

# What Is Church Membership To You ?

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 27 August 2023

Preacher: Pastor Cal Morrison

- [ 0 : 00 ]     A couple of weeks ago, we were in 1 Corinthians 12, and we were trying to understand what church is. We were discussing, we were looking at what our picture of the church is. And this morning, following that, I want to look at what it is to be a part of the family.
- I'm going to be reading from Ephesians chapter 2, if you have that, please open that up. But not necessarily giving an exclusive exposition of that, but taking a broader look at this theme of what it means to be a part of the church. So, I'm going to be reading from Ephesians 2, from verse 11 to the end.
- I'm going to be reading from the NIV. This is Paul speaking to church in Ephesus, giving some good reminders that help us frame what the Lord has done and frame who we are in light of where we came from. So, Paul writes this, Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called uncircumcised by those who call themselves the circumcision, that done in the body by the hands of men.
- Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.
- But now, in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.
- [ 2 : 22 ]     His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.
- He came and preached to those who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
- Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.
- Built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone, in him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord, and in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
- Amen. This is God's Word. We pray he blesses the reading of it. What comes to mind when you hear the word member or membership?
- [ 3 : 48 ]     That was the question two weeks ago. What comes to mind when you hear the word church? What is the picture in your mind? Well, what is the picture in your mind when you hear the word member or membership?
- Recently in America, in the news, there's a controversy, a case going on in the news, where this family, who 20 years ago, they took in a homeless boy and they raised him, they brought him in as part of the family, and they cared for him as a son.

When he was 18 years old, they were helping him get a place in college to play American football, and there were certain legal factors to consider in doing this process of getting to college.

And so, long story short, this boy had success both in college and professional football at the highest level.

A book was shortly afterwards written about their story in 2006, and in 2009, a film was made. Both of these are called *The Blind Side*.

[ 4 : 59 ] Don't know if you've heard of it. Anyway, *The Blind Side* is a true story. The film made a good bit of money, and this issue that's now happening in the news is partly to do with the distribution of that money, although the boy himself made a lot of money in his career as well.

Now, the sticking point in the middle of this case is this legal process back when he was going to college, the legal process the family took to get him to college.

Now, while they had explored adopting him, at the time he was going to college, they were apparently advised to go down the route of conservatorship. He now claims that the family duped him into thinking that he was a real part of the family, and claims the money from the movie that went to the family was distributed among the family, but legally, he's not part of the family.

Now, he didn't get his fair share, as his claim. The family, of course, are denying this, and it's a complex court case, it's a complex lawsuit, and it's a sad example of estrangement, and who knows what the truth is.

But what is now clear is that he isn't really a legal part of the family. While he was treated like a son in the past, and while the family say they will still treat him like a son, legally speaking, he is not a son.

[ 6 : 25 ] He's just not. He wasn't adopted. It's messy business. Now, what would be at stake in your life if at some point you found out you weren't really a part of your family?

What would be at stake? Is there something that that hangs on, something that depends on, maybe an inheritance or something that will affect something, but what would be at stake if you found out you weren't really a part of the family?

We were talking about this two weeks ago, that what you think about church will affect what you think about membership and vice versa. And we looked at the picture that we often paint of church, and then the picture the Bible paints of what church is.

And one of those pictures that the Bible paints of what church is, and what it means to be a Christian, is that you are a very real part of the family.

This is what Ephesians 2 is talking about, that you who were once far off, you weren't part of this, you've now been brought in, fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.

[ 7 : 28 ] You're a very real part of the family. Now, if you're a Christian, you're not going to find out years later that you weren't really adopted. You're not going to find that out.

And so you shouldn't be treated like you're not actually part of the family. If you're a Christian, then the adoption papers have been signed. You are a child of God and a member of his household.

So when we think about church and how we talk about and practice membership, it should reflect the wonderful picture that the Bible paints. The problem that folks often have is when our practice of these things and our experience is like they are no different from the social clubs and membership subscriptions in our modern secular culture.

They ought to be very different. This shouldn't be the case. The Bible paints a far better picture. Now, the Bible and the picture it paints doesn't tell us exactly how to do everything.

