

God or Man Centered?

Mark 11:15-17
Charlie Brackett

Let's get one more lesson from this passage about worship before moving on. We have noticed that today, God's house is His church. It is not a building made with men's hands, but a spiritual house made up of individual Christians. That is the true house of God, and the place where real worship takes place.

That raises a question about the building that many call the church, that is, the building in which we assemble together for worship. Is it of no importance? If it is not the true house of God, are we free to use or abuse it anyway we like? Absolutely not! While it is not the dwelling place of God, it has a spiritual purpose and God does dwell there when we gather in the name of Christ. In Matthew 18:19 Jesus said, "...where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I with them."

Some church buildings are magnificent structures, monuments to the pride of men's achievements if not to the glory of God's name. Inside is often a sanctuary, a place generally thought of and treated as one would expect to treat a holy place. Frequently, the sanctuary, designated for the worship of God, is surrounded by a variety of social facilities for satisfying the physical side of man. There are kitchens, nurseries, gymnasiums, teen recreation rooms, music and drama rooms, life-care centers, and centers for activities ranging from family counseling to sewing. If you watch such a church's calendar, you will find social activities offered for youth groups, singles and the elderly. There will be financial seminars, and workshops in various crafts and hobbies. There will be puppet shows, dramatic performances, both instrumental and vocal performances of one kind or another, and the local symphony orchestra may be invited in from time to time to address the cultural side of man.

I'm not telling most of you anything new, but here is my point. In most cases, much if not all of the money that built such a facility was the Lord's money. It was given to Him when the collection basket was passed on the Lord's day. The same money which built the sanctuary built the kitchen and the gymnasium. The same money which dedicated a place of worship, dedicated places of recreation, entertainment, and social development. Once given to Him, it is all God's money. Did He intend for man to turn the place of worship and prayer into a place of social development, a center for family and community diversion. I think not! Where is the authority for such in the New Testament?

Can we not see the difference in what is oriented toward man rather than centered around God? When men made the temple a place for furthering their own interests, Jesus dramatically called religious leaders back to the fact it was a place of prayer. Some religious leaders today need to be brought up abruptly and reminded that worship of God ought to be God directed. They need to see that He is to be its center, not man.