

National Park Church What We Believe

Our Beliefs

God's story is a story of love and redemption. The story or message that most clearly shows this redemptive love is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus (I John 3:16). Paul says this message is of "first importance" (I Corinthians 15:3). As God reveals His nature through the stories of the Bible, the following teachings emerge as central doctrines. These teachings form the core of our beliefs at National Park Church.

God

There is one true God, eternally existing in three Persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. These are equal and are one God. God created the world out of nothing, deeming it good, and by His power He sustains all He has created. God revealed himself through his creation and his relationship with the people of Israel In the Old Testament, but has more fully revealed himself in the person of Jesus, his Son (Romans 8:22-25; Ephesians 1:13-14).

Jesus Christ

Jesus was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35) and became flesh and blood (John 1:1-16; 29-34) without ceasing to be God. He lived a sinless life in the power of the Spirit and in full obedience to God and performed many miracles to confirm His divinity. Though innocent, he died on the cross because his good life threatened the powers of his day and he became a perfect sacrifice, paying the debt for our sins (Mark 10:45). On the third day after His death He arose from the dead showing His victory over Satan, sin and death, launching God's new creation (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). He appeared to His disciples and then ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of God serving as our mediator and his power and authority is now fully available to his church for his mission in the world.

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit leads the church in mission. He makes people aware of their need for Christ (John 16:8-11, 2 Corinthians 6:11). He indwells and empowers believers (I John 4:13; Galatians. 5:16-26). His presence in our life is a seal and guarantee that we are God's children (2 Corinthians 1: 21-22). The Holy Spirit gives believers spiritual gifts (talents or abilities) (1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Romans 12:4-8) to be used to help others.

Salvation

Salvation is the release from the slavery of sin and is a free gift of God. The death of Christ on the cross is the only sufficient payment for our sins and his resurrection is the only liberating power from our sin. All have sinned, but all can be saved. This salvation is available for any who put their trust in Christ as Savior (Romans 3:23, 6:23; John 3:16). Those trusting Christ should repent of sin, confess their faith, and be baptized (Romans 10:9; Acts 2:38).

Baptism

Baptism is the physical act of giving our lives over to Christ as he washes away our sins ; Baptism is connected to salvation in the Scriptures (Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Galatians 3:27, and 1 Peter 3:21). In baptism, we identify with Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection which leads us to live a new life for God rather than an old life of sin (Romans 6:4). Jesus himself was baptized to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), and we seek to follow in His steps. Baptism is an outward demonstration of obedience to Christ by one who has declared his faith to others. Baptism is also the entrance into the family of God.

Communion

Jesus established the Lord's Supper shortly before His death. On the evening before the crucifixion while sharing Passover with his disciples, Jesus "took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and gave thanks, and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it all of you. This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28). "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19).

The Lord's Supper is a time to remember the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. During this memorial remembrance the bread symbolizes the body of Christ and the wine symbolizes the blood of Christ. When believers take the elements in an act of worship, gathering in His name, Christ's presence is among them and felt (Matthew 18).

Because Christ is present with us, the Lord's Supper is a witness to the truth and meaning of the good news. Jesus invites all people to find salvation and sustenance in him. The Lord's Supper table is a table that is open to all.

The Lord's Supper is also a time to recognize the body of Christ, the family of God. In this time, we express love, prayers and care for each other (1 Corinthians 11:29).

National Park Church invites all who believe in Jesus and have accepted His gift of salvation to participate in receiving Communion.

Church

The church is the Family of God in which members love, care for, support and encourage each other and the Body of Christ on earth, empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue the work of Jesus of spreading the good news to the lost, discipling the saved, helping them become fully devoted followers of Christ, and uplifting the down-trodden (Ephesians 4: 1-16).

Bible

The Bible is the inspired word of God. It is useful to us as we become fully devoted followers of Christ and is the final authority in life and doctrine (2 Timothy 3: 16).

Christ's Return

Christ will one day return and judge all people (1Thessalonians 4:13-18). Those who refuse to believe in Jesus will be separated from God's presence in Hell and believers in Jesus will be welcomed in God's presence in Heaven (John 3:16, 36; John 14:6). Additionally, believers will be judged by how they lived out their faith in Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Section Notes for What We Believe

Notes on God:

“Deeming it good,” – So many Christians think that the spiritual world is all that matters and that the material world is evil. The story of God, however, begins with a physical creation that God calls good (Gen. 1:4, 10, 18, etc.). This has implications for how we view creation today.