And so in many places, many cultures, we have many things that help us to figure these things out. You know, there are denominations. There are traditions.

[ 8 : 37 ] Some churches have charitable status. Many structures, many churches have documents to help churches function in orderly ways. These are not necessary evils.

They are often simply helpful things to help us function in our society. For instance, let me tell you a helpful thing. Page one of the Constitution is about advancing the Christian faith.

That's a good thing. Helps us to do that. But equally, things like denominations and traditions and so on and so forth, things like these are not meant to be masters.

They're meant to be servants. When Jesus said, for instance, that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, it was clear that the Sabbath wasn't the chief end of man.

The Sabbath was to help man fulfill his God-given purpose. But it wasn't an end in and of itself. This was clear when Jesus said this. And so, denominational ties, traditions, constitutions, structures, so on and so forth, these things ought not to be an end in and of themselves.

[ 9 : 48 ] They are supposed to help us fulfill our purpose as a church. But like the Sabbath, these things, all these things, can be used in unhelpful ways when we fixate on them and miss the heart of it.

And this is what the Pharisees did with Jesus. They were so fixated on Sabbath laws and often added traditions that they put a burden on the people to the point of hindering acts of love and mercy.

They hindered love and mercy for neighbor and other creatures and things simply because they were putting a burden on the people. They were literally making the Sabbath master the people rather than serve the people.

And it's almost like Jesus said, is this what God intended? Is this what God intends for any of these things that they should master us?

Do we not have one master? Again, the Sabbath itself, these things, the Sabbath wasn't bad. It was the fixation on it that missed the spirit of it.

[ 10 : 53 ] And so, for us in our time, traditions are there to serve us but not to master us. When we get fixated on things, even good things, it can cause us to miss the very heart of it.

And we could end up using good things to place a burden on people when they were made to free people. And when we miss the heart of it, then we begin to look less and less like a loving family.

We're supposed to look like a loving family. And these things are there to help serve us, to enable us to do that. Think about this, for instance, in children.

Okay, Paul says this to the Corinthians. He says, and you're, don't be like children in your thinking, Corinthian Christians. Because what do children do? So if you say to a child, if you say to a child, for instance, don't watch the TV before you finish your homework.

And then you go through and you see your child on the iPad. What did I tell you? You said not to watch the TV. And they fixate on the letter of it.

[ 12 : 02 ] And you're like, well, you've just missed the spirit of it. You know, being literalistic about the black and white that's on the paper, you can completely miss the heart of it. But the Jews were doing this with the law that was in black and white in the Torah.

And Jesus came along and his interpretation of the law wasn't wildly different from what Judaism was supposed to be. His interpretation was getting at the heart and spirit of the law.

What is the greatest commandment? Well, is it not to love the Lord your God with all your heart, your mind, your soul, your strength? And don't forget this, to love your neighbor as yourself.

And so, we ought not get fixated on things and be literalistic and miss the spirit of it. This is why we need to get to the heart of what the Bible sees the church as.

If we are just thinking about the church in black and white and what this and that says, we're going to miss the heart of it. And how the Bible defines who is a part of the church, who is a part of the family, and what's that supposed to look like.

[ 13 : 09 ] This family in America, the story of this family who took this boy in, you know, at some point in time was a great, great story. It was a story of love and success for everyone involved.

But somewhere along the way, that got lost. And people started bickering about the black and white on paper. And now it just looks like estrangement and fighting over money and legalities.

And it's sad. Missed the heart of it altogether. One of the reasons Paul writes what he does in 1 Corinthians 12 is because some people felt like they really weren't a part of the family.

And then other people were treating some people like they weren't really a part of the family. And Paul says, how can this be? This cannot be. And then he gets to the heart of it. Well, you're thinking of yourself more than you're thinking of other people.

The freedom that Christ has won for us is not for ourselves. And it's not for our own gain. It's that we might serve in love. And is that not our God-given purpose?

[ 14 : 11 ] We were created for relationship. We were created to love and serve. What is the greatest act of love? This world thinks the greatest act of love is sex.

