



new life fellowship

**Sermon Title: Church: The Church as Citizens of Heaven**

**Speaker: Matt Manno, Pastor of NextGen Ministries**

**Scripture: Philippians 3:17-20**

Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Philippians 3:17-20 (NIV)*

### **Sermon Outline:**

In this passage of scripture, Paul is writing to the church at Philippi. At this point in time, Philippi was a major city very similar to Rome – they were governed by the same laws and were granted the same rights as those in Rome. The Philippians were very proud of their status.

Rome's values were invading Philippi and Paul is reminding the Church that their values are to be different. Paul says what they do shows what people really value, he is talking to people in the Church who profess Jesus with their mouths and live as if it doesn't matter, he says "their appetite is their God". Paul is encouraging them to follow him as he follows Jesus, to look at others who have lived this way and learn from their example.

**The church is not an event, a location, a product or an experience. The Church is God's passion, His Beloved. We the Church are the Citizens of Heaven.**

**A citizen of heaven is a visible, verbal follower of Jesus Christ who consistently applies the principles of heaven to the concerns of the culture. ---Dr. Tony Evans**

Being a citizen gives you certain rights and privileges, our values are often shaped by where we call home.

We, in the United States, are living in a highly influential culture that is shaping people into their own image. Everything about a person is open to debate. Social media takes us into every aspect of the lives of others. People in church today have values that are shaped more by the culture than they are by God.

In our current political climate, we are building the power of man more than we are building the power of God. We want salvation by the government, and we want our salvation from the culture. The Church in America at times has aligned itself with building an empire of men more than building the Kingdom of God. We are trying to force God's hand, His will and His way into a political box we dress up as Christian advocacy.

We've gotten away from the Gospel and made it secondary to our nationalism, patriotism, capitalism, etc.... We may not be denying Jesus by our words but by our actions and what we have allowed to happen exposes our values.

As Christians, we owe our ultimate allegiance to God and should never let man-made institutions overtake the demands of the Almighty God. We are citizens of heaven while residents on earth. Church is not a place to hear sermons and sing songs, it is where the values of heaven operate here and now, so humanity sees what God looks like.

Ultimate allegiance to God can only happen when we live out our calling. It is not our job to adopt or critique the culture, but to infuse God into the culture so others can see and taste heaven here on Earth. The greatest change we can give on Earth is not how we vote but how we advocate for Christianity here. We are called to take care of the poor or the marginalized and the oppressed. Our hearts should break for those around us, standing up for justice and the injustice we see in the world. We are called to be forgiving and loving to those we disagree with and we are to trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to make these things real in our lives.

We need to engage culture through the lens of the Gospel, get connected to the life of the Church and allow Jesus into our lives.

**Sermon Summary:**

This Sunday Pastor Matt Manno continues our summer sermon series Church: Being a Community of Jesus Followers. Today Pastor Matt's sermon focuses on the church as the Citizens of Heaven and what it means for us as the church to live in the world with the values of heaven.

**Sermon Questions:**

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. In your family of origin how did the land in which you grow up shape your values? What were you taught that was good and should be proud of?
3. When you think of the values of the United States, its history, its founding, are there any values you see or hold that may be in direct conflict with the Sermon on the Mount?
4. Whom in your current life do you passionately disagree with regarding your values? How can you show them love next time you engage with them?
5. Before you say something to another, or post something on social media, how would the value you are speaking sound different if you applied a Gospel filter? If you first asked yourself, "Am I saying something that is in conflict with Christ has said or is it in agreement with the Gospel?"