“God revealed himself through...” – Most doctrinal statements completely neglect God’s revelation of himself through Israel’s history. That history and the OT itself is critical in understanding Jesus. We shouldn’t have a view of the New Covenant that completely divorces it from the Old Covenant. Rather, we should see the deep connection between the two covenants (Rom. 1:2-4; Heb. 1:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:10)

Notes on Jesus:

“in the power of the Spirit...” – This phrase captures how Jesus lived a sinless life. He did it by allowing himself to be completely led by the Spirit of God in him. He was the first Spirit-Man. The second part of the phrase points to an emphasis of the Gospel writers concerning Israel. In all the ways Israel had failed to be obedient to God, Jesus succeeded in being obedient to God.

“Though innocent, he died...” – This adds another layer to Jesus atoning work on the cross that the Gospel writers point. Not only did Jesus pay the debt for our sins, but he also challenged the people in positions of power and the systems of power in his day by the good life he lived among men. The cross was not only a perfect sacrifice, but it was also an attempt by the powers-that-be to get rid of Jesus because the light of his life showed the darkness of their own. Of course, that attempt failed.

“Satan...” – In historic Christianity, Jesus was the victor over Satan, sin and death. “launching God’s new creation...” – This points to the significance of the resurrection of Jesus. The bodily risen Jesus is the first example and a sign of what will ultimately happen to all creation. God will restore and renew his creation into a “new heavens and a new earth” (Rev. 21).

“and his power and authority...” – We need a fuller understanding of the ascension of Jesus. Yes, he is now our mediator because he is at the right hand of God. But, he is also fully present to us to carry out his mission in the world. Because he has gone into heaven, the Holy Spirit has come to be with us in a way Jesus could not have had he remained physically present (John 16:7).

Notes on the Holy Spirit:

“leads the church in mission...” – This is the basic contention about the Holy Spirit and the spread of the gospel in the first century according to Luke in the book of Acts (Acts 2:1-4; 4:31; 8:29, 39; 10:45)

Notes on Salvation:

“is the release from...” – The primary source for understanding biblical salvation is the Exodus story where salvation is liberation, freedom or release from a power that enslaves and oppresses. In the NT, sin is seen as that enslaving power from which Jesus, in his cross and resurrection, releases us (Rom. 6:15-23).

“and his resurrection...” – See above.

Notes on Baptism:

“Baptism is also the entrance...” – Our talk about baptism becomes pretty individualistic at times. While it is important to understand that we are committing our lives to Christ and not

joining a church, it is important to understand that we are being born into a family. The family has responsibility to encourage and support and the individual has a responsibility to be growing part of the family (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-29).

Notes on Communion:

“Because Christ is present with us...” – In Jesus’ life and ministry, he often shared the table with tax collectors, sinners and others who were considered outside of God’s family by the religious elite (Matt. 9:10-17; Lk. 7:36-50; 19:1-10). Because the gospel is available for all, the meal, which symbolizes the gospel, is also open to all. The communion is a time in which we are all invited to come eat and drink of Christ and become full on him.

“The Lord’s Supper...” – It seems clear that this is what Paul has in mind when he is correcting the Corinthian church on the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. Somehow, they are neglecting to love and care for each other in the meal and that is what makes it null and void (1 Cor. 11:29).

Notes on the Church:

“the Family of God...” – While I like the use of the Body of Christ as a metaphor, it is only one of several metaphors the NT uses to talk of the church. Also, it is a metaphor that speaks to the function of the church. Another equally significant metaphor (maybe more significant) is the Family of God metaphor. This metaphor focuses more on the relationships within the church. Both together make a strong understanding of what church both is and does. “the work of Jesus of spreading the good news...” – It is important to see our mission in terms of continuing the work that Jesus began in his life and ministry (Jn. 14:12). “uplifting the down-trodden...” – Part of Jesus’ ministry was serving the poor. That should be part of ours, too, if we are continuing to do the works he did.

Notes on the Bible:

“It is useful...” – While we want to uphold the authority of the Bible in our culture, it is basically a negative position. By that I mean that it says that the primary way we will use the Bible is to show what is right and what is wrong. Again, that’s important, but I want to paint the Bible in a positive light, too. It is useful to help us live the life of a disciple of Christ, to live life God’s way (2 Tim. 3:16).