It's not. It's sacrifice. We're going to be thinking about that later. Greatest act of love is sacrifice. Love in action. Agape. God showed his love for us and that he gave his one and only son.

Greatest love that someone can have for another, Jesus says, is that he lays down his life. People in Corinth were doing all sorts of things not to love one another. They were boasting about who baptized them, grounding their faith in how much wisdom they had.

Some were using their freedom as a license for sexual gratification. Some were insisting on their own rights and then taking their brothers to a secular court to sue them. Some were insisting on their own rights to eat whatever they want despite how it might be a stumbling block to their fellow brother.

Paul says, all things are lawful but not all things build up and you're doing things that don't build up. Let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor. Some people, even in the meal of the church, were coming and having seconds, thirds, fourths before other people were able to get there.

[ 15 : 32 ] and they were consuming even the Lord's Supper all to themselves so that other people missed out on this sacrament that the Lord gave. And so even when Paul says, whoever, anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself, he's not talking about discerning your own body.

He's saying, whoever eats and drinks without discerning the church, your family, without thinking about your family, if you do this without thinking about your family, you're drinking judgment on yourself because you're excluding your own family members.

I mean, it's a challenge, isn't it? These things are a challenge. How is what we are doing affecting other people in our family? Whatever we say and do, is it for good?

Is it for bad? Do our words and actions build one up or tear down? And he goes on and he says, you are using even spiritual gifts for your selfish gain.

You're using them to puff yourself up and God gave them so that he could build people up. And then he says in chapter 14 that he would rather use five words that build someone up than 10,000 words that don't.

[ 16 : 53 ] This is the whole thing of chapter 13, isn't it? Probably everyone who's been to a wedding in here have heard 1 Corinthians 13. Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is romantic.

Paul is saying you need to get to the business of loving one another. And loving one another means sacrificing and thinking of other people. Consequently, that's good for a marriage.

It's not a bad marriage passage. Jesus, a commandment, a new commandment I give you, that you would love one another just as I have loved you.

By this will all people know that you are my disciples, that you love one another. So what does it look like to be in the family of God? If someone went around Bells Hill and they said, this little group over here, that's the family of God.

Do you want to be a part of that family? What do you think they would say? If someone went around town and said, Bells Hill Baptist, and you could say this, I'm not saying this exclusively about this church, but as a church, if someone went around town and says, Bells Hill Baptist is the family of God, what would they see?

[ 18 : 11 ] What would, what picture of who God is and what his family is like, what picture would that give them? what would they think of God?

What does the world see in the family of God when it looks to any church? Do we reflect by the way we speak to and treat one another the love of Christ?

Paul says, strive to excel in building up the church in 1 Corinthians 14, 12. And so we need to think, these are things to reflect on, they're not one way or the other, I'm not saying that we don't do this or we do, they're just to reflect on, this is the picture of what it means to be a part of the family.

And so we need to think about the church more like a family and like a body, because that's how the Lord sees it. We mustn't reduce our practices down to legalities and divisions.

These things are there to help us, but not master us. And so if you're in Christ, then you're part of His body and part of His family. It's a family. And so, wherever you are, whoever you are, are you a child adopted into the household of God?

[ 19 : 23 ] And if you are, then, that's amazing. Do you feel like that? Should, and if you've ever parented a child, you will, you will understand this.

If you've not, then I don't want to put you off. But, should children divide over who sits where at the dinner table? Should the children fight over who has what toy?

Should the children divide over who can do this better than the other? Should they fight over who gets to sit in the front seat in the car? Should they argue over who is the better son and the better daughter?

I mean, in all of this, what do the parents really want? Do the parents not want love among the family, among the children? Do the parents, and this might sound familiar to you, do the parents not want love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and, boy oh boy, self-control?

Do they not want an attitude that is eager to share and quick to say sorry and quick to forgive? I mean, in a normal family, that's what you want.

[ 20 : 41 ] How could it not be the same in the family of God? Do you see the resemblance with church? I mean, we're all fallen creatures, we're all human, we all struggle with this at times.

