

**McCabe United Methodist Church**  
**The Church: Uniting Scripture with Life (Part 5)**  
**Romans 12:1-2, 9-21**  
**7-15-12**  
**Pastor Ray Baker**

Today we will continue with part 5 of our sermon series: Uniting Scripture with Life, by talking about the role of the church.

First, do you know which Cruise Line has the largest ship in the world? It's Royal Caribbean.

Before Royal Caribbean built the world's largest cruise ship, they needed to focus on the purpose of the company. Perhaps the church should take the same sort of trip.

The Church, if you will, had a specific purpose when Noah built an ark. At the time Noah's Ark was biggest passenger ship in the world. It wasn't fancy or glamorous like the Titanic, but it served its purpose - and unlike Titanic, it stayed afloat.

The Oasis of the Seas is the largest Cruise ship in the world. She dwarfs the Titanic.

- The ship is 1,187 feet long and 208 feet wide and 20 stories high.
- When it came time to paint the ship, inside and out, it took 158,000 gallons of paint.
- The ship has room for 6,200 guests and 2,100 crew members.
- The guests can gather in any of the seven different neighborhoods, 21 swimming pools and Jacuzzis.
- One of my favorite facts is the ship uses over 110,000 lbs of ice per day in the restaurants and bars.
- The ship was completed in 2008 for the cost of \$1.5 billion.

So why would anyone build such a large cruise ship? Does size matter? Is bigger better?

The staff and board of directors at Royal Caribbean had a goal of attracting a larger portion of the market. They dreamed of building a ship that would attract "non-cruise people." They wanted to attract folks who would never dream of taking a cruise.

People in the Cruise Ship industry know only 11 percent of Americans have ever taken a cruise. They also know 94 percent of their customers say a cruise vacation's as good as, or better than, a vacation on land.

But how could they attract the other 89 percent, the non-cruise people? To answer this question Royal Caribbean commissioned a survey of 1,000 Americans to learn how Americans define a successful or good vacation.

They learned that Americans want options. They want freedom to make choices while on their

vacations. “They want beaches and museums; they want gourmet cuisine on Sunday and pizza on Monday; and they want to hike in the afternoon and to gamble in the evening.”

The company quickly realized it was essential to increase the number of options available and provide more freedom for their guests. You could say they realized people would take a cruise if they could live as though they weren't onboard a cruise.

Royal Caribbean learned people want to take walks in the park, so RC gave them a park. But they want to stroll on the beach at sunset, too. So RC gave that to them. They want to choose between a number of fancy restaurants for dinner, just as though they were downtown. So RC built multiple restaurants.

Whether you're a company that owns a luxury liner or a church, it comes down to knowing what people want and having the ability, the drive, the creativity, the determination, and the vision to attract new people.

Why are we in the Church business? Do we know?

In today's text, the church's reason for being is linked to glorifying God by the way we live. God has designed the Church as people who understand how to live in a right relationship with God by offering our lives to God...By being sincere and filled with joy and hope...by reaching out to people like us and who aren't like us...by making a difference in the world.

So what has the church in the USA learned over the past few decades? A church doesn't need to look like a church to be a church. That's why store-front churches are springing up in the inner cities and doing very well among the people they want to reach. That's why mega-churches are popping up in suburban areas, churches that look like corporate campuses complete with reflecting ponds and workout gyms.

I think we've also learned the importance of learning from people who are not members of our church. We should ask our visitors to evaluate our ministry?

- What do they see?
- What is their first impression?
- What ministries can they identify?
- What can we learn from them?

We should also continue to learn from people who aren't Christians. Not only “How do they view us,” but also what are their needs, hopes, joys, and fears. If we don't know them...we can't serve them.

Another lesson is the Church must adapt to the changing culture. I didn't say we should abandon our beliefs. I said we must adapt the same way the church has throughout history.

There is another cruise ship called the Queen Mary, which now rests at a dock in Long Beach, California. The ship isn't in mothballs, it's an active lively church even though it no longer goes out to sea. It's now an exclusive restaurant attraction.

The Queen Mary has a wonderful history. She was built in Scotland and embarked on its maiden voyage on May 27, 1936, after Her Majesty Queen Mary presented her. She departed from Southampton and reached New York, in just five days. The QM has four propellers weighing 35 tons each, a 140-ton rudder and weighs 81,234 tons. In its glory days, it carried 1,957 passengers serviced by a crew of 1,174.

During World War II, however, she underwent a transformation. The ship became the "Grey Ghost" when it was camouflage-painted and its portholes blacked out. She became a troop transport because of its four, 40,000 hp turbine steam engines could outrun German U-boats. During the war it traveled more than 600,000 miles and carried over 800,000 troops. On one of her historic journeys her passengers included Winston Churchill and 5,000 German prisoners of war.

The Queen Mary has had three distinctive roles in her lifetime. She has been a luxury cruise liner, a troop transport and is currently taking part in the California economic engine as an exclusive restaurant and attraction to 1,000's of people. Make no mistake...she's no museum; she's earning her way in yet another life, or adaptation.

As Christians who are looking at what's happening around the world I think we can learn from what we see in the Church in Europe. I've heard many people say the Church in Europe looks more like a museum than a thriving Church. The reason is the building is missing an active and thriving group of people. Their buildings are symbols of a bygone era, because they weren't able to adapt to the changing culture.

Here at McCabe we have the same questions to ask: Are we going to keep doing church as usual, or are we going to adapt? Are we going to be satisfied with our current level of spirituality or are we going to grow closer to God? Are we going to think of church something that lasts for an hour each week or are we going to take God home with us?

Royal Caribbean built a ship for "non-cruise people." I believe God is calling us to become a church for "Churched People" and for "non-churched people." God is calling us to be a church for all his people.

What are you going to do to help McCabe adapt and to grow?