

# INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
August 1, 2021  
10<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Exodus 24:3-11, John 6:1-15

Hymns: 460; 462; 439; 283

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Ephesians 4:1-7,11-16

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, <sup>2</sup>with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. <sup>7</sup>But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ...*

<sup>11</sup>. And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup>that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, <sup>15</sup>but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Responding to positive events in our lives.

A sports team has a winning record. How do you respond?

Somebody saves your life. How do you respond?

Those are two very different scenarios, aren't they? I know when I get excited or for that matter upset with the Minnesota Twins because they blew a big lead, or traded away another really good player, I call one of my brothers who is also a Twins fan, and we hash out our frustrations, or if they win a big game maybe we rejoice together. Whatever it might be it is something I respond to while at the same time it isn't what life is all about. It's a distraction, a fun recreation that I allow to come into my life just for that distraction, for that fun, but then life goes on.

However, we do see quite the celebrations when a sports team wins a major championship. Things often get out of hand as people in a frenzy over the victory start wrecking things. The response is not at all appropriate to the significance of the event. It's a sporting event after all, not the end of a war, or the beginning of one. In those circumstances the response does not reflect well on the fans, and it doesn't reflect well on the team, or the city where the team is located. It brings shame rather than glory.

Now, about when somebody saves your life. Maybe it involves an organ transplant. Maybe it was a matter of being there with first aid care or as a first responder in an emergency. That is big deal that impacts life. It happens every day with real people. In some cultures, it is inculcated into societal consciousness that the one saved, the one who owes his life to another, actually does owe his life to that other individual. They will serve them, be at their beck and call willingly and happily for the remainder of their time on this earth.

How would that go for you, an American? A heartfelt thank you with a firm handshake; that's what sounds about right for our culture. Then oftentimes we go on our way and the lifesaving event is put in the past.

That sounds rather cold doesn't it. The first response sounds more appropriate. But we have a life to live! Can anyone expect me to stop living my life? Besides, how often does anything like that happen? What are the odds that it will happen with me?

As a Christian you know the answer. Jesus, the very Son of God came down to earth to save my life, to save both soul and body from eternal death in hell. I was spiritually dead. As all unbelievers are also yet today; they are the walking dead. Only the Spirit of God can breathe life into our souls with the gospel of Christ crucified. Jesus saved my life! He redeemed me from death at great personal sacrifice. He suffered, and He died a torturous death to deliver me from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

How ought I to respond? How should you respond? Is a casual "Thank you!" and I will be on my way an appropriate response to this gift of life? Or do we owe our lives to Him? Isn't the dedication of our lives to Him for time and eternity a bit more appropriate? Too many Christians, including Christians we know and love, think the causal thank you, with little or no intrusion into my daily life to be a more than adequate response.

In our text the Holy Spirit directs us toward --

**THEME: Striving together as One Body In Christ.**

It begins and ends with --

**I. Having a Walk in Life Worthy of Our Calling.**

Your walk in life is your way of living life. It does set us up to do more than talk our faith. We are to live our faith. We need to be careful to respond appropriately. We are not preaching the law as a source of righteousness, not even as a way of defining what a Christian walk should be. So, we are not starting by saying we will be careful not to sin. Yes, it is essential that every Christian understands that Jesus by His death and resurrection was not

securing for us a license to sin. But our walk is going to be a response to a great act of love and sacrifice. Remember we were saved through faith in Christ *crucified!* We have been called to faith in Christ Jesus as our Redeemer Lord. How is our life going to reflect this calling so that we honor and glorify Christ in our manner of living?

The Holy Spirit directs us first in response toward our fellow believers. We are connected by Christ's death and resurrection. Our interaction with our fellow believers will be "*with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" (v.2-3) This assumes the pursuit of a relationship with our fellow believers. We need to remember that we are a community of believers who know one another, know what it is going on in one another's lives, and we are ready to respond in a caring way, caring more for our fellow believer than we do for ourselves. We will respond in love as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us.

I have a concern here. If we do not gather together around the Word in worship of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, we not only fail to honor and praise the Lord who bought us, but we aren't going to be a community that