

CBC Topic - Corporate Worship

Sunday evening, 22nd April 2018

Q: If all of life is worship (Romans 12:1-2), why do we gather together?

1. Why do we gather?

- 1.1. Because God's people are commanded to gather
"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing..."
Hebrews 10:25

- 1.2. Because God is in the business of gathering his people.
 - 1.2.1. Created to gather (1-2)
 - 1.2.2. Scattered in the fall + Babel. (Gen 3-11)
 - 1.2.3. God promises to gather his people (Gen 12)
 - 1.2.4. God gathered his people on mount Sinai. (Exodus 19ff)
 - 1.2.5. God gathers his people to his Son (John 10:14-16, Matt 6-8)
 - 1.2.6. God is therefore gathering his new-covenant people on a better mountain.

*"But you **have** come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.... 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:22-24, 28-29.*

"Since Christ is now in heaven, it is there that the New Testament thinks of Him as building His church, because the church of Christ is the assembly which He calls into being around himself. This supernatural church or assembly around Christ is a present, not merely a future reality, and we are to think of ourselves as already members of it, assembled with him in heaven."¹

- 1.2.7. God will gather his people to be with him physically forever!

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her

¹ *The Church and Denominations*, D. Broughton Knox.

husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. Rev 21:1-3

- 1.3. Because the local church is an earthly, miniature realisation and foretaste of the heavenly gathering.
 - 1.3.1. We *are* the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27)
 - 1.3.2. We *are* the temple of the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 2:5)
 - 1.3.3. We *are* the family of God (1 Timothy 3:15)
 - 1.3.4. N.B. What is a church? *Ekklesia* - lit. gathering/ assembly (Matt 18:17)

New Hampshire Confession of Faith XIII (1833)

"We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptised believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the (apostolic) gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by his laws (word); and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word; that its only scriptural officers elders and deacons whose qualifications, claims and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus."

2. So what do we do when we gather on Sundays?

- 2.1. We gather to *engage with God*
 - 2.1.1. **To hear him speak together**
 - Audibly
 - Reading of scripture (1 Tim 4:13)
 - Preaching & teaching of scripture (2 Tim 4:2)
 - Visibly
 - Baptism
 - Lord's Supper
 - 2.1.2. **To respond to him together**
 - Prayer -
 - "Our Father in heaven"
 - The church at prayer in Acts
 - Singing

"Let them exalt him in the assembly of the people, and praise him in the council of the elders." Psalm 107:32

"Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." Colossians 3:16

2.2. We gather to encourage, edify, and equip one another.

2.2.1. We need it

“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Heb 10:23-25

2.2.2. We grow through it

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4:11-16.

2.2.3. We all have a part to play in one-anothering

- *Love one another (Romans 13:8)*
- *Spur one another on towards love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)*
- *Encourage one another (Heb 10:25)*
- *Teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16)*
- *Greet one another (Romans 16:16)*
- *Serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13)*

2.2.4. We’ve all been given gifts to use for the common good.

- *1 Corinthians 12:4:-7ff*

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work...All these (gifts) are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

2.2.5. We’ve been given a gospel to be equipped to share together

“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to

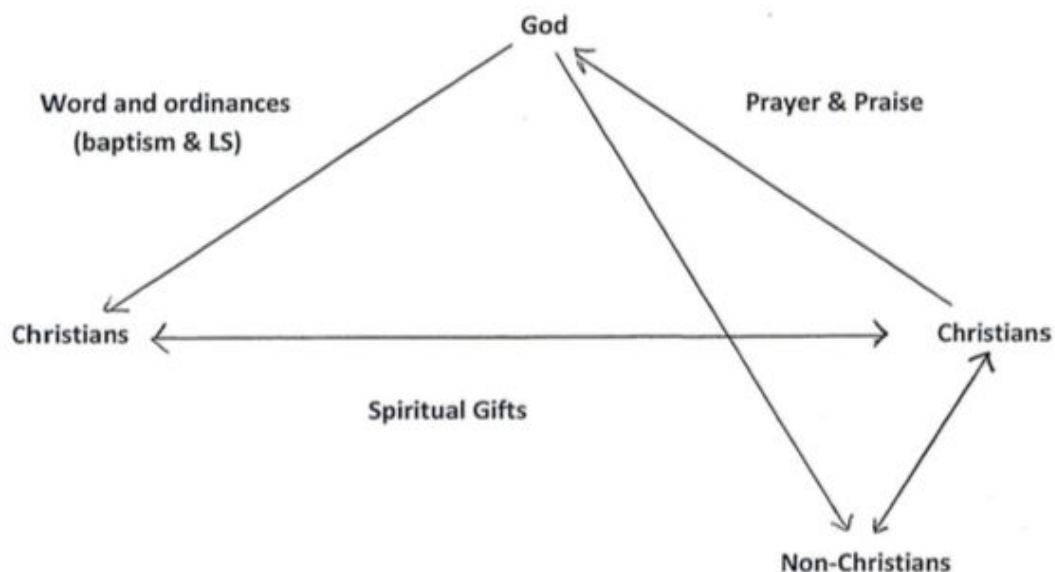
me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Mat 28:18-20

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” 1 Peter 3:15

2.3. We gather in view of a watching world

“So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, 25 as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!” 1 Cor 14:23-25

“When this temple gathers, something otherworldly takes place. It's an outpost of hope in a dying world, a fellowship of resurrected sinners, whose presence in the world is foretaste of a greater transformation to come.”²



Implications and reflections...

² *Rhythms of Grace*, Mike Cospers, p79.