

The church is not a building!

1. Preamble...

- a. Good morning, my name is David Farley... welcome to our first service in our brand-new building!!! Let me mention a few things.
- b. First, I want to thank all the volunteers who have spent countless hours assembling, building, moving, cleaning, and organizing. Most of these people have asked me not to mention their names. But know that the elders are incredibly thankful for your labor. Also thankful for your generous giving... we did this without a capital campaign, but we may do one for the expansion.
- c. Second, the north doors are emergency exits only. Please use the south doors... Having one main entrance and exit serves the security team, and the greeting team, plus it gives the pastors the opportunity to greet everyone who walks through the doors. As the church grows, this is really important to me personally. This means that if you park on the north side, please walk around to the south doors.
- d. Third, please be patient. This project is not done. It will take us a few weeks to get everything completed and situated (landscaping, bookstores, classrooms, signs, etc...)

e. Fourth, many have asked, why didn't you build a bigger sanctuary....

2. Prayer...

3. Introduction

a. I love buildings, especially church buildings...

b. I was an architecture major at WSU for one whole week, until the math scared me away...

c. But I never lost my passion for buildings, especially church buildings.

d. In 2000, we moved to St. Louis Mo. for seminary.

i. St. Louis is much older than Spokane, which means there are lots of beautiful old church buildings.

ii. Driving around town I would often say to my wife...

iii. Heidi, stop the car, look at the size of that steeple.

iv. Heidi, stop the car, look at those stained-glass windows.

v. Heidi, stop the car, look at that stonework on that church building...

e. Maybe you're thinking, "yeah... I appreciate church buildings to, I guess!!!"

f. You don't understand...

- i. I have pictures of old church buildings on my study wall.
- ii. I have not one, but two thick coffee table books devoted to old church buildings, and I have read them both cover to cover—several times!!!!

g. In light of my passion for church buildings, you can probably imagine how excited I am this morning to finally have our own church building.

- i. I'm excited about the natural light, the high ceilings, and all the windows.
- ii. I'm excited about all the classrooms.
- iii. And after paying rent for nine years, in five different locations, I'm very excited about owning a building.

h. I'm excited!!! Although there is something far more exciting than a church building.

i. What is more exciting than a brand-new church building?

ii. The church of Jesus Christ itself!!!

iii. I want to make one simple point this morning.

iv. *The church of Jesus Christ is far more exciting than a church building.*

- v. Why is the church of Jesus Christ so exciting?
Because of what the church is!!!
- vi. What is the church?
 - 1. To answer this question, we will look at four pictures of the church from the NT.
 - 2. This means that we are taking a brief break from our gospel of John series.
- vii. *Why is the church more exciting than a building???*

1. The church is the gathering of the called!

- a. The New Testament word for church is the Greek word “ecclesia.”
 - i. It is used 114 times in the NT.
 - ii. The word ecclesia comes from two words
 - 1. Ek- out
 - 2. Kaleo- to call
 - iii. The church is a local gathering of Christians who have been called out of darkness into God’s glorious light.
 - iv. They have been called out of this world, called out of slavery to sin, and called to gather with the saints...

b. Bible scholars often make a distinction between the universal church (all Christians for all time) and the local church (a local gathering of believers in time).

- i. While this distinction is somewhat helpful, the vast majority of references to the church in the NT refer to local churches.
- ii. In other words, the emphasis is placed on the local gathering of believers.
- iii. The NT authors had no category for someone who was part of the universal church but not actively involved in a local church.

c. The church is the local gathering of the called!

d. Illustration

- i. Have ever been really excited about receiving a phone call???
 1. When I was a senior in college I started applying for real jobs, that is career jobs.
 2. Sure, I had many jobs in high school and college, but not a career job.
 3. During the Spring of my senior year, I traveled to Seattle to interview with several insurance companies.
 4. After each interview, I was told to wait for a phone call.
- ii. A career job represented adulthood, financial independence, and a way to provide for my family, which was starting in a few months.

- iii. As you can imagine I was very excited for this phone call.
 - 1. Every day after class, I walked up the stairs of my fraternity and headed straight for the bedroom to look for a blinking light on the answering machine.
 - 2. This was before cell phones...
 - 3. If I saw a blinking light, my heartbeat quickened a little.
 - 4. I picked up the phone and dialed the number for messages... My heart rate sped up even more.
 - 5. Was this *the* call??? The call that would change my life???
 - 6. One day the call finally came...
 - 7. SF Insurance finally called, and they offered me a real job!

- iv. I was ecstatic about receiving this call.

e. Application

- i. If you are a member of the church of Jesus Christ, you have been called by someone far more significant than the State Farm Insurance Company.
- ii. And you have been called to something for more significant than full time employment.
- iii. You have been called by the maker of the universe.
 - 1. He has called you out of darkness.