But many times, you know, it's mature adults, even Christians who have been shown the highest and most costly mercy from God, yet we can still, all of us, do this.

And this is why Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15. There were sinners and tax collectors gathering around Jesus to hear him.

What a wonderful thing. But the Pharisees and teachers of the law were there and they were muttering about who Jesus was speaking to. And by the end of the parable, the Pharisees and teachers are shown to be like the angry and bitter big brother, refusing to celebrate or rejoice when someone who was lost is found and someone who was dead is now alive.

Now, imagine the big brother. I think the big brother, if you know the parable, I think the big brother would be happy for the son, the other son, to just now be a servant.

[ 21 : 56 ] Ah, you don't deserve to be a son anymore. But that's not what the father says. I mean, it's true. The young brother says, I don't deserve this.

But it's not about whether you deserve it or not. It's the grace and love of God is bigger. But we need to ensure that in churches we're not like the big brother.

Jesus said in Matthew 7, the measure of mercy and judgment that you use on others will be applied to you. So, be really slow to judge and very quick to show mercy because the measure you use on others will be used on you.

Ephesians 4 says that all the members of this family and this body ought to build one another up in love. Church is a family who ought to be known for their love for one another.

And if you're in Christ then you're in the family. The dividing line isn't through the body. It's not through the family. It's around the church. It is between those in Christ and those not in Christ.

[ 23 : 06 ] And so, what we need to be clear on is not who is a better or more obedient son. It's not who has more ability in the body. It's not who works the hardest in the family.

What we need to be clear on is simply who is in the family in the first place. That's what we need to be clear on. What it means to be in Christ. That's where the fence is. That's where the gate, the door is.

There shouldn't be any fences or walls dividing Christians from one another. The wall should be around the church. The wall goes around the flock, not through the flock, with all the sheep on the inside and the non-sheep on the outside.

And how do you get inside? Through the door. And who is the door? John says in John chapter 10 that Jesus said, I am the door of the sheep.

If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. You see, no sheep saved by the good shepherd should be on the outside of the wall.

[ 24 : 13 ] God forbid. Membership isn't something extra for cleaner sheep. It isn't simply the affirmation. It's not something for cleaner sheep or sheep that are tidier or more obedient at listening to the shepherd's voice.

It is simply an affirmation that you are a sheep in the first place and that you are part of his flock. That's not to say that there's not a wall and there's not a door. It's just, what is the wall?

Where is the wall? And what is the door? That's all. So, how do you become a child in the family of God? How do you go through this door to get in?

Well, John 1 says that Jesus came to his own and his own people did not receive him, but to all who did receive him, what does it mean to receive him? Who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

There you have it. That's how you get into the family. Well, how do you become a member? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6, Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? For as it is written, the two will become one flesh.

[ 25 : 22 ] He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. You are not your own. You were bought with a price. In chapter 12, he says, Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body. The body does not consist of one member, but of many. You were bought with a price. The life of the good shepherd.

We were all baptized into one body, the body of Christ. That's the way in. He is the door. He is the way. It's by his spirit and his name. So becoming a member is becoming a Christian, is becoming a sheep, is becoming a citizen, is becoming a son or daughter in the household of God.

Now, the form, the structure that we practice in churches to state this is right and good. It's simply affirming who you are. That's what it is. It's not something extra.

It shouldn't be treated as something extra. It's an affirmation of who you are. It's a recognition. It's not a second step. It's a recognition of who you are and your place in the family, your place in the body, your place in the flock.

[ 26 : 46 ] It is any given church saying to any given person that we recognize you and welcome you and count you as part of the family. You're a passport-carrying citizen of his kingdom.

You're a sheep in his flock. You're a child in his family and you are a limb in his body. That is what this membership process is. At the same time, it is you affirming that this indeed is an embassy of his kingdom, that these people are the household of God, that they are sheep of his pasture and together are his body in this place.

And Jesus gives his church the right and responsibility to do this. He gives the church the keys to the kingdom. He entrusts the church to protect the flock and to guard the gospel because there are wolves out there that want the sheep.

There are false teachers, there are false Christs, and there are false Christians. And so, he gives us things to entrust and guard.

