

1. What is the Church?

The NT word *ekklesia* means assembly, congregation, gathered people. The Church is the people God has redeemed in Christ, joined to Him and therefore joined to each other. Jesus calls His sheep by name; they hear His voice and follow Him. He gathers them into His sheepfold, and He Himself is the gate. Paul calls the Church the **body of Christ**, with Christ as the Head. Peter calls us “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession.” We are His temple, His living stones, His bride.

So, the Church is first **a people Jesus has GATHERED to Himself**. Christ gathers sinners. We receive Him by faith.

But Christ also gathers us **to each other**. He puts us into a body with different gifts and functions. Christianity was never meant to be a private arrangement between Jesus and me. Being a Christian has always come wrapped in a covenant family. Calvin said that no one can have God as Father without having the Church as mother. If God is your Father, His people are your family. You’ve been adopted. So get in, weirdo. You cannot embrace the Head while despising His body.

2. Why have we been gathered?

For the glory and worship of God. God says in Isaiah 43 that He formed a people for Himself “that they might declare my praise.” Peter says we were chosen to “proclaim the excellencies” of the One who called us out of darkness. “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name **together**.” We gather to make much of God through His Word, prayer, sacrament, song, and service.

But Hebrews 10 also says, “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together.” The command isn’t merely, “Go hear a sermon.” Your presence does something to the people around you.

You **stir them up**. This is the gym where we get pumped up! Encourage one another. Challenge one another.

The NT is filled with “one another.” Love one another. Bear one another’s burdens. Forgive one another. Confess to one another. Pray for one another. Serve one another. Teach one another. Sing to one another. **You cannot do most of that alone.**

Isolation is one of the enemy’s tools. Predators isolate. Pull a coal from the fire and it glows for a while, then dims, then goes cold. You can pray at home. Read Scripture at home. Listen to preaching in the tractor. But don’t fool yourself: none of that is the **gathered Church**. You need other Christians, and they need you.

3. Where is the gathered Church going?

Revelation 7 shows the destination: a multitude nobody can number, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, gathered before the throne crying, “Salvation belongs to our God...and to the Lamb!” Our Sunday gathering is a dim picture of that coming reality.

Christ is gathering that people through His Spirit and His gospel. “Go. Make disciples. Teach.” J. Piper put it well: **“Missions exists because worship doesn’t.”** Missions will eventually end. Evangelism will end. There will be no unreached peoples in the new creation. **Worship never ends. The gathered Church never ends.**

But it starts here. **The Church gathered is the launch point.** So be here. Become a member. Stand and be counted. Sing even when you don’t like the song. Listen to the Word. Come to the Table. Pray with the saints. Know your care group. Serve someone who cannot repay you. Forgive people. Bear with people. Stop expecting Christ’s Church to contain nobody who inconveniences you.