2. He has called you into the kingdom of his beloved son.
 3. He has called you into his family.
 4. He has called you to an eternity of joyful bliss.
 5. He has called you to gather every lord's day with the community with the saints.
- iv. What do they gather for???
1. To celebrate the marks of the church...
- v. *The church of Jesus Christ is the local gathering of the called! Why else is the church exciting???*

2. The church is the family of God

a. The Bible often describes the church as a household, which is another word for family.

i. **Galatians 6:10 (ESV) — 10** So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

ii. **Ephesians 2:19 (ESV) — 19** So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

b. How can we become members of the household or family of God? Because God amazingly becomes the father of all those who trust his son Jesus.

- i. God is referred to as father over 250 times in the NT.
- ii. How is this possible? How is it possible for wayward sinners, to be God's children? The moment we believe the gospel all our sins are removed, we are declared righteous, and most significantly, we are adopted by God the father.
 - 1. Justification is wonderful news- we can be declared righteous.
 - 2. Redemption is wonderful news- we can be free.
 - 3. Forgiveness is wonderful news- we can be forgiven.
 - 4. But the best news of all is adoption... Why? In adoption, God not only justifies us, redeems us, and forgives us, he makes us his children. Which means he wants a relationship with us, a very close relationship.

c. Illustration

- i. In 1952, a probation officer in New York City tried to find an organization that would assist in the adoption of a twelve-year-old boy. Although the child had a religious background, none of the major Christian denominations would assist in his adoption, because he was from a smaller and lesser-known denomination.

- ii. As you can imagine, this child felt rejected and unloved.
 - 1. His parents abandoned him.
 - 2. Then the “Christians” abandoned him.
 - 3. Nobody wanted him.

- iii. Yet, if someone would have adopted him; history probably would have been different.

- iv. The child’s name was Lee Harvey Oswald.
 - 1. He was the man who killed JFK.
 - 2. We don’t know for sure, but I bet a loving adoption would have changed Lee Harvey Oswald’s life, which would have changed JFK’s life.

- v. Adoption changes people.
 - 1. Adoption changes us...
 - 2. When we are adopted, we become members of the family of God!

d. Application

- i. ***Salvation is a family creating event.*** When you are saved, you are saved into a family, known as the church of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. ***Justification***
 - 2. ***Familification (familified)***

- ii. Every time we gather with the saints on the Lord's Day, it is a family reunion.

- iii. Here is the thing.... God expects his family to be a close nit family.
 - 1. He wants us to strive for unity with our family members.
 - 2. He wants us to share our burdens with our family members.
 - 3. He wants us to be generous with our family members.
 - 4. He wants us to pray for our family members.
 - 5. Why? They are our family!!!!

- iv. Close nit family relationships only come through spending time together.
 - 1. The best way to spend time with your brothers and sisters in Christ is by joining a small group or a discipleship group.

 - 2. This is the only way, in a church this size, that you are going to be able to experience the tight nit relationships that are expected of NT Christians.

- v. In addition, close nit family relationships only come when people commit to loving each other through thick and thin.

1. The best way to commit to loving your brothers and sisters in Christ is by becoming a member of this church. In the process you will sign a membership agreement that spells out our biblical commitments to each other.
 2. To find out more, go to our website and sign up for our next membership class at the end of the month.
- vi. Is this family perfect? No!!! Why? Because you're in it!! Here is the good news, God gives us the supernatural grace we need to love our Christian family. How much glory would God receive if everyone in this family was easy to love??? Not much... How much more glory does God receive when we love members of our family who are hard to love? Much more!!!
- vii. Which family member does he want you to love this week?

e. The church is the gathering of the called.

f. The church is the family of God. Why else is the church exciting???

3. The church is the body of Christ.

a. The NT frequently refers to the church as the body of Christ.

b. The body metaphor emphasizes unity and diversity.

i. **1 Corinthians 12:14–20 (ESV) — 14** For the body does not consist of one member but of many. **15** If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? **18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. **19** If all were a single member, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

ii. Application:

1. There is one body but many parts.
2. There is one body, but many different types of people.
3. There is one body, but different giftings.
4. Are you using your gifts to build up the church?

c. The body metaphor emphasizes love for others.

i. Addressing the church in Corinth Paul writes,

ii. **1 Corinthians 12:25–27 (ESV) — 25** that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. **26** If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. **27** Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

iii. Illustration....

1. Throwing my back out a few weeks ago...
2. Tell story...
3. My whole body felt the pain... I could not walk, I could not turn my head, I couldn't do anything.

iv. Application...

1. If another member of the body of Christ suffers, we should all feel it and do something about it...
2. Do you know someone who is suffering in this body? What can you do about it this week?

d. The body metaphor also emphasizes the headship of Christ.

- i. The NT declares that Christ is the head of the body, his church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19).
- ii. Sadly, many people today say that want Jesus, but not the church.
 1. Or they want spirituality but not religion.
 2. They want Jesus, just not organized religion.

