

Pentecost #18

9-26-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Someone who isn’t part of Jesus’ own circle is casting out demons in Jesus’ name, and the disciples want him stopped. They appeal to Jesus, as Joshua did to Moses about the elders who prophesied without official authorization. Like Moses, Jesus refuses to see this as a threat. Jesus welcomes good being done in his name, even when it is not under his control. The circle we form around Jesus’ word must be able to value good being done in ways we wouldn’t do it, by people we can’t keep tabs on.”

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

Opening Hymn: [“Just As I Am, Without One Plea”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 19:7-14

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;

the decrees of the LORD are sure,
making wise the simple;

⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eyes;

⁹ the fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;

the ordinances of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey,
and drippings of the honeycomb.

¹¹ Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can detect their errors?
Clear me from hidden faults.

¹³ Keep back your servant also from the insolent;^[a]
do not let them have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Hymn of Praise: [“This Is My Father’s World”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“Generous God, your Son gave his life that we might come to peace with you. Give us a share of your Spirit, and in all we do empower us to bear the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen”

1st Reading: [Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29](#)

2nd Reading: [James 5:13-20](#)

The Gospel: [Mark 9:38-50](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“The Church Is One Foundation”](#)

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

I don’t believe that many of us ever dreamed about spending the past year and a half in the clutches of a deadly pandemic. To say the least it has been a life-changing time for everybody, young and old alike. The damage occurred varied and was to the extreme for many who experienced the death of a loved one to the loss of income and even possible long term health issues. But one of the most difficult aspects which almost everyone had to live was that of being physically isolated from even the very closest family and friends. Maybe for the first time in life the feeling of long-term loneliness became almost too much to handle. This brought to life that we are most definitely a social being. We need others in order to find fulfillment in life.

Being lonely brought to mind a childhood experience. Not far from where I grew up was a rather dense and sizeable woods. Buried deep in this woods by a small stream lived a hermit along with a couple of goats, a dog, and some chickens. His home was a small shack hidden from any signs of other human life.. It was quite evident that he lived a very isolated life. I recall thinking about what this man’s life was like. What caused him to want to live such a lonely existence? I thought about what it would be like to live in such isolation without any family or friends. I couldn’t imagine living with nobody to talk with, nobody with whom to share life, nobody to love and in turn not to be loved. I remember the empty, sad feeling I felt deep within just thinking about such a life and about that lonely hermit who I never met or even saw but existed. Nevertheless, I knew he must have lived a terribly sad and even painfully lonely life. I couldn’t imagine such a life and it left a vacant feeling within me just to think about it.

Even at that young age in life, I realized that people need each other in order for there to be any kind of happiness and fulfillment in life. As I recall those memories even to today, I feel that pain and emptiness.

Experiencing these many years in life, I have discovered that many face situations which throw them into the grasp of the despair of loneliness and isolation, into involuntary hermitage of sorts. It can happen with the loss of a loved one, friend or family. Loneliness and isolation is the fear of growing old, the fear of living out one's years in a strange facility, among strangers without anyone who seems to care. To be left alone is a most common fear and one which I learned early in life with the hermit who lived in a shack in the midst of an isolated wooded area. In many ways during the height of the pandemic we felt we were hermits living in isolation.

The feeling of loneliness and isolation can happen to people even in the midst of a crowd, in the midst of everyday life. Even when surrounded by others at work, at school, at the mall, and even within the family, the reality of loneliness can be a painful reality. People can isolate themselves by just going through the motions of relationships, always keeping a safe distance, always hiding one's feelings and emotions out of the fear of getting too involved. Many think becoming involved leads to vulnerability, weakness, and painful exposure. Therefore, it becomes desirous to keep relationships on a superficial level, we can't get too involved for we may get hurt, so therefore, we keep our safe distance.

This trait has played out in many churches. People often select a church in which they can remain anonymous. In fact this can very well be the hallmark for the church and the reason for many to grow to be very large. The larger they become the easier it is to remain anonymous and attract those who fear becoming too personal. This is not the role of the church since the church is the fellowship, the communion of saints, and not the gathering of hermits. This means the church is communal, or the people coming together to share their lives with each other. It is quite clear that this is not only what the early church was but how it functioned, grew, and survived. James clearly gives testimony to this in the lesson this morning. He could not have been more explicit, "Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord."

