

## To What Shall I Compare This Church

Franklin Church of Christ  
Edwin Crozier  
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AM Worship

### Introduction:

As Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and those they influenced in **Luke 7:31**, He asked, “To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?” These kinds of comparisons are often helpful in teaching. A friend of mine once borrowed from this verse asking a similar question and I would like to ask it here today. If we asked, “To what shall I compare this church,” what would our answer be? Examine what many people think about “church” and take note of the proper perspective.

### Discussion:

- I. To what some mistakenly compare Christ’s church.
  - A. *A Funeral Home*
    1. Too many view the church as a funeral home. For them it is a place where nothing happens, all ambition has died and all action has ceased. They come because they feel obligated to pay their respects, but if they can get out of it, they will. Regrettably, some churches are like this. They do nothing because they do not realize the great power they have through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their teaching is dead and lifeless, saving no one.
    2. Certainly we recognize that the church is made up of those who are dead to sin (**Romans 6:11**). But we are not to be just dead—we are alive in Christ. The Gospel we teach brings the newness of life (**Romans 6:4-5**). It is the power of God to save (**Romans 1:16**). We should view it accordingly and allow it to charge us with life, vitality and action. The church is not to be a funeral home.
  - B. *A Gas Station*
    1. Too many view the church as a gas station. That is, it is a place to go whenever they are on empty. It is amazing how much mileage some Christians can get out of one sermon. How many Christians are going to miss our services tonight thinking, “I have already had enough church this week.”? How many will miss for weeks on end because life seems to be going well, but will show up when they hit a snag and need a pick me up? This is often the kind of mindset people have who church hop because, “We are just not getting what we need out of the worship here.” Regrettably, too many churches try to fill this role. Instead of encouraging and pushing Christians to grow, work and provide input, some churches try to be the need fulfiller. They want to be the place for folks to come get their weekly spiritual feasts, with elders, deacons and preachers doing all the work to meet everyone else’s needs.
    2. No doubt, worship can be rejuvenating as the Good Shepherd leads us beside quiet waters and restores our soul (**Psalms 23:2**). But the church is not a place to go to get our needs fulfilled. The church is a group of people with whom we assemble in order to serve and help them (cf. **Hebrews 10:23-25; Philippians 2:3-4**). The church is not to be a gas station.
  - C. *A Discount Store*
    1. Some people want the church to be a discount store, selling a discounted, cheap gospel. Some want a church that preaches the saving Gospel of Jesus without preaching the obedient, sacrificing and growing Christian. Too many want the grace of the Gospel emphasized and the challenges of the Gospel ignored. Anything that might be unpleasant or disagreeable to anyone should be placed on the gospel bargaining table of **Romans 14**. Regrettably, too many churches are willing to fit this bill, watering down the gospel, following social agendas, removing the Biblically distinctive features of Christ’s church, all the while claiming they are doing such to appeal to the masses.
    2. As someone once said, “Christ’s grace is free, but it is not cheap.” We cannot earn salvation. We will be saved by God’s grace that we cannot earn. But, in so saving us, He has not granted us permission to continue living the same way that condemned our soul. His Gospel saves us, but it also challenges us to grow. If the Gospel does not change us and continue to change us, then it is not saving us (**Romans 6:1-2, 12-13, 22-23; II Peter 1:5-8**). Our job is to preach that challenging word whether people like it or not (**II Timothy 4:1-4**).
  - D. *A Court Room*
    1. On the other hand, some view the church as a court room. They view the church as the place where everyone is to be put in their place, filled with lawyers and judges who seek out

every infraction and then prosecutes and punishes to the full extent of the law. They push every difference of judgment as a matter of doctrine, wanting the church to establish lines of control over every member (and sometimes over other churches). In this scenario, God's grace and room for growth are lost. Regrettably, too many churches are willing to take up this role. They want to seek out everyone who might possibly believe or practicing anything questionable. They want to draw lines where God has not. They want to stamp out every possible difference of opinion on any possible issue. If someone does not line up with the controlling influencers, they have to hit the road.

