

# What Is the Church Meant to Be?

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## Part 8: The Church Welcomes All

Thank you for continuing this inquiry into what Scripture says the Church is meant to be. It has been such a pleasure to dig deeper into these segments one at a time during Sunday School recently.

So far, we have considered the Church as a living body, a people called to action, a life marked by freedom, a faith that produces fruit, a fellowship that matters deeply, a body that builds itself up in love, and a people called to move outward into the world.

This leads us to another important question:

Who is the Church for?

This may seem like an obvious question to many mature believers, but it is an important one in the natural flow of what we are exploring together.

I'm confident we'd all agree church is a place where people encounter grace while still in the middle of their struggles, questions, wounds, and growth.

Scripture confirms this rather beautiful answer.

In **Matthew 11:28**, Jesus says:

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Notice the invitation.

Jesus does not first say:

“Get yourself together.”

“Become impressive.”

“Fix yourself up first.”

He packs so much in His one-word call of love:

“Come.”

That simple word tells us something important about the heart of Christ.

Jesus moved toward people.

And throughout the Gospels, we see Him continually welcoming:

- the weary
- the doubting
- the struggling
- the outcast
- the sinner
- the overlooked
- the leper

This welcome does not mean Jesus ignored sin or truth.

Far from it. We can learn so much from how Jesus handled the people with whom He came in contact.

Grace came first.

Relationship came first.

Invitation came first.

Paul echoes this spirit in **Romans 15:7**:

“Therefore welcome one another, just as Christ also welcomed you, to the glory of God.”

That is a powerful standard. How do we measure up to it in our own lives?

We are called to welcome others in the same spirit with which Christ welcomed us.

And perhaps nowhere is the heart of God more beautifully displayed than in **Luke 15**, where Jesus tells three parables:

- the lost sheep
- the lost coin
- the prodigal son

In every story, something lost is pursued.

And when it is found, the response is not irritation—it is celebration.

Jesus presents Heaven itself as rejoicing over restoration.

That matters deeply, because sometimes people feel they must become “ready enough” before entering church life, belonging among believers, joining the choir, or taking on other roles of service in the church.

But the Gospel is not a ‘ready enough first’ Gospel.. The Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches something different.

Grace is not the reward for finally becoming worthy, but rather the doorway through which transformation begins.

A Church shaped by the welcoming heart of Christ is a place where:

- people can be honest about where they are
- questions are not feared
- struggling people are not treated as interruptions
- restoration is celebrated
- grace and truth walk together

This kind of Church does not lower the beauty of holiness at all.

It brightly reflects the understanding that Christ meets people before they are fully healed.

After all, every one of us is still growing.

Every one of us still needs grace.

Every one of us came to Christ as someone in need of mercy.

**Takeaway:**

We can really celebrate that the Church is not a museum for people who already have everything together. It is a living body where grace welcomes people into the transforming work of Christ from any starting point. Readiness is not the prerequisite for coming to Jesus. His very invitation is the prerequisite. Sanctification is a lifelong process and a healthy church has people at every step along the way.

**Questions to Ponder:**

How can I reflect the welcoming heart of Jesus in my everyday relationships?

Am I helping create a church culture where people feel safe to grow at any stage of sanctification?

Do I instinctively move toward struggling people the way Jesus did?