This is not the description of a church in which its members stand aloof of each other. It is a church in which its members share each other's lives through times of suffering, times of joy, and times of sickness. James points out it is alive and real when people come together to help each other to not only overcome the adversities in life through prayer but also to help celebrate the joys in life by singing songs of praise and thanksgiving. One of mankind's most rewarding ways to celebrate joy is through song. This is not only applicable to the church but finds reality in everyday life. We all know the story about Francis Scott Key writing the National Anthem during the night of the bombardment of Fort McHenry in the War of 1812. He viewed the bombardment from a captive vessel in which he was being detained while negotiating the release of an American prisoner of war. Two days after the battle he was released and he came

back to Baltimore. That night he finished writing his poem "The Defense of Fort McHenry" which he wrote to be sung to the drinking song "Anacreon of Heaven". The next morning he showed it to a prominent judge who in turn had it published the same day in the form of a handbill and distributed throughout the city. That night in celebration of the victory over the British, this song was sung throughout the pubs and within gatherings in the streets. People expressed their common joy by the first singing of "The Defense of Fort McHenry" which a century later in 1919 became the National Anthem, "The Stars Spangled Banner."

One would wonder if James and the early church would ever recognize the church of today. What would he say about how we have formalized and institutionalized the life of the church? In our worship we have become ritualized to the extent that it just may have lost any personal need of individual expression. Would James be able to find that honest personal contact among people or people who are hiding behind formalities? Has the church gotten beyond the meaning of the early church and James' writings? Have we lost the true intent of the Body of Christ in meeting not only spiritual needs but human and physical needs of its members? Could this give us a clue as to why churches are on the decline? Regardless, it is the function of the fellowship of believers to share suffering through prayer, celebrate joys through songs of praise and to extend the power of God's healing through the laying on of hands. The church is alive when both the good and bad are shared so that life may find fulfillment and not just be an existence of empty loneliness. This is what we must make known and share as the church.

But there is another extremely important function of the church which James presented as a part of the early church life. This is the healing of the soul through confession. "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective." Personal confession is the most threatening and even emotionally dangerous thing we can do. But, on the other hand, it can be the most relieving and beneficial practice in order to ease the burden of sin and wrongdoings in our lives. To have someone just listen as we get something off our chest brings healing.

When the fellowship of believers becomes so trusting in its relationships as to feel free to give personal confession to another, then it has reached the fulfillment of being the true Body of Christ. This doesn't mean that it is necessary on Sunday mornings to publicly disclose those skeletons in life or spill our guts for all to hear. But, it does mean that within the fellowship there should be trusting relationships so that on a one to one basis, we know there is someone to whom we can unburden our lives with the assurance that it will not go any further than that. This becomes necessary within life and the church, the fellowship of believers is where we should be able to turn to find new life through confession and forgiveness.

Finally, James says the church is one which welcomes those who stray and are lost. "My brothers and sisters if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back to another, you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." Membership in the church is living compassion among each other. Even if one strays and sins there is forgiveness awaiting their return. Through compassion the fellowship of believers actively pursues their return. This is compassion and love which goes the extra mile. This is our challenge as we recover from the

pandemic. We share our lives because we are the living Body of Christ. We, who are the church, are to live as brothers and sisters in God's Kingdom of love and forgiveness.

Anthem: ["Lord God, We Praise You"](#)

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

Ever present God, life is filled with surprises some of which we may find to be of our liking and some which are trials which we find difficult to live through. Presently we are still living through the trials of a continuing pandemic. Many have experienced the pain of being isolated and lonely over the past months and are fearful that this experience may return with this resurgence of the virus. Grant us the wisdom to find ways to overcome this fear and be able to return to some kind of normalcy. As a church, may we find a renewed spirit in order to reach out to each other and to the world in which we live with the warmth of compassion and love. In this may we find that your presence is ever with us and that we are never alone.

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: ["Abide with Me"](#)

Announcement

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