2. No doubt, God wants us to be of the same mind and judgment (**I Corinthians 1:10**). No doubt, the Gospel does make demands of our lives and we must repent of our sins or else, at times, the church will have to take disciplinary action (**I Corinthians 5:4-13**). At the same time, we must not lose sight of Christ and His grace, who died that imperfect people could have their sins cleansed. We must not lose sight of the fact that Christianity is a growth process (**Hebrews 5:11-14; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 1:5-8**). The church is not to be a courtroom.

#### E. *A Resort Hotel*

1. Too many view the church as a resort hotel. That is, it is a place where they gather with good people to relax, be entertained and enjoy themselves. It is a place where they go to keep company with folks who have no problems, no faults and no sins. It is a place to be served. Regrettably, too many churches are run this way. All the Christians come dressed up in their best Sunday clothes and put on their best Sunday faces. They never want to admit problems because they are convinced they are the only ones dealing with the real issues of sin and temptation. Further, they view the church as having staff and guests. If you are an elder, deacon or evangelist, you are on the staff and have to do the work, everyone else gets to lounge around and be served. Worship becomes entertainment instead of personal involvement in submission to God.
2. No doubt, the church is a haven from the world. When we gather with the saints, we are gathering with people whose attitude toward sin is different from everyone else. However, look around at the people who assemble here. Every single one of us is a sinner (**Romans 3:23**). Every single one of us struggles with temptation, doubts and sin. Whether you are looking at an elder, evangelist or new convert, you are looking at someone with problems. We all have our game faces on today, but inside we are all people with hurts, wounds, struggles and issues. We are all striving to grow in Christ. Most of us are convinced of our own personal unworthiness and we are also equally convinced that we are the only ones in that situation. But we are not. The church is not to be a resort hotel.

## II. To what shall we compare the church?

### A. *A Hospital*

1. *It is a place for people in need.* The church is where sinsick people turn for healing and recovery. We come to the Great Physician (**Luke 5:31-32**). In Him we find healing and in His people we find relief and aid for the burden we bear.
2. *It is a place of service.* Those who find their healing from the Great Physician, do not simply return to the world to go back into sickness. Rather, as we continue our recovery, we become the instruments of the Master Healer (**II Timothy 2:21**). As His tools, we become servants. While we entered His hospital to receive healing, we remain to help others heal. We become ministers and servants, working to build up Christ's body (**Ephesians 4:12**).
3. *It is a place of compassion.* As we work to help others recover, we do not try to set ourselves up as the examples. We do not strive to put others in their place. We do not seek our own. Rather, we bear with one another. We work with one another. We are gentle and have compassion on one another (**Galatians 6:1-3; Ephesians 4:31-32; I Peter 3:8**).
4. *It is a place with a mission.* When we recognize the great healing work Christ accomplishes through His church, we begin to see that we have a mission. Sure, there are people who are already healed and recovering here in this church. But there are so many outside this congregation that still need the Great Physician's medicine. They are struggling in sin and some of them do not even know they are sick. We have to get that great message out so they might be healed (**Romans 10:13-15**). This mission drives us and keeps us together. Recog-

nizing this great mission causes us to sacrifice ourselves to Christ's work. Because this mission is so important we would not think of leaving. If something occurs between us, we do not abandon the cause of Christ. Rather we work together through love to overcome our issues with each other and continue on accomplishing God's work (**Ephesians 4:1-3**).

**Conclusion:**

How do you view the church? Allow me to say, while for the sake of easy explanation, I have repeatedly spoken of the church as a place, the way we might any of the comparisons we used, we must recognize the church is not a place. The church is the group of people. We are the ones with needs, we are the ones who compassionately serve and we are the ones with a mission. One further aspect of Christ's church that we must understand. According to **Acts 20:28**, it is God's church that Christ purchased with His own blood. If you are not a part of His church, then Christ's blood has not purchased you. How do we become a part of Christ's church? **Acts 2:47** says God will add us when we are saved? When are we saved? Peter said to be saved we must repent and be baptized for the remission of our sins (**Acts 2:38**). Have you been saved and added to God's church, purchased with the blood of Christ? If not, why not submit right now?