Now, there will be tares among the wheat. There will be goats among the sheep. In fact, I think the picture that is given that it's preferable to have a goat come in to the flock than it is for a sheep to be outside of the wall.

[ 28 : 12 ] There will be tares among the wheat and goats among the sheep. To the best of our ability, we want to affirm true believers, but it will not always be apparent. And so, some of the time, all we have to go on is three things.

I think there are three things that are all we have to go on to make our best judgment. And that is clear teaching on what it means, sincere confession from the person, and sound judgment from the family.

Those three things. Clear teaching on who Jesus is, what it means to be a part of his family, sincere confession from a person wanting to join that family, and sound judgment from the family to welcome them in.

That's it. That's our job. Because if we know anything about these parables of wheat and tares and sheep and goats, we know that it is not our job to separate. In these parables, it's not our job because we are far more likely to damage the wheat and harm the sheep if we try to do the separating.

It's not our job. Jesus will do that in the end. Rather, our job is to teach clearly who Jesus is and teach clearly what it means to be a citizen, a child, a sheep, a limb, and then by our best judgment take sincere professions and acts of faith to be true.

[ 29 : 31 ] It's my conviction that churches ought to do this. Teach clearly who Christ is and what it means to be a part of his family. Teach clearly on how to become a part of his family and then anyone who affirms this to welcome them into his family.

That's membership in the body. That's also called sonship in the family and it's also called citizenship in his kingdom. Now, can you imagine, can you imagine for a moment a person who wants to be recognized as a child in a family and they insist on all the rights of a child but they don't want to sign the adoption papers?

They don't want to spend time with the family. It doesn't make sense. Can you imagine a person who wants to go to an embassy and be classified as a citizen and be protected and provided for but doesn't want a passport, doesn't want to provide information, doesn't want anything to do with these people of that kingdom?

Or can you imagine a limb that wants to be a limb in the body and wants to have all the benefits of a limb in the body but doesn't want to be attached to the body? It doesn't make sense.

The kind of membership that the Bible talks about is also citizenship and it's also sonship. It is how you are part of the body, how you are part of the kingdom and how you are part of the family.

[ 30 : 53 ] And so let me ask you this, let us have a wee, because we live in a peculiar time where people get to pick and choose. That's not been the case for the great majority of history. So let me ask you this, did this, did your hand choose to be a part of the body that it's attached to?

No. Did a citizen choose which country they were born in? Did a child choose which family they were born in? None of these things chose.

And so membership like sonship, like citizenship, isn't something we choose or do. It's intrinsic to our faith. It is intrinsic to who we are.

You cannot be a Christian and not a member. You cannot be a Christian and not a citizen. You cannot be a Christian and not a son or daughter. And the truth is, while we live here waiting for his kingdom, we can only live out our citizenship through a local embassy.

We can only live out our sonship through a local family. We can only live out our membership through a local body. And so I want to give you just five practical and theological reasons why membership is intrinsic to your faith.

[ 32 : 14 ] It's not extra, it's intrinsic to your faith. Five very quick reasons. Firstly, you can actually keep his commandments when you're part of a church in ways that you cannot when you're not.

There are so many commandments given to Christians that cannot be kept unless you are part of a body. Secondly, your gifts can serve the body as they are supposed to.

And so if you're not part of a body, you are not using your gifts as they're supposed to be used. Thirdly, you are strengthened by the body as you are supposed to be.

Fourthly, together you manifest Christ to one another and to the world. And fifthly, you are known and counted and given a place as you ought to be.

These things are not merely benefits, they are intrinsic to your faith. So, I want to poke at the question that's probably at the heart of all this. Do you need to be on a membership role somewhere?

[ 33 : 23 ] Does this need to be a formal thing? Now, let me say something that a membership role is not. A membership role is not the Lamb's Book of Life.

Thank God. It is not but, but, let me tell you something. It should be noted that throughout the Bible there are many genealogies, many censuses, many lists, many registers, many names, noted down all over the place.

And for Israel, this was important to affirm and validate someone's place among the people or in a land. Every family and every tribe bar the Levites were given a portion of the land.

