

Home Service for 8/1/2021

Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Encourage one another to live as people worthy of God's calling.

Call to Worship:

There is one body, one spirit, one Lord of all. We are one body in Christ, bound together in holy love. There is one hope, one faith, one Father of all. We are one family of God, blessed with gifts of one Spirit. There is one baptism, one true home, one Mother of all. We are one people, nourished by God with the food of eternal life. AMEN.

Opening Prayer:

Jesus Christ, our Lord and our brother, you have called us to be your one Church. Make us one in our faith and hope, and one in our loving service. Make us one in worship and in daily living. Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to make us one as you want us to be. We ask this, Jesus, for you are our Lord and our Savior forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

God of unity and love, place within each of us a spirit of hope and community. Have mercy upon us when we speak without love or act without humility. Cleanse us with the living water of your grace. Create in us willing hearts to live in patience and gentleness. Raise us up to be your children, growing toward maturity in faith and love. Strengthen the church, that we may be a model of ministry and unity for all the world to see. In Christ's name, we pray. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

In Christ's grace, our hearts are cleansed and our lives are made whole. In Christ's grace, we are forgiven and loved for life.

Read Psalm 51:1-12

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, we are in the middle of the summer months. We looked forward to rest and recreation, but time is moving rapidly on and we still find ourselves stressed and weary. We need to slow down. We know this, but yet find this hard to do. We load ourselves up with activities, stresses, duties and then wonder how we will survive them. As you have found us before, Lord, find us again. Wrap your arms of compassion around us. Help us to savor the times that we have with each other.

Make us keenly aware of the magnificence of this world. Draw us to the times of peace and rest. As we have brought names of loved ones to you for your healing mercies, remind us that we, too, stand in need of your healing love. Give us strength, courage and joy, that we might become disciples who are worthy of your kingdom, for we offer this prayer in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: 2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13

When Uriah's wife heard that her husband was dead, she mourned for him. ²⁷ After the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the LORD.

12 The LORD sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, ³ but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him.

⁴ "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him."

⁵ David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this must die! ⁶ He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. ⁹ Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his

wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

¹¹ “This is what the LORD says: ‘Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. ¹² You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.’”

¹³ Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

Nathan replied, “The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Ephesians 4:1-16

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it^[a] says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”^[b]

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions^[c]? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) ¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 6:24-35

Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

²⁵ When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?”

²⁶ Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷ Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.”

²⁸ Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?”

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”

³⁰ So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹ Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’^[a]”

³² Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

³⁴ “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

³⁵ Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

Message

Today’s text reminds us of the fact that we are saints in the Lord united together by our Christian faith. The invisible Christian church is the unity of all believers in Christ. It makes no difference where these believers are gathered together to worship the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Each of us has different body parts that function for the benefit of our bodies. God’s church is the same. There are many different members who serve to benefit the church, the body of Christ. We use Paul’s words in our text as our theme of encouragement: “KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.”

The holy Christian Church is made up of believers who understand that we do not deserve eternal salvation but God gives it to us by his grace. The Church is made up of believers who believe that the power of the God’s gospel is the only power in this world that is able to change men’s hearts and men’s lives. The power of God’s gospel is the only power that is, can, and does save sinners now and forever. The

holy Christian Church is made up of believers who understand that we do not deserve eternal salvation but God gives it to us by his grace. COLOSSIANS 3:14,15 states "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful" "And be thankful" the very words we need to help us begin to understand all in these verse today. "KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT". We do not do this on our own. God's Spirit produces unity. God's gifts promote unity.

The most important gift that the Holy Spirit gives us is faith. Ask different people what are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. You will receive varying answers. Some like to concentrate on physical gifts of the Holy Spirit that can be seen and felt. These gifts could include: miracles, healings, and speaking in tongues. There are far more important gifts of the Spirit. These might be considered unseen. You know them. They are peace, joy, love, comfort, forgiveness, and many other Christian virtues. These are important. BUT faith is still the most important, sometimes overlooked, gift of the Holy Spirit. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

God's Spirit gives faith in order to produce unity among believers. The faith that believers have as members of the Holy Christian church is vitally important and powerful. Faith dwells in the hearts of believers. This means that God dwells in the hearts of believers. Faith unites us as believers to live united lives for the benefit of the world. We are united by God's word to live God's word. God's word reveals to others and us his great love for all sinners.

