

Pentecost #9

7-25-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Today is the first of five Sundays with Gospel readings from John 6, the first four of which focus on Jesus as bread of life. Today Jesus feeds thousands of people with five loaves and two fish. What we have, what we bring to Jesus’ table, seems like it is not worthy enough to meet all the needs we see around us. But it is not the adequacy of our supplies or our skills that finally makes the difference: it is the power of Jesus working in the littlest and least to transform the world into the world God desires, a world where all the hungry are satisfied”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 145:10-18

“All thy works shall give thanks to thee, O Lord,
and all thy saints shall bless thee!

¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,
and tell of thy power,

¹² to make known to the sons of men thy^(a) mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of thy^(a) kingdom.

¹³ Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and thy dominion endures throughout all generations.

The Lord is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.^(a)

¹⁴ The Lord upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵ The eyes of all look to thee,
and thou givest them their food in due season.

¹⁶ Thou openest thy hand,
thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

¹⁷ The Lord is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.

¹⁸ The Lord is near to all who call upon him,
to all who call upon him in truth.”

Hymn of Praise: [“Praise the Lord! O Heavens”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Gracious God, you have paced within the hearts of all your children a longing for your word and a hunger for your truth. Grant that we may know your Son to be the true bread of heaven and share this bread with all the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [2 Kings 4:42-44](#)

2nd Reading: [Ephesians 3:14-21](#)

The Gospel: [John 6:1-21](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Our Father, by Whose Name”](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

This past Thursday the church council began a process of self-examination as a church in order to begin to prepare for the future. This one night session is only a beginning in the process. We discovered what we thought to be our strengths and weaknesses which led us to celebrate our strengths but confronted with the challenge of our weaknesses. This led us to begin to look to our society and why there has been a drastic turn-away from the traditional main-line church. In this process it became very evident that we are being challenged from within as well as from the circumstances of society.

There is little doubt that the church as a religious institution and not just a social, political, or entertaining entity, is viewed by a growing majority as being hypocritical to its core message. Through the past fifty years it has lost its credibility of being relevant to the situations of a problem filled society and life. In far too many instances the church is seen as a part of society’s problem. In far too many circumstances it has become the political ally of political extremism promoting hatred and divisiveness. Secularism and the promotion of wealth and greed have not only become society’s religion but is being preached as a Christian virtue in far too many pulpits. This is all in plain view of everybody and then affects their views of the church.

To be the Body of Christ, the church, in this highly tumultuous time is a challenge. To add to the challenge is to live through a deadly and fearful pandemic which may be extended beyond what it should by political extremism which has invaded and controls many religious institutions. There is little doubt that the pandemic has affected the sustainability and the life of the church when it should be under control. For far too many, the church is viewed as self-serving and not true to the basic teachings of Christianity. This leads the church as being a reflection of a society filled with mistrust, divisiveness, and extremist ideologies. In reality it is seen as one of the influences of disunity which has overtaken our lives and threatens to destroy us. This is the challenge we face.

It is to this very situation which Paul addresses in his prayer for the church at Ephesus. He begins: “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name” Paul clearly makes the point that, regardless of who we may be, we are unified in that there is the same Father who created us all. God is the father of “...every family in heaven and on earth...” This means we are bound together in the unity of being brothers and sisters created by God, the Father of us

all. When we recognize that God is our Father, as we pray in the Lord's Prayer, then we are saying we are a part of the family of mankind held together in unity through His love for us. To Paul this unity is lived in the church and is essential for its very existence. We must never let the pressures of society's divisiveness divide us.

He goes on to express in his prayer that this unity under the Father and creator is given life when the very Spirit of God is allowed to fill the lives of those in the church by taking the life and message of Christ as the very core and essence of one's being. This happens when the inner being is grounded in the love of God as found in Jesus' life. Therefore, the unity of the church is realized when each individual member's inner being is under the power of this love. It is through this love that we are strengthened and unified with each other and to the world in which we live.

