laterally means to bow down
 - b. It originally meant to “kiss the ground” as in obeisance before king
2. In fact, a lot of the worship texts in Bible express worship physically
 - 2 Chronicles 20:18
 - Psalm 95:6
 - Nehemiah 8:6
 - 1 Corinthians 4:25
 - Job 1:20
 - Psalm 134:1
 - Matthew 28: 9
 - Revelation 4:10
3. Worship begins in the heart, but it does not stay there
 - a. Worship is to overflow from our heart and spill out into our lives
 - b. Worship is to move us—not just our emotion, but our lives
4. **Point:** Not so much body posture as the openness of our heart
 - a. When we really recognize God’s presence, it drives us to our knees
 - b. We are overwhelmed by His majesty & holiness—so we worship
 - c. When we are moved to worship, we are also moved to serve Him

B. Summary of life of King Amaziah (**2 Chron 25:2**) “...*but not wholeheartedly*”

1. What a recommendation that is! He did right, but not from heart
 - a. Oh, Amaziah wasn’t as bad as many, but his heart wasn’t in it
 - b. I wonder if that ever describes some of our worship to God?
 - 1) Were here to do the right things, but our mind is miles away
 - 2) We’re here to worship, but not to give God our whole being
2. Let’s give God everything we have—heart, soul, mind, strength
 - a. Don’t hold anything back—give God your best today
 - b. And then give him everything you have this week!

II.A Church God Can Use: Introduction

- A. **Restoration Movement:** Set aside creed/tradition, and restore NT church
 - 1. The immediate question, “*Which NT church will we restore?*”
 - a. We know things about NT churches because of problems
 - b. Writers wrote the epistles to deal with specific church problems
 - c. We **certainly** don’t want to restore everything about Corinth!
 - 2. But each NT church teaches us something about being people of God
 - a. We learn (positively and negatively) from Jerusalem, Philippi, Ephesus
 - b. We even learn from Corinth (family of God despite problems)
 - 3. Today we ask what is a church God can use—Antioch (**Acts 11:19-30**)
- B. Antioch was the 3rd largest city in the empire (500,000 people)
 - 1. This was not a sleepy little oriental town, like Jerusalem)
 - a. Antioch was a modern metropolis with all the problems that go with it
 - b. It was military stronghold and center of commerce and trade
 - c. It had vices and the violence of any large maritime seaport
 - 2. Church was planted there after first wave of persecutions of **Acts 8**
 - a. This mission church became base of operations for Paul
 - b. (Michael Green has suggested, “*Had it not been for Antioch, Christianity may have shriveled to become only a small sect of Judaism*”
 - c. And it was also at Antioch where believers were first called “Christians”
 - 3. What is a church that God can use? We’ll use Antioch as our case study

III.A Church God Can Use

- A. **First**, in a church God uses, leaders lead... and so do followers
 - 1. Antioch was blessed by God with high-power leadership
 - a. You talk about a ministry team, Antioch really had one
 - 1) Barnabas came first (**11:24**); Paul joined him (**11:25,26**)
 - 2) Luke’s gives a list of the leadership team (**Acts 13:1**)
 - b. Gifted people from outside-- Agabus (**11:28**) & Silas (**15:32**)
 - c. The leaders not mentioned are interesting—elders and deacons

2. **Point:** Ministry preceded formal leadership ([Acts 11:19-22](#))
 - a. Antioch wasn't a mission strategy or a intentional church plant
 - 1) Refugees from Jerusalem came to Antioch and shared gospel
 - 2) When Jerusalem leaders heard of the ministry, they sent Barnabas
 - b. But the work began before any sanction from leaders
 3. Church God can use is a church where leaders lead... and so do others
 - a. Such a church will have leadership, but the followers will lead too
 - b. Ministry will come from the bottom up, not just the top down
 - c. Remember what Jerusalem did when Antioch caused problems?
 - 1) All these Gentiles sneaking in back door—what will the church do
 - 2) Who came up with the plan for Gentile believers? ([Acts 15:6,22](#))
 - d. The leadership of the church led, but the whole church led as well
 4. Churches like Antioch are too busy working to worry who is in charge!
- B. Second,** the church God uses is one that takes risks beyond status quo
1. The church at Antioch began by taking a huge, incredible risk
 - a. Before Antioch, the church had been a Jewish organization
 - 1) Oh, they took in an occasional Gentile (*Cornelius, eunuch*)
 - 2) But the church was basically zealous practicing Jews ([Acts 21:20](#))
 - b. It was Antioch, not Jerusalem, who risked reaching out to Gentiles
 - 1) They did so w/o demanding Gentiles first accept Jewish ritual
 - 2) Later, more Gentile forms of expression came into church (Corinth)
 - c. Because Antioch took a huge risk (and some heat), the gospel spread
 2. Churches that God can use constantly reshuffle the status quo
 - a. Those churches focus on two things—obeying God and seeking lost
 - b. They may cherish some traditions, but not as much as they do people
 - 1) Faithfulness refuses to elevate traditions over people
 - 2) Jesus warned us to get our priority right ([Mk 2:27-28](#))
 - 3) Tradition should also serve the church, not the other way!
 3. The church God can use is one that always takes chances

- C. **Third**, churches that God can use are focused on the story
1. Antioch was an evangelistic and mission-minded church
 - a. The church began when refugees taught the good news (**11:20**)
 - b. Barnabas came to give leadership and more responded (**11:24**)
 - c. Paul later joined Barnabas and even more were taught (**11:26**)
 - d. More and more teachers came there to teach the gospel (**13:1**)
 - e. Finally, Antioch sent missionaries out into the world (**13:2-3**)
 2. This was a church obviously founded and focused on the story
 - a. That was why Antioch so successful in transcending barriers
 - b. They were completely captured by the story of Jesus
 3. Churches that God can use are churches captured by the story
 - a. Former professor, “*Christianity is a religion of Biblical authority*”
 - 1) Yes, as long as we see scripture pointing to Jesus (**Jn 5:39-40**)
 - 2) Michael Green puts it this way— “*It is Islam, not Christianity, that is a religion of a book. Christianity is the religion of a Person!*”
 - b. Another former professor, “*Have to say something vs something to say*”
 - 1) We’ve been consumed with any number of strain-at-a-gnat issues
 - 2) About syllogisms, inferences, traditions and proving others wrong
 - c. Lost in the middle of the issues is the story of the risen Christ
 4. No wonder we find ourselves struggling with ineffectiveness
 - a. What must capture us is about a Savior and a cross
 - 1) That is what captured brothers and sisters at Antioch
 - 2) God used them to do earth-changing things!
 - b. If we are captured by the story, God can use us too

IV. Conclusion

- A. What does it mean to be a church that God can use?
1. It means that we’ll be a church captured by the person of Jesus Christ
 2. It means we’ll seek to be more and more like Him.
- B. That is our challenge; that is our invitation