Come Grow With Us!

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday May 28, 2023

Text: John 15:1-10 Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:14-16

### Intro

1. Our website (courthousechurchofchrist.com) is in the beginning stages of a needed makeover: So far a new logo and slogan, and many more pictures still to come.
   1. Logo: A Tree, representing growth
   2. Slogan: Come Grow With Us, the goal we have for each member
2. John 15:1-10: Jesus said He was the True Vine and His disciples are branches.
   1. The branches are required to grow and bear fruit.
   2. A healthy vine will have many branches.
   3. The apostle Peter wrote, “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen (II Peter 3:17-18).
   4. The way to ensure the purity of the doctrine of Jesus is taught and maintained and no error creeps in is for every member (branch of the True Vine) to grow spiritually in Christ, Who is the Head of the body (Ephesians 4:14-16).
3. With summer about to be kicked off with this weekend, the Memorial Day Weekend, let us focus our efforts in inviting others to services or to a Bible study.
   1. The Two-Invitation-Card Challenge: Take two of our congregation’s invitation cards and invite at least two people each over this next month!
   2. We invite all to “Come grow with us!”
4. One of the best ways to see what makes a congregation grow is to study the New Testament to see what made the early church grow in the times of apostles.
5. The Scriptures show us the church grew when…

#### The Seed Was Put In The Soil

* 1. First, for a church to grow people must hear the word, the gospel preached!
     1. Romans 10:14: How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?
        1. And how will they hear without a preacher?
     2. *Luke 8:4-15:* The parable of the Sower teaches us that if there is to be harvest, the seed must be put in the right kind of soil.
        1. Luke 8:11: The seed is the word of God.
        2. It also teaches us to sow the seed to all soils, for the right soil will grow from it!
        3. If the seed stays in the “barn” there will be no harvest!
  2. Some NT examples where the seed (word of God) was put in the hearts of men.
     1. *Acts 2:22-36:* The first gospel sermon recorded.
        1. Results: Acts 2:41: “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.”
     2. Acts 8:5: Phillip preached Jesus in Samaria.
        1. Results: Acts 8:12: “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.”
  3. Saints are to preach the gospel of Jesus and plant the seed today!

#### The Members Worked Together

* 1. The church in Jerusalem had needy widows.
     1. Acts 6:1: There was so much growth that there were those who were getting overlooked.
     2. *Acts 6:2-6:* Men of the local church were appointed “over this business.”
     3. Acts 6:3: Members of the local church took care of their needy saints.
  2. Results: How did this affect the church growing?
     1. Acts 6:7: The church grew so much that even Jewish priests were converting!
  3. A local church can grow when its members are willing to work together!

#### The Church Was At Peace

* 1. Acts 9:31: The church had “peace” and was being “being built up” or edified.
  2. Results: The text says they “continued to increase” (KJV: “Multiplied”).
  3. Too many churches today are torn asunder by one thing or another and have no concept of what it means to be at peace.
     1. Romans 12:18: As far as we can, be at peace with all people.
     2. How do we achieve this peace today?
     3. Unity: being of the same mind we can have peace (I Corinthians 1:10).
  4. When there is harmony and peace within a local congregation there can be growth!

#### The Church Was Persecuted

* 1. It’s easy to understand growth in times of peace, but what about persecution?
     1. The thought behind persecution was to stamp Christianity out.
     2. They thought they were getting rid of a problem, not making it bigger!
  2. The early church had lots of problems and it kept them growing.
     1. Acts 5:17-18: The church grew so much after the discipline of Ananias & Sapphira; the Jews became jealous and imprisoned the apostles! *(The church can grow through discipline as well)*
     2. Acts 9:1-2: Saul imprisoned many Christians, men and women.
     3. *Acts 12:1-5:* Herod beheaded James, the brother of John, and imprisoned Peter.
     4. After such persecution, who would want to be part of the church?
  3. Results: How did persecution affect the growth of the church?
     1. Acts 8:1: Persecution caused the Christians to scatter all over from Jerusalem. *To go in hiding?*
     2. Acts 8:3-4: Those scattered went on preaching the word! (Rest of Acts 8 tells of word spreading to Samaria and all the way to Caesarea)
     3. Acts 12:24: “But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.” (This growth was despite Herod’s attempts to persecute)
     4. Acts 11:19-24: The persecution that arose in connection with Stephen’s death (Acts 7:54-8:3) sent saints preaching the word from Jerusalem to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, to both Jews and Greeks, and the text says, “a large number who believed turned to the Lord” (Acts 11:21).
        1. The church at Jerusalem heard of it and sent Barnabas to check it out. When he arrived he encouraged them “with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord” and “considerable numbers were brought to the Lord” (11:22-24).
  4. Not what man would think of causing church growth!
     1. When we are growing in our faith in Jesus, our circumstances don’t matter!
  5. Saints need endurance (James 1:2-3) to keep growing into maturity and to set their minds on Christ no matter what the circumstances are!

#### God’s Word Was Kept

* 1. *Acts 16:* Paul visited some churches he had worked with to see how they were doing.
     1. Acts 16:4: The delivering of the letter written in Acts 15 to strengthen and encourage non-Jewish converts.
  2. Results: How did this affect the growth of the church?
     1. Acts 16:5: “So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.”
  3. Saints can grow when the word of God is kept and they are strengthened and encouraged in its teachings!

## Conclusion

1. The church grew in times past when these things were done.
2. The Lord’s body of believers can still grow today and bear fruit when these things are done!
3. We need to grow individually in our faith and to grow together so that the body may be built up in love and faith!
4. We can grow today when every member brings to the body the talents and abilities they have from God and uses them to His glory!
   1. Ephesians 4:14-16
      1. 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;
      2. but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,
      3. 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 love.
5. Let’s be the branches of the True Vine that grow together and bear fruit!
6. Come grow with us!
7. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent and be baptized!
8. If a Christian in error, don’t wait till it’s eternally too late. Repent and be renewed!
9. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!