God's most amazing grace is that he dwells in us sinners. It makes no difference that we are, what we are or our standing in society. God looks at us sees sinners who are forgiven and covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness. You and I and every Christ believers are brought into God's kingdom and inheritance. This saving faith is given to us as a gift of the Holy Spirit. We and God's Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts that unites. God's Spirit produces unity among the believers by faith. This is our motivation to make every effort to "KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT".

One of the wonderful things about Paul's writings is the fact that they are instructions written to the early church, and yet his words to that church are still quite applicable to the modern church. This particular passage from Ephesians addresses a number of matters related to the church and the life of those who are a part of the church, but it all boils down to two basic matters: each of us is called and gifted in a special way, and we are to unite together in using our gifts to build

up one another and the whole body of Christ. While this seems like a “no-brainer,” I contend that it is a bit more difficult than we make it out to be, especially considering our current circumstances.

How often have we put ourselves above all else and selfishly pursued a dream or object only for our own gratification? I imagine that this is true for most if not all of us in this room today. But part of the truth in this reality is the fact that this is the way our culture has conditioned us. That is, our society teaches us that we should always be “looking out for number one.” Our lives should be centered around ourselves: advancing in the professional world, climbing the social ladder, and acquiring the greatest “toys.”

In short, modern society, particularly in the United States is individualistic, “me”-centered. We have allowed ourselves to be consumed and defined by what we accomplish or acquire rather than by who we are in relationship to God and one another. The result is that in engaging such individualism we have disengaged ourselves, unable to truly relate to one another, and most especially to God. We have lost sight of our identity as ones created, claimed, and called by God to be in relationship and service to one another in this world, and instead we are absorbed by the cultural trappings of our modern society.

The central theme of Paul’s message here is unity in the body of Christ. We are to be united with others who are seeking after Christ, which by default means obliteration of the self and individualism. Paul urges the reader on to maturity, which involves the community as a whole, not just individuals. And we are to be engaged in building up one another so that we might all grow to maturity. We should be so united with the church community and the church with the larger human community, that the bond is stronger and more important than any of the other alternatives of this world that may drag us away; like social status or wealth. Paul is very clearly defining an alternative culture; a culture of community and mutual up-building, a culture which is quite different from what we know in the modern world.

Paul is trying to drive home in this passage the fact that we can accomplish so much more when we are united together in service as the body of Christ. This body of Christ, however, is only healthy and efficient when every part is thoroughly coordinated, which means that we must have an understanding of our identity as ones called and claimed by God. Paul urges the readers to “live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Paul is operating on the assumption that we are all called by God in some way; that we all are gifted in a special way for service in this world. As the creator, God certainly has specific hopes and plans for

each of our lives. Our task is to discern to the best of our ability God's calling on our lives and to live that out as best we possibly can in this time and place. The body of Christ is at its best when every person can look beyond herself and respond to the promptings and nudgings of God.

The body of Christ which is the church has single hope, that all might know Christ. If we are not willing to put aside our own agendas, then the body of Christ will not function properly, which in the end will hurt us too. Living in Christ requires two things of us; that we discern and strive after our calling from God, and that we use that calling in service to the church that is Christ's body. We must look to Jesus Christ who is the head; we must seek out our calling within that body, and we must strive to live a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called. When we can do that, then in united strength, we can stand against the toughest of tests and grow up in Christ, encouraging and supporting one another along the way. Our greatest call in life is not one defined by modern culture, but one which comes from God the Father of all. When we can turn our faces to God and reach out our arms in service with and to all who are around us, then we will know what it is to be built up in love, even as we build one another up in love. Amen

Benediction:

In the Spirit of peace, we go into the world. May we share the unity and love we have found here, that others may touch the presence of Christ's peace, and the grace of God's love. Amen.