



THE PASTOR'S PEN

Volume 43 No. 119

September 10, 2014

On Church Attendance

One question that is often asked about church attendance is: "Why is it that some people go to church regularly, some go occasionally, and others hardly go at all?" Usually, when a person asks that question, what they really want to know is: "How little do I have to go to church and still be in good graces with God?" If you are at that point, then trust me, you have already missed out on the whole basic reason of why church attendance is important to you. However, this line of questioning does open the door for all of us to discuss the importance of participation within the Christian community that we call "the Church." It also leads us to the even more important question of: "Are there any good reasons that I should go to church at all?" that many of our young people in our homes are asking us.

The answer to these kinds of questions and dilemmas can be found in the Bible. It starts with the fact that the Bible calls us to be The Church, and not just go to church. Now to effectively be The Church, believers need to faithfully gather with the other members of the Body of Christ for the equipping (teaching and empowering) of the saints (Christians) and to encourage each other in living a Christian lifestyle.

From the pages of history, President Theodore Roosevelt was a man who believed in attending and participating in church for these very reasons. In 1917, he gave an interview to a reporter from the *Ladies Home Journal* where that subject was covered. In that article President Roosevelt is credited with offering ten good reasons for going to church each week. His thoughts were very insightful and so I wanted to share some of his opinions with you on this important topic today. According to TR:

1. In the actual world a churchless community, a community where men have abandoned and scoffed at or ignored their religious needs, is a community on the rapid downgrade.
2. Church work and church attendance mean the cultivation of the habit of feeling some responsibility for others and the sense of braced moral strength, which prevents a relaxation of one's own moral fiber.
3. There are enough holidays for most of us that can quite properly be devoted to pure holiday making. Sundays differ from other holidays, among other ways, in the fact that there are 52 of them every year. On Sunday, go to church.
4. Yes, I know all the excuses. I know that one can worship the Creator and dedicate oneself to good living in a grove of trees, or by a running brook, or in one's own house, just as well as in church. But I also know as a matter of cold fact the average man does not thus worship or thus dedicate himself. If he strays away from church, he does not spend his time in good works or lofty meditation. He looks over the colored supplement of the newspaper.

5. He may not hear a good sermon at church, but unless he is very unfortunate, he will hear a sermon by a good man who, with his good wife, is engaged all the week long in a series of wearing, humdrum and important tasks for making hard lives a little easier.
6. He will listen to and take part in reading some beautiful passages from the Bible and if he is not familiar with the Bible, he has suffered a loss.
7. He will probably take part in singing some good hymns.
8. He will meet and nod to, or speak to, good quiet neighbors. He will come away feeling a little more charitably toward all the world, even toward those excessively foolish young men who regard churchgoing as rather a soft performance.
9. I advocate a man's joining in church works for the sake of showing his faith by his works.
10. The man who does not in some way, active or not, connect himself with some active, working church misses many opportunities for helping his neighbors, and therefore, incidentally, for helping himself.

In the ninety-six years that have passed since that historic interview with President Roosevelt, church attendance and participation are still vitally important to faith development and Christian service. In agreement with the President, the Bible advise us "not to give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, even more as you see the day of the Lord approaching." (Hebrews 10:25).

So let me ask you: Why not go to church this Sunday? Come and learn to be the Church in your community. Come and be with us in our worship and praise, unless of course you are sick or in jail. If that is the case, then let us know and we can bring the Church to you so you can still be a part of the support and fellowship that we both need from each other. We cannot do it without you and you cannot do it without us.

In the words of TR, "Bully!"

James