

Called

Why are we here? Who are we? And what are we to do? We all ask such questions - sooner or later.

They are simple yet vital questions. Those who cannot answer one or more of them are likely to struggle. That is certainly true if you do not know what to do!

Serve

Why does the Church exist? Our question does not concern buildings. It is about the people of God.

There is one word we expect to see included in an answer, namely the word *serve*. In fact we can say the Church is here to serve God,

Christians, and other people. And we can go on to speak of *worship*, *support* and *witness*. Let us explore further.

Worship

First, *the Church is to serve God through worship*. When we speak of worship we do not limit ourselves to the meetings held each week on the Lord's Day. They are included, of course. However we are aware that our whole lives are to be a lively sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to God. That is so because God created us to know and enjoy him for ever.

We know the first man, Adam, was given a specific task. He was to care for the good creation in which he was placed. He was not to rape or ruin it. Rather he was to be a good steward or manager of it, working it well (*Genesis 2.15*).

Furthermore he was not left to do it alone. God provided a helper, Eve, the first woman (*Genesis 2.18ff*). Together they were to go about their God-given task. And they were not alone. We are not suggesting there

were other people at that point to help them. But they were not alone. God was with them (*Genesis 1.26ff*). They were called to enjoy sharing with God at all times. They could speak with him. And they could rely upon. In him they could find all the strength and wisdom they would need (*Genesis 3.8f*).

Glory

Each day they could see afresh what a great, glorious and good God is. Such an experience would have given them cause to stand in awe before him. More than that, it would lead them to engage in the greatest work of service people can ever do.

Our first calling is to worship. It is to admire, adore and exalt God. It is to express our dependence upon him, recognising our weakness and frailty and his holiness, power and might (*Exodus 20.1-11*).

In the garden of Eden Adam and Eve heard God speak. He spoke with them. And they were free to speak with him. Thus they found first hand that our Creator is a communicator. He has made us able to speak as

well. We can debate and discuss. We can even engage in what many call small talk. Yes, we can talk about the weather. But we can also think out aloud, talking with one another about the deep things of life. Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going?

Knowing that God speaks leads us to ask how does God speak with us today. We do not see people enjoying the exact experience Adam and Eve had in the garden. But that does not mean we cannot hear God speak.

Although Adam and Eve, and mankind in Adam, were cast out of the garden due to their disobedience, rebellion and sin, that does not mean that God ceased speaking. Down the years that followed, and right up to the time after Christ's first coming, God spoke through prophets. These were servants he called to make known his will, to expose our sin, and to speak of his mercy and grace.

Furthermore, God caused the messages he gave to be recorded. And not just recorded, also

preserved. And God led his people to put the messages he wants all people to hear in one place. Thus it is we have the Bible.

Word

The Bible is God's Word written. In it we find the essential facts God wants us to know about himself. And we discover the humbling truth we need to know about ourselves. We have a rebellious lawless nature. We need to be changed as well as forgiven.

In the Bible we also learn God's perfect will for us. We find directions for worship. Two principles are of prime importance. *First*, we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength (*Deuteronomy 6.5; Matthew 22.37*). And *secondly*, we are to worship God only. We are not to worship any idol (*Exodus 34.14; Deuteronomy 4.23f*). Nor are we to use artefacts and images as aids to worship. Instead our worship is to be in the Spirit and truth (*John 4.23f*).

We now need to ask whether there are any essential parts to worship. What is it to include? Or, out another

way, how are we to worship, be it in private or public?

True worship includes proclamation, prayer and praise. All three elements are essential.

Proclamation

The emphasis here is on listening. We need to hear what God has said so that we can discern his will for us. As we have seen, he has given us his Word. It is the resource we need to discover the breadth, depth and height of his love for us. It is also the only infallible guide we can find here on earth to knowing his plans and purposes for us. Thus our aim each day is to put ourselves in a place where we can be still and listen to God speak through the words of Scripture (*Colossians 3.16*).

Those who can will seek to read a portion of the Bible and to meditate on what it says. Those who cannot read will seek to listen to it read by another. In so doing we will find ourselves prompted to bow down in worship. Responding to the glory and majesty of God revealed in Scripture is a foundational aspect of

true worship. It is nurtured and fed by God's Word.

Prayer

Those who hear are those who pray. (*1 Thessalonians 5.17*). Having read God's promises to us in the Bible we find ourselves pleading those promises before God's throne. What he says he will do and give we ask him to do and give. And we do so, not because we are selfish but because we want to see God loved and adored by others. God's promises are our pleas Matthew Henry rightly argued in his day.

Praise

Those who admire God are those who spontaneously adore God. Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs are to be heard on our lips (*Ephesians 5.19; Colossians 3.16*). They are to be sung sincerely from the heart. We are to praise God for his mercy and grace; for the salvation we enjoy in Christ Jesus; and for the glory for which we shall enjoy for ever, and for which he is now preparing us.

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22 September 2013