



Magdalen Road Church

Delighting in God - Displaying his glory

GOD'S BIG SOCIETY

THE COMMUNAL VISION OF THE BIBLE

1. A COMMUNITY OF GOD



It would not be quite accurate to say that my parents worked for the church, they lived for that small community of believers entrusted to their care.... our home was in the church and the church had insinuated itself into our home. We were part of it because it became part of us...

What remains indelibly inscribed, not so much in my memory as in my very soul is the deep and unwavering commitment - love, I think is the right word - that my parents had for that community.

Now as I look back from a distance I see what I failed to recognise clearly at the time but what nevertheless shaped me profoundly: their commitments mirrored the commitment of Christ, who "loved the church and gave himself up for her" Eph 5:25.

Miroslav Volf, After our likeness : the church as the image of the trinity (Grand Rapids Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), ix-x.

CHALLENGES TO CHURCH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY

BREAKDOWN IN THE FAMILY AND
WIDER COMMUNITY

"POSTMODERN" ETHOS

*"If the Modern Era was a rage for order, regulation, stability, singularity, and fixity, the Postmodern Era is a rage for chaos, uncertainty, otherness, openness, multiplicity, and change. Postmodern surfaces are not landscapes but wavescapes, with the waters always changing and the surfaces never the same. The sea knows no boundaries."
Pete Ward, Liquid Church. (Baker Pub Group, 2001), 15.*

RELATIONSHIPS IMAGE GOD

IN CREATION

Genesis 1:26–27

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created man, in his own image,
in the image of God, he created him;
male and female, he created them.

IN THE CHURCH

Ephesians 2:15

¹⁵ ...His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

THE CITY OF MAN: ALIENATION AND FALSE RELATIONSHIPS

CAIN

Genesis 4:14

¹⁴ ...I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.” ...¹⁷ Cain was then building a city.

BABEL – BABYLON – ROME/BABYLON

Revelation 18:2–3

² With a mighty voice he shouted:

“ ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!’ ...

³ For all the nations have drunk

the maddening wine of her adulteries.

The kings of the earth committed adultery with her,

and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”

THE CITY OF GOD: RECONCILIATION AND TRUE RELATIONSHIPS

ABRAHAM

TEMPLE/JERUSALEM/ISRAEL

Isaiah 62:12

¹² They will be called the Holy People,
the Redeemed of the LORD;
and you will be called Sought After,
the City No Longer Deserted.

THE CHURCH

Matthew 5:14

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.”

NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:2

² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What experiences of church have you had, both good and bad? How has that affected the way you view the local church?
2. Do human beings need relationships in order to “image God”? (Genesis 1:26-27) Describe how that affects your view of God, and your view of yourself.
3. The whole of the Bible is “a tale of two cities.” Trace the main contours of this using the notes, and try to understand the characteristics of “the city of man” and “the city of God”.
4. How has your examination of this so far affected your view of God yourself and the church?