

## Précis of sermon July 15 by Rev. Stephen Andrews on the Church as the Temple of God

The focus of the sermon was on the nature of the Church. Rev. Andrews, the Principal of Wycliffe College, Toronto felt that this was a good thing to reflect on during summer months so that when we return to our routines in the fall, we have a renewed vision for and conviction about the church's place in our lives and, importantly, our place in the Church's life. Rationally minded people may view Christians as "lunatics" and find it hard to understand how people they respect at work can actually "buy this stuff". Cynics often view Christians as hypocrites. At the same time, many who do attend church may be doing it out of a sense of duty or obligation; others come because they feel a particular need is being met. Rev Andrews challenged us to ask ourselves "why is it I come to church?"

Rev. Andrews spoke of what the Church is in relation to God. In Paul's letters, the image of the Church as the temple of God is referenced a number of times. In 1 Corinthians 3 v16 it is written that "surely you know that you are God's temple, where the Spirit of God dwells" and in Ephesians 2, v21 we read "in Him the whole building is bonded together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord". For the Jews, the Temple in Jerusalem was the most holy Place and annually worshipers came from far and wide to pay homage to the Lord. It was not that this was the only place where the Lord could be found as He is present in all places and at all times. As we read in Isaiah 66 v1 "Heaven is my throne and the earth is My footstool". Nonetheless the temple was regarded even by Jesus as "God's house" (Matthew 12 v4) and he held it in great respect as is evident in the story of his cleansing of the temple.

As God is everywhere, there some justification for worshipping God at the lake, at the cottage or the golf course but He has chosen to reveal himself in a unique way in the Church as Church is designed to bring glory to Him through our worship and in our witness. We are often guilty of viewing the Church from the perspective of what we can get from it. We may think of Church as a theatre where we gather as an audience and expect to be entertained. – the sanctuary being the stage were God and the supporting players perform and the congregation demonstrates approval or disapproval by their weekly attendance. Rev. Andrews said this view of the church is common but wrong. We are the performers and God is the audience. "God does not visit us week by week to inspire or amuse us. He lives in our midst; and we assemble week by week to worship Him".

This view of the Church has a number of practical implications, the first being that we must not "give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing" (Hebrews 10 v25). The Creator of the universe has deigned to be present with us in a special way when we assemble together. We should not pass on the opportunity of worshipping with fellow believers. We need to believe that God is waiting to meet with us in His temple. Secondly, since the Church is God's temple, we must be both responsible and responsive in our worship, meaning that every aspect of our worship must be offered to

God from the best of our abilities. We were encouraged to wholeheartedly join together in the life of worship for we are in God's temple and He is in our midst. Finally, when we acknowledge that we are in God's temple, we are also acknowledging that we belong to Him and that He can have his way with us. The Bible does not say that we possess God but rather that He possesses us. We are God's temple. And just as the Temple in Jerusalem was set on a hill as a beacon of light to the world, so God's design for us as his temples is that we should come to worship him and engage the world around us by opening our doors to any who are seeking Him.

In summary, the key points of the sermon were that the Church is the Temple of God, which means that God is with us in a special way when we worship. His presence with us means we need to offer to God the best of our worship and also willingness to welcome the outsider into our midst. This may require some sacrifice but we are reminded that God's son was sacrificed for us to bring us near to God, so we must be willing to give up what is dear to us for those who don't know him. Rev. Andrews prayer was that Lake Joseph Community Church be a place where the lost and seeking can say "God must dwell here!"