**Why Are We Different (part 2)?**

A while ago one of your brethren here asked if I would preach a sermon on the topic of “Why We Are Different?” This sermon is not intended to be on the topic of scriptural authority, but rather to answer a very simple question. “Why are we of the Oak Ridge church of Christ different from most churches in what we teach and practice?” I have received a lot of good feedback from part 1 and I truly appreciate that. I would like to continue with part 2 today. I hope to post the notes and make them available as I will not be able to cover all the scriptures I refer to. This sermon is also consistent with the instructions from Peter in **1 Peter 3:15-17** and we will start there this morning.

Just because a church claims to be following Christ, does not mean they are pleasing to the Lord. What we want to study this morning is, **Why Are We Different?** In part 1, we covered:

**1. THE THINKING OF SOME**

* Many churches believe that whatever an individual can do, a church can do (**e.g., James 1:25-27**). That is not consistent with the New Testament and they fail to realize that James is writing to individual Christians and not to congregations (**James 1:1-2**).
* Many churches feel if a church thinks something is a good work, God will allow them to do it, no matter if the scriptures allow it or not. “We would have rock concerts in our building as long as folks would come.” We see that God defines what a good and acceptable work is (**Matthew 7:21-24, Ephesians 2:8-10**).
* Many churches make it clear that their primary mission is to provide social services to the community. You can see this with a casual scan of church websites in our area. Jesus’ mission on earth was to glorify God and His word and to seek and save the lost. That is the same mission He gave His church. We are to worship God, to save souls and help them on their spiritual journey to Heaven, and to encourage one another (**John 4:24, 17:17, Matthew 16:26-27, 18:11, 28:18-20, Acts 2:40-42, Romans 1:16, 15:5-6, Ephesians 1:13, 3:8-12, 4:11-16, 1 Timothy 2:3-4, 3:15**). These are just a few verses that highlight our primary missions.

**2. WHY DON’T WE …**

* **Why don’t we have church sponsored dances, pool parties, concerts etc.?** These are not permitted uses of the Lord’s treasury and some of these activities can stir up an environment of temptation due to immodest dress and immodest behavior [**Song of Solomon 2:7 (4 times), 1 Peter 4:1-4]**.
* **Why don’t we have church sponsored carnivals, raffles, selling and buying of chances, etc.?** These are not a permitted use of how the church is to raise money and this activity promotes a form of gambling (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2, 1 Timothy 6:6-10**).
* **Why don’t we have church sponsored entertainment such as groups, choirs, bands, or soloists to give concerts during our services or use instruments in our praise of God?** The Lord has specified for all of his disciples to sing in order to praise and worship God and to teach one another in song. Nowhere in the New Testament do we see where churches provided entertainment for one another or use instruments with their singing (**Ephesians 5:18-21, Colossians 3:16-17).**
* **Why don’t we have a church sponsored daycare facility, bake sales, food pantries, flea markets, trunk or treat, easter egg hunts, Wednesday night spaghetti suppers, blood drives, clothing drives, fellowship halls, social centers, gymnasiums, etc.?** These are not New Testament works/activities of the local church, not a function of the local church, and change the focus of the church (**Mark 11:15-17**). The New Testament church is to have a spiritual focus and provide spiritual nourishment. Christ Himself did not come to take away poverty in the world and this is not a mission of His church. His New Testament churches do provide for the physical needs of members of those churches, but do not provide for physical needs/physical activities for communities (**John 6:26-27, 21:15-17, Mark 14:3-7, Acts 2:44-45, 4:35-38, Ro. 14:16-19, 1 Tim. 5:16, 1 Cor. 11:20-22**).

***\*Now we pick up here in part 2 of our study.***

**Why don’t we, the Oak Ridge church of Christ, support man-made organizations?** Many churches feel if a man-made organization such as a school, a hospital, an orphanage, a ministry, etc., is a good work, then why not support these man-made organizations with the money collected for the Lord? In Oak Ridge we do not use money from the Lord’s treasury to support schools (such as Abilene Christian College, David Lipscomb, Freed Hardeman, the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in Karns, Knoxville Christian Academy), hospitals, orphanages, retirement homes, etc.. We do not see any local churches in the New Testament providing support to man-made organizations (**2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 2 Timothy 2:1-2, Titus 2:1-8, Hebrews 10:24-25**). In the New Testament we find the local church is sufficient to:

* + Care for the needs of the local saints
  + Teach and preach the gospel locally and support preachers abroad
  + Develop Christian men and women
  + Develop teachers, elders, and preachers
  + Worship God in a collective manner
* **Why don’t we have an elaborate organization such as other churches?** We find no organization in the New Testament that oversees a local church or multiple churches acceptable to Jesus Christ. In the New Testament we find no board of directors, presidents, councils, archbishops, apostles on this earth, etc., that oversee the work of churches. We simply find elders/pastors/shepherds/overseers/bishops that oversee the work of only the local church they are a part of with the assistance of deacons (**Philippians 1:1, 1 Peter 5:1-4**).
* **Why don’t we provide financial help from the Oak Ridge treasury to those who are not Christians?** Providing help for poor and needy folks of this world is commanded of all Christians (**Matthew 25:37-40, Galatians 6:10, 1 Timothy 6:17-19, James 1:25-27**). However, we find no example of New Testament churches providing financial assistance to non-Christians from the Lord’s collections taken up each Sunday.

**3. SOME THINGS WE DO AND WE PRACTICE**

* Study of God’s Word (**Acts 17:11**)
* Encourage one another (**Hebrews 10:24-25**, exhort, admonish, edify, etc.)
* Reach out to the lost with the gospel – offer spiritual nourishment and salvation to the lost. Our focus is to be on the spiritual teaching, preaching, and outreach of the Gospel (**Acts 2:40-42,** **Romans 1:16**).
* Provide for our own physically and spiritually (**Galatians 6:1-10, Romans 12, 1 John, 1 Timothy 5**).
* Individuals do unto others as we would want done to us – put others first (**Matthew 7:12, Philippians 2:1-4**)
* Individually provide for the less fortunate and those in need (**Galatians 6:10, James 1:25-27**). We find many New Testament examples of individual Christians providing help for those of the church or outside the church to meet their physical and spiritual needs.
* As we have been studying on Sunday mornings, we watch out for each other (as a flock, straying sheep, etc.) (**Acts 20, 1 Peter 5**). God’s way is to have local shepherds of the flock in Oak Ridge. Until that time, each one of us needs to watch out for each other.
* Worship, glorify, obey, and strive to please God (spirit & truth, sweet aroma, etc.) (**John 4:23, 2 Corinthians 2:15-17**)
* Promote unified fellowship in the Lord (**Ephesians 4:1-6, 1 John 1:3-7**)

In **Titus 2:14** disciples of Christ are called special, peculiar, a people for His very own possession. Yes in Oak Ridge, we are a different people from most religious folks around us because we simply want to please God. We were once of the world and now we have become a people of God (**1 Peter 2:9-10**). Let us embrace our uniqueness and shine the Light of Jesus to our friends and loved ones who may be in churches teaching and practicing things that do not please God (**2 Peter 1:19**).

If you are not a child of God today, **why not become a shining light of Jesus today?** You need to believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, be willing to confess before men that He is the Son of God, turn from the things you are serving now and submit to Him in repentance, and then be immersed in water so your sins can be washed away. Jesus and all of us here invite you to become a child of God right now!

If we can help you now, please come forward while we stand and sing!