In love there is no room for the extremes which promote discord and disunity. Aristotle believed that the true wisdom in life is to strive for the "Golden means." That is to say, the extremes in and of themselves, may not be the answer at all but each may have elements of an answer or solution. When married together then the truest answer may be found – the "Golden Means." In this unity, truth may be found. Love is that "Golden means" in life which takes us beyond our own egos and desires in order to bring life and even well-being to another person. Love is the giving of oneself. The only extreme in love is love itself. It is this love which brings the unity of spirit within the fellowship of believers which then radiates into the life which surrounds us.

So Paul prays for the church, "I pray that, according to the riches of this glory, He may grant that you be strengthened in your inner being with the power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love." Being rooted and grounded in this love demands that we begin to take this love of God to new heights in our lives. Paul relates in order to do this we must have the power or the ability to comprehend the totality of this love – its meaning and experience. This comes when we are in unity with the saints or with those who have become one with Christ. It is within the unity of the fellowship of believers that we experience the fullness of God's love. This does not happen with knowledge alone but in living relationships of loving and forgiving one another. The unity found in this love is far beyond any human knowledge which we may accumulate.

We can have all the academic degrees in the world, we can have all the knowledge of science and the humanities, we may even have all the knowledge of theology and the Bible, but without the unity within the bonds of God's love we are left adrift on the troubling seas of everyday life. Therefore Paul continues his prayer. "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and the length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

It is when we, the church, can fulfill Paul's prayer to be that Body of Christ in the unity of God's love that we will be able to answer the cries and pains of the world in which we live. It is with the power of the unity we have in God's love which gives us the ability to be that example of unity as children of the family of humankind. Paul relates that this power is far beyond anything we may imagine - far beyond anything the world has to offer.

We may find that the Olympics over the next two weeks will give us somewhat of a reprieve as to the polarization and negativity of our day and age. But, sadly that will most likely only be a reprieve and will

not be that on-going unifying drive which is so desperately needed and longed-for. After the flame of the Olympics is extinguished everything will all too quickly return to as it was before.

It is important for us, the church, to take Paul's prayer to heart for we should be that oasis within the heat of the dry desert to offer not only relief to all who are caught up in the turmoil of disunity and extremism but to be an on-going example of unity in and through the love and forgiving message of God. This is a powerful tool which can and does change lives when it is lived. Many of us may look for the church institutions to change but that is not where it must begin. It begins within each of us and it begins within the fellowship of believers here at Epiphany. The stronger we become in our unity in God's love and with each other, the more we will become that beacon of hope and life for the world in which we live.

Thankfully, Epiphany in so many ways has been able to overcome the temptation to become embroiled in the extremism which bombards us as we come together each week. This is as it should be and needs to be in order for the Body of Christ to remain unified and united so that together we may reach out in love and forgiveness to each other and to all who come into our midst. As we look to the future in our planning to be that alive Body in Christ, we must never allow our unity in God's love to be compromised by the destructive influences of an extremist, polarized society. Rather, we must seek to share our unity in God's love in every way possible. We may be small in numbers but are, and can be even more so, gigantic in sharing God's love with each other and with the world in which we live. It is up to each of us as individuals and together.

Anthem: ["We Are One in the Spirit"](#)

Offering*: ([On-Line giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Our Father, we your children so easily forget that we are all created by you and you are Father to us all. Therefore we strike out with our misdirected egos and pride leaving us a broken family who deny the love you have shown us. In our disunity we only magnify and prolong the problems which face us. Enter our hearts that we may seek answers to our turmoil and not just try to reinforce our individual and often collective egos. This is of paramount importance as we face another surge in the pandemic.

Many of your children are suffering today not only from the pandemic but also for tragic and devastating wildfires, floods, famine and droughts. Protect and comfort your suffering children and bring them relief and strength to face their future.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto,

Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della ,
Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["The Church's One Foundation"](#)

Announcements

Vicar Karen Pugatch will be ordained and installed as associate pastor at St John's Lutheran Church in
Linthicum, August 7th at 2:00 PM. – 300 W. Maple Rd., 21090

Night at the Ball Park in Frederick: The Frederick Keys, July 31st at 6:00 PM

Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions force us indoors. Face masks and social
distancing outdoors are not required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether
indoors or outdoors.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church

9122 Sybert Drive

Columbia Hills

Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291