- iii. As I mentioned a few weeks back, scholar Kevin Deyoung calls this “decorpulation.”
 - 1. This word comes from two words.
 - 2. **Decapitation** comes from the Latin word “caput,” which means to cut off the head.
 - 3. **Corpus** is the Latin word for body.
 - 4. So, the word “decorpulation” means to cut off the body.

- iv. Many want to cut off the body of Christ from the head of Christ.
 - 1. But this is violent, bloody, and strange.
 - 2. How many times have you seen a body walking around without a head??? Never.
 - 3. Bodies need heads or they die—very quickly.

- v. Application:
 - 1. We can’t have Christ without his body, the church.
 - 2. We can’t love Jesus and ignore his body, the church.
 - 3. If we love the head (Christ), we must love the body (his church—a local gathering of believers).
 - 4. This means we must get involved with this local gathering of believers.

e. The church is the gathering of the called

f. The church is the family of God

g. *The church is the body of Christ...* Why else is the church exciting???

4. The church is the temple of the Spirit

a. The NT describes the church as the temple of the Spirit.

i. **Ephesians 2:21–22 (ESV) — 21** in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. **22** In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

b. The church of Jesus Christ, the new and better temple, is indwelled by the very presence of God's spirit.

i. I have discussed this concept in detail many times in the past. So, I will only briefly mention it here...

ii. The point I want us to see is simply this.

iii. God does not manifest his presence everywhere.

iv. Sure, God is omnipresent (explain).

v. But the church of Jesus Christ is the only place on earth where God promises to manifest his presence.

vi. That is, the church is the only place on planet earth where God promises that we will experience his presence.

vii. What about Matt 18??? Where two or three are gathered...

c. How does God manifest his presence when the saints gather?

- i. He manifests his presence when we sing the truths of Scripture. Maybe you have experienced this???
- ii. He manifests his presence when the Bible is preached. Maybe you have experienced this???
- iii. He manifests his presence in the Lord's supper, when he reminds us that we are children of God. maybe you have experienced this???

d. Illustration:

- i. Last summer my family spent some time in Washington DC, which enabled us to attend the Citi Group open, a professional tennis tournament.
- ii. Thousands and thousands of Tennis fans from all over the world were there for two weeks to watch their favorite tennis players.
- iii. As we walked around the crowded grounds of the tournament with thousands of fans shoulder to shoulder, we heard several people around us shouting,

- 1. "hey, he is right there...
- 2. he is over there...
- 3. there he is...
- 4. look over there...
- 5. that is him...

6. is that really him...

7. grab your phone and take a picture.”

- iv. Who were they looking at? It was Frances Tiafoe. Frances Tiafoe is a rising star in American tennis.
- v. He was walking around the grounds with the common folk, with the fans..
- vi. The crowds parted, phones came out, and people lined up to be in the very presence of Frances Tiafoe. He was right there, less than ten feet away from us. We were in his very presence. People were excited.
- vii. You may not care about being in the presence of Frances Tiafoe, but would you be excited to be in the presence of Tom Brady, Taylor Swift, John Mayer, Cooper Kupp, or Bill Gates???
- viii. People spend thousands of dollars to get front row seats at concerts or the big game to be as close as possible to their favorite rock star or athlete...
- ix. Yet, every time we gather with the saints on the Lord's Day, we get to be in the very presence of God almighty, the maker of all things!!!
- x. It is ok to get excited about gathering with the local church!!!

e. What does this mean practically???

- i. The church of Jesus Christ (i.e., the gathered saints, not a building) is the only place where God promises to manifest his presence.
- ii. Pray for God to manifest his presence.
- iii. Bring your non-Christians friends to be confronted by God's presence.
- iv. Make gathering with the saints in God's presence on Sunday morning a priority!!!
- v. The church of Jesus Christ is not a social club, a place to see friends, or a place to hear a pep talk, or a place to get inspiration for the week. The church of Jesus Christ is the temple of the living God, the one place on planet earth where God promises to manifest his life changing presence.

5. Conclusion:

a. What excites you?

- i. Making more money?
- ii. Winning the lotto?
- iii. Getting into the right college?
- iv. Raising successful kids?
- v. The adoration of peers?
- vi. The latest show on Netflix?
- vii. Working out?
- viii. Watching football?

ix. A New church building???

b. Some of these things are exciting. But there is something for more exciting than all of these things combined.

i. You and I get to be members of the church of Jesus Christ!!! Why is this so exciting???

1. The church is the gathering of the called
2. The church is the family of God
3. The church is the body of Christ
4. The church is the temple of the Spirit

c. There is something far more exciting than making money, acquiring stuff, and watching Netflix.

d. You were redeemed by the triune God to glorify his name through active participation in a local church. That is why you exist!!! let's pray...