

The Sower

The Lord's Day-----July 30, 2017

Arthur Church of Christ

415 W 4th Street, Arthur, IL 61951

Preacher: Ron Bartanen

Times of Worship

9:30 a.m. (Bible Classes)-----10:30 a.m. (Morning Worship)----1:30 p.m. (Wednesday Bible Class)

New Web Site: <http://arthurcoc.com>

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JUST CHRISTIANS

If you were asked what you are religiously, what would be your answer? Most, if they would be members of any "church", would probably reply by giving the name of their denomination. This, however, would not have been so in the first-century church, for denominations were then non-existent. While, at first, the early converts to Christ were Jewish, the gospel soon was preached also to gentiles, but the idea of a "Jewish Church" and a "Gentile Church" would have been completely foreign to God's plan for "one fold (the church) and one Shepherd (Christ)" (John 10:16). Jesus, on the evening He was betrayed, prayed for believers: "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in us,, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). While there were different terms used in relation to believers in Christ, such as "body of Christ," "the Way," and "disciples" of Christ, the one

that would be most significant was the name "Christian," designating those who were followers of Christ. As the church began to include gentiles in the fold, and the apostle Paul began fulfilling his calling to "bear (Christ's) name among the gentiles" (Acts 9:15), Luke tells us that "the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). Peter would later admonish suffering believers, writing that if any would suffer as a Christian, he should not be ashamed, but rather, "glorify God in that name" (1 Pet. 4:16b, ESV). Denomina-tional names are divisive and sectarian in nature, and are far from glorifying God. The name "Christian" in no way should divide true Christians from one another, but only to recognize the believer's separation from a non-believing world.

In the New Testament, which is our authority for our faith and practice, all who believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God who died for their sins and was raised

again, repented of their sins, unashamedly confessed Him, and were buried with Him in baptism were just Christians—neither more nor less. (cf. Acts 11:26; 28; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39). Why should it be otherwise today? If you respond in faith and obedience to the gospel as they did, you would become what they were—a Christian. If you would “in word and deed, do all in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:17), continuing in His word, you will continue to simply be what they were—Christians. Jesus’ words to His followers then should yet be heeded today: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31), and as a disciple, bear the name “Christian” (Acts 11:26).
—Ron

“AS WE GROW OLDER, infirmities increase and heaven holds more and more of our loved ones: so heaven gets sweeter as the years go by. ‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus?’ (Revelation 22:20, KJV)” (Cecil May, Jr., Gospel Advocate, August, 2017)

WORLDLY CULTURE NEEDS THE GOSPEL

“And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

Cultural challenges of our time are growing stronger each year. Faithful Christians often wonder how this nation’s morals and values could change so quickly. Many no longer value the life of the unborn or the sanctity of biblical marriage. Those who love sin soon forget God and despise those who bring right and wrong into the light (John 3:19-20).

Many have bought into the skepticism widely publicized in the media, assuming there are no reasons to believe in God, creation, the resurrection of Jesus, or the Scriptures. While 75 percent of Americans claim to be Christians, active church attendance has declined from 41 percent to 38 percent. More than 43 percent, however, are unchurched and have not attended church this year except for a wedding or funeral.

How do we evangelize this secular world? No doubt we will fail to reach some, but there are good and honest hearts among others (Luke 8:15). The word of Christ still builds faith in those who will listen (Romans 10:17). The cross will still draw people to Christ (John 12:32). We must preach a true message of hope and love, focusing on the Lord Jesus.

We must live pure and holy lives before the world (1 Peter 1:13-16). We must be potent as salt and light to our world (Matthew 5:13-16), revealing the love of Jesus to a world in need. To persuade people, we must teach what God wills and give reasons to follow the Lord. It is not enough to state facts: we must help people see why morality is better than immorality, why love is better than indifference, and why faith is better than unbelief.

--Phil Sanders, The Search Light, July, '17

GOD’S MIGHTY WORK

My family and I were recently able to travel out West and visit some of the most breath-taking sights in our country. This was not our first time. As a matter of fact, it was our fourth trip out West in the last two years. We have fallen in love with the climate, landscape, and adventures. During this latest trip we were able to drive some roads that we had never been down before. And the beauty of the land did not disappoint.

It is interesting how within a 100 mile radius the

scenery can change so dramatically. From towering cedars to miles of desolate land and scrub brush. From Painted Desert to the red rocks of Monument Valley. God’s mighty work is beyond compare. David says it well: “O LORD, our LORD, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Psalm 8:1).

As we experience life here on earth, it is easy to get caught up in our routine. There are times where we move from one task to the next with little thought to the world around us. Some go their whole lives without ever recognizing the beauty of creation. It’s not that they are blind to the beauty of the

landscape. It's that they are blind to the Creator of that beauty. They see the splendor around them, but not the splendor of God who made the heavens and the earth. How sad that is.

God has done many wonderful things, including creating us in His image. May our lives be a vehicle through which the mighty work of God is on display! --Keith Harris, Little Rock, Ark.

TEACH THE TEACHER: Years ago my dad started first grade in a one-room country school. When he returned home after that first day at classes, his mother asked him how he liked it. Dad answered, "I don't see any reason to go back to that school because the teacher had to ask me how to spell cat." --Nancy Humphrey, Country Magazine

"A THREE-FOLD SALVATION" will be today's message, with Romans 5:1-10 as the reading.

PRAY FOR: Lyla (Nursing home, #37); Nadine; Linda; Rodger; Ron (bladder stone/infection). Pray for a spiritual awakening. Our country and our Judeo-Christian values are being cast aside, and our biblical resolve is being continually tested. Pray that God will not give up on us, and will continue as our guide and protector. Pray for those subjected to persecution for their faith in Christ.