

The Old-Time Church

Jeremiah 6:16

Sermon by: Stephen Herrod, Pastor

MESSAGE:

THE WAY OF THE OLD-TIME CHURCH

PASSAGE: JEREMIAH 6:16 ESV

Thus says the Lord:
“Stand by the roads, and look,
and ask for the ancient paths,
where the good way is; and walk in it,
and find rest for your souls.
But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message is to call the Church back to its biblical roots, emphasizing repentance and a return to the principles of the early church. It challenges the local church to reflect on how the church has shifted away from its original mission and encourages a revival of true worship, community, and justice. Ultimately, it points to Jesus as the “old-time way” that leads to life and faithfulness. The sermon invites the church to walk in God’s ancient paths for deliverance and rest.

SERMON NOTES

Sermon: This verse in scripture is part of a larger context where God, through the

prophet Jeremiah, is calling the people of God to repentance. It involves Judah’s spiritual decline, where the people of God had turned away from following His commands and were engaging in social injustice, idol worship, and oppression. The priests and prophets were corrupt, and as a result of the corruption and spiritual decline of both God’s people and God’s leaders, God’s prophet, Jeremiah, warned them on behalf of God of the impending judgment and destruction that would come upon them if they did not return to God’s way.

When the Lord says to “stand by the roads, look, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and to walk in it,” He was referring to the ancient ways of obedience, faithfulness, and righteousness laid out in the Law of Moses. God’s way is the path that leads to life, rest, and blessing from God. The “good way” in verse 16 refers to the way

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of God's commandments, which promised peace, justice, and rest for their souls if they followed it. Nevertheless, despite the clear call to return to the right path, the people of Judah stubbornly refused and said, "We will not walk in it."

For this sermon, I want us to go on a journey together. I want us, as a local church, as the people of God, to stand by the same roads and look. The first thing I want you to see is what the church has become after all these years. One this is for sure: The church as it is, is not the church as it was.

Since its inception, the church has: devolved from an assembly of people to a place, transitioned from a movement to an institution, shifted from being distinct from culture and a light to the nations, led by the Spirit, to being of the culture and following its trends, and reduced from being a gathered people with a mission to a scattered people without purpose.

And as a result of these drastic changes, we now see a concept of church that is not a house of prayer, but a house of messiness.

As a result of these drastic changes, we see a concept of church that is not a house of prayer, but a den of thieves.

As a result of these drastic changes, we see local churches where people gather not for worship of the true and living God in Spirit and in Truth, but for entertainment and to be entertained.

As a result of these drastic changes, we see local churches that are driven not by God's Spirit and God's Word, but by people and people's ideologies that have been borrowed from the world.

As a result of these drastic changes, more wolves than ever before have come into the assemblies of God's people, disguising themselves as preachers, priests, and prophets, leading people astray with the teachings of demons rather than the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Be not mistaken, the church as it is, is not the church as it was.

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Some of you standing at the road today have, in time, experienced a taste of the old-time church, and as you look at the church as it is, you can remember a time before this, that now, in reflection, you call the “good old days.”

You have a taste of the old-time church when Gospel music was not self-centered but was Christ-centered and God-exalting.

You have a taste of the old-time church when the people gathered together to read the scriptures, pray the scriptures, sing the scriptures, and preach the scriptures.

You have a taste of the old-time church when, if the people of God were not sick or shut-in, they would gather often and regularly, and there was a strong sense of community and fellowship.

In the “good old days,” Everyone knew each other, supported each other, and shared resources. You have a taste of the old-time church when the church was jam-packed on Sunday because the people of God gathered together no matter how busy they were, and no matter what they had been through or

were going through, and those gatherings extended beyond Sunday to weekly prayer meetings, Bible studies, and fellowships.

You have a taste of the old-time church when worship was deeply expressive, with passionate teaching and singing that came from a heart satisfied in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the congregation would praise God together.

You have a taste of the old-time church when grandchildren, children, parents, and grandparents all gathered together for worship.

But as you stand at the road and look today, you can clearly see that the church as it is, is not the church as it was.

Others of you stand at the road and look today, having not tasted the old-time church, but although you have not even a taste of what the local church was, all of us who stand at the road looking today must take note of the spiritual decay and decline along the way that has brought us to this road in the first place.

