**Unchurched**

Jesus wanted to build a church, a community, a group of people. Jesus said, “I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it” (Mat. 16:18). Jesus was going to take care of this community like a shepherd takes care of sheep (John 10:1-18). Death itself is not going to destroy this community, because he has the key of death and hades (Rev. 1:18). Here then, is an eternal group, an eternal congregation. But there are many who don’t believe in this shepherd, so they stay away. They don’t feel comfortable around the church, for many reasons.

But if Jesus is who he claims to be, comfortable or not, they need to become like Jesus and obey him. Jesus is heaven, and he came to earth. He came and lived among people that didn’t like him, but he loved them.

Jesus ends up being the perfect model for people who are uncomfortable in church. Some of these people are in church now, uncomfortable, but so amazed by Jesus they want to become like him at all cost. Lesson by lesson, Bible study by Bible study, prayer by prayer, they have begun to understand that Jesus loved people who didn’t love him back. This is the way they too want to be; they want to be like Jesus.

They don’t simply want to be in his presence, but they want to be like him in character. They know that birds of a feather flock together. If I am not comfortable being with Jesus on earth, what makes me think I am going to enjoy being with him forever in heaven? If Jesus loved me, the unloveable person that I am, then I will love the unlovable too; the very ones who happen to be in church or out of church. Here and there, these unlovable people become more lovable all the time. Especially when they don’t quit Jesus. In all their personal trials which are like mountains, they don’t quit Jesus. They continually seek his person, his presence and character. Isn ’t this what Jesus meant when he said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6). Through becoming like Jesus in his person, we have access to heaven (2Peter 1:3-11). This mortal must put on the divine nature until it gets comfortable. Peter describing this divine nature says, “you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge… love.” (2Pet. 1:4-11). The greatest of the divine nature is love, even loving the unlovable like he did. Put that in me too! Dan Peters