

WHAT IS JESUS SAYING TO HIS CHURCH IN COWETA COUNTY?

By Dr. Julie Chambliss (8-10-2014)

Lately, I have been reading very thoughtful blogs and pieces about the differences between American Christians and those from other places in the world. I hope it's not a surprise to you that American Christianity is much more focused on individual destiny and purpose where as in other cultures the church focuses much more on corporate vision and destiny.

I know historically that most Christians did not even own their own Bible and scripture was typically interpreted in the context of their faith community, having to do with the life of their community. And certainly this emphasis on the corporate, whole Body of Christ was extremely important to New Testament writers. To them, there was ONE church in each city and they saw this church as vitally connected to the other city-churches throughout the world. They didn't have modern communications and the ability to move and travel easily to any part of the world, something we take for granted today.

I, myself, have worn many pairs of Christian glasses in my life. I have been a part of many different churches and denominations and I have loved them all. When I left one, I always left for reasons beyond my control. I have raised a family, have ministered to the homeless in downtown Atlanta and the affluent in Dunwoody, and to AIDS orphans in South Africa. I have traveled to nations as a Ph.D. expert on various social problems. In the past few years, I have been a missionary, which has given me yet a different and fuller perspective, having gone to very poor places on 3 different continents in 3 years.

So what does this have to do with the Body of Christ in Coweta County? I truly believe Jesus wants us to do both ... to realize our own significance as individual Christians and members of local congregations but to also realize that there is a Body of Christ in this county of which we and our congregations are members. I challenge you in your prayers for the county to talk to the Lord about this and listen to what He says.

Jesus' first sermon text in Nazareth was a quote from Isaiah 61 (read Luke 4:17-19). American preachers usually interpret these passages in an individual manner only. However, when you read Isaiah 61:1-4 you will clearly see that the gospel not only saved and healed individuals but also transformed whole cities! The biblical gospel deals with sins of the society and not just with individual sinners.

And consider the words of Jesus to the seven churches of Revelation 2-3. He doesn't address individuals, but the whole city-wide church in a location, which was composed of many different local fellowships.

So the question for all of us to grapple with is this: What message is on Jesus' heart today for His whole Body in Coweta County?