

**Sermon #20**

**The “Unchurched”**

God is gracious and kind, big and expansive.

His grace is offered to all.

He is magnanimous and great.

We are called to be like Him.

What do you think in your heart about so-called “unchurched” people?

What do you say about them?

I’ve heard some pastors, church leaders, religious teachers and church folk say that a person is not and cannot be a real Christian unless he is a member of a local church organization.

Some even go so far as to say a person must be tithing to the church organization and go to church services at least once a week before they recognize him as a real Christian.

This is a lie from the pit of hell. And it is a very damaging lie.

Some people who hear this lie are repelled away from God because of the judgmental and arrogant attitude of these church people.

Others may join a church and do all the religious rituals out of guilt or pressure, but this in itself can hinder them from entering the Kingdom of God and enjoying God.

The simple truth is that churches are there for people who want them and need them.

They are a gift from God for those who will benefit by them, not an obligation to God or a requirement of God.

Church organizations are man-made and man-ruled; but God works through them for good.

If God leads you to become involved in a church organization, then follow. If God leads you out of church involvement, then follow. But don't believe the lie that Christianity is defined by a church organization or your involvement in it.

A Christian is a person who lives in love—  
that is, the definition of love which Christ taught.

John the disciple said, “<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”  
And both Jesus and John made it clear that true love is obeying the teachings of Christ.

Jesus also made it clear on several occasions that God favors those who believe and obey, regardless of their professed doctrines or church membership and titles:

***Example 1:***

(Jesus said) <sup>25</sup>“But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; <sup>26</sup>but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, *in the region of Sidon*, to a woman *who was* a widow. <sup>27</sup>And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

<sup>28</sup>So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, <sup>29</sup>and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. <sup>30</sup>Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way. Luke 4:25-30

The church folk were furious when they heard Jesus say this!  
They didn't want to accept the truth that God's love, grace and goodness extended outside their church group.

They especially didn’t want him pointing out the obvious irony that their own prophet was more effective *outside* their religious group than *inside* it!

**Example 2:**

<sup>21</sup>Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup>And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.”  
<sup>23</sup>But He answered her not a word.  
And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, “Send her away, for she cries out after us.” <sup>24</sup>But He answered and said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”  
<sup>25</sup>Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”  
<sup>26</sup>But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.”  
<sup>27</sup>And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”  
<sup>28</sup>Then Jesus answered and said to her,  
“O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.”  
And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Matthew 15:21-28

This woman was considered an unclean dog by the religious folks of Jesus’ day, yet her faith was greater than that of most of the church folks.

The three characters in these examples were all unchurched people, judged as unholy and inferior to the Jews and the church leadership of the day.

Yet look what God did for them!

He didn’t question their lack of church membership, nor did He command them to get involved in or join the church.

According to Jesus, it is possible for a person to be a lifelong church member and tither, who has done amazing things in the name of Christ, but who will not enter the kingdom of God:

(He said) <sup>21</sup>“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup>Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ <sup>23</sup>And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

Matthew 7:21-23

Some Christians go to church, and some don't.

Some unchurched people are unbelievers, and some are believers.

Some church members are unbelievers, and some are believers.

God looks at the heart, and we should, too.

Judge not by appearances, but with righteous judgment!

It is not for us to judge whether or not a person is a Christian.

We are called to believe and follow Christ.

“I, the Lord, AM righteous and true.

No good thing do I withhold, from you or anyone else.

Faith in Me will set you free.

Trust Me working through all for good.

Believe in Me: My power and goodness.

I AM working through ALL,

so receive whoever I send and do just what I say to do.

Then you will receive all the good that I have.”