And we must follow the directions that our guide has given us to ask for the

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ancient paths, to ask where the good way is, and to walk in it!

Considering what was, and despite what is, the church must adhere to the word of the Lord and walk in the path that God has laid out for the church.

And lest you be deceived, let me tell you what the church really is!

The church is the body of Christ, which consists of all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. Those people who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation are situated all over the world, and the gatherings of believers in various communities are local churches.

Local churches are gatherings of believers who claim Jesus as the Christ! Notice, friends, that the church is not a building.

The church is not a denomination.

The church is the body of Christ, which consists of all the gatherings of believers who claim Jesus as the Christ and truly follow Jesus the Christ!

Here is something else that must be cleared up. There is a new cliché that suggests you are the church—that you, alone, are the church in some sense. But let me help you here. While you may be part of the church, while you may be part of the body of Christ, it is impossible for you, yourself, to be the church. It is impossible for you, yourself, to be the body of Christ because the church is not about you!

Get this: by definition, the word "church" is a translation of the Greek word ἐκκλησία "ekklesia", which is defined as an assembly, or rather, literally, "called-out ones." By definition, you or I cannot possibly be the church in and of ourselves, because the church, by definition and understanding, is an assembly of people whom God has called out from the world, out of darkness, into the marvelous light!

God does not have isolated temples all across this world. You cannot be the church by yourself, and you cannot be the church apart from God's people. God's idea for the church is for God's people to be assembled together, for it is

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only in the assembly of the body that the body can truly function as God intended.

Family, as we stand at the road and look, we must seek God's Spirit and God's word for the ancient path. We must seek the Scriptures that we may see where the good way is and walk in it so that the church may truly be the church!

And I'm running out of time now, but as we seek God's Spirit and God's Word for the ancient paths of the church, as we seek God's Spirit and God's Word to see where the good way is and walk in it, I am here to tell you that we must go back further than the 2000s, the 90s, the 80s, the 70s, and the 60s; we must go back further than the good old days.

But if we are to truly find rest for our souls and be the church that Jesus died for, the church that is the bride of Christ, the church that Jesus is returning for, we must go back to the ways of the old-time church.

I'm finished now, but hear what I am saying:

What if Back to Church Sunday is less about a marketing tactic to get people in the building and more about the grace of God leading us to repent and turn back to the old-time ways of the Church?

The old-time ways of gathering together regularly, devoting ourselves completely to the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in Acts 2:42.

The old-time ways of having everything in common with one another, and restoring the intimacy of relationship with each other in Christ Jesus as recorded in Acts 2:44a.

The old-time ways of looking out for each other in such a way that those among us who have much will help those who have little as recorded in Acts 2:44b.

The old-time ways of being one in heart and mind as recorded in Acts 4:32a.

The old-time ways of justice and righteousness being at the center of our fellowship as recorded in Acts 4:32b.

The old-time ways of pursuing what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding as recorded in Romans 14:19.

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The old-time ways of the strong fulfilling their obligations to bear with the failings of the weak as recorded in Romans 15:1. The old-time ways of spiritual people restoring those caught in sin with a spirit of gentleness as recorded in Galatians 6:1.

The old-time ways of speaking the truth in love as recorded in Ephesians 4:15! The old-time ways of looking not only to our own interests, but also to the interests of others, as recorded in Philippians 2:3-4.

The old-time ways of bearing with each other and forgiving one another if you have a grievance against someone as recorded in Colossians 3:13.

The old-time ways of letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in our hearts to God as recorded in Colossians 3:16.

The old-time ways of encouraging each other and building each other up as recorded in 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

The old-time ways of considering how to stir up one another to love and good

works, not neglecting to meet together, as recorded in Hebrews 10:24-25.

The old-time ways of confessing our sins to each other and praying for each other that we may be healed as recorded in James 5:16.

I'm finished now, but as we stand at this road together, as we look back on what was and look at what is, may we obey the word of God to walk in the old-time way so that we may find rest for our souls!

And might I add, that ultimately, the way of the Old-Time Church is Jesus the Christ! He died for our sins according to the scriptures, He was buried, and He was raised on the third day! And He, Himself, said I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the father but by me (John 14:6). This is the word of God for the people of God; thanks be to God! Amen.

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