So, how important would it be then to be known and counted among the people? Similarly, in the New Testament, we see the importance of being known and counted to be included in the provisions of the community of faith.

Throughout much of church history, think about this, we sit at a peculiar time in our country and only because our country has been influenced by Christianity. Only because of that.

[ 34 : 33 ] because look around this world today and look at countries that have not had a Christian influence and you won't see these things. Because much of history, much of history, not being part of a church would exclude you from much of the communal provisions and care, not to mention spiritual participation in the body.

For people throughout history to be known and counted anywhere would be greatly beneficial because loads of people would not be afforded that elsewhere. Think about this.

Apply that to North Korea or somewhere like that. Think about people who, think about Shanti and Lily, the great work that they're doing in India because people like widows and, you know, the poor and stuff like that, they don't get a place.

They're not known. They're not counted. How important it is to be validated, to be given a place. Jen and I were in France in 2015 with our family and we were going on a wonderful day trip to Paris and we probably could have arranged it better as it was Jennifer's uncle who was a Baptist minister sadly got his passport stolen and a load of money.

The money is by the by. The passport's the real issue and so the day trip in Paris for him looked like a day trip to the embassy. He's had to spend most of the day there.

[ 36 : 13 ] Now think about this and this is what I'm talking about. A membership role isn't a Lamb's Book of Life but let me tell you something that's beneficial and sometimes the way we practice it isn't the best but let me tell you something that's beneficial about it, okay?

Does going, if you're in a foreign country, right, and you lose your passport and you need to go because you need to get out of that country at some point and you need to go to the embassy and you say, listen, I've lost my passport and they're going to say, ah, no problem, here you go.

I mean, they're going to ask you some questions, they're going to do some investigating to find out if you are a citizen but see when they give you a passport or they give you documents or they put your name in black and white, does that make you a citizen?

No. You are a citizen. They are simply affirming and validating that you are. That's what church membership is. It's simply an affirmation of who you are.

Now, it's right and good that we do this stamp and there's the passport and stuff like that. That's a good thing. But let's not get confused. Let's not get confused that we either have to do some second step but let's also not get confused that we don't do this at all.

[ 37 : 25 ] We don't want to overcomplicate it but we don't want to undervalue it. You see, the picture the Bible gives of what it means to be a Christian helps us see the greater reality in heaven that the church, although imperfectly, ought to reflect on earth.

We are citizens of the kingdom of God, sheep in the flock of God, children in the family of God, and limbs in the body of God. Jesus Christ is the king of the everlasting kingdom, the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

He's the true son of God who made a way for us to get to the Father that others may be adopted into the family. He is the body that was broken for his bride. And so as a Christian, your earthly and visible experience in a church should affirm and reflect your heavenly and hidden reality as a citizen of his kingdom, as a sheep in his flock, a child in his family, and a member of his body.

Although it will be practiced differently from place to place, it would seem to go against the joyful pattern of Scripture not to in some way confirm and count and affirm and state who are part of his kingdom, who are in his flock, who are in his family and part of his body.

Listen, this is the point, that you would be known and counted and given a place among the saints. Is that not a good thing? If you're a Christian, don't you want to be known?

[ 38 : 54 ] If you're a Christian, you don't become a member, you are. You don't become a citizen, you are. You don't become a son, you are. You don't become a daughter, you don't become a limb, you don't become a sheep, you are all of these things.

Do you not want to be known and counted? And my hope is that we go ahead and we not only practice, but we experience something that is more like to be a part of a family.

For us to know what that means and to really feel it. And part of the reason, part of the reason that people are confirmed, known, and counted to use those biblical pictures is to honor and help the parts of the body function and grow, to protect and feed the sheep of the good shepherd, to recognize and love the children of God, and to protect and provide for the citizens of his kingdom until the day Christ appears and we enter his kingdom forever secure.

Nobody is going to love you like he is going to love you. This is his church and you are his child, his sheep, his citizens, his family.

Let us reflect this here and now and then on that day we will rejoice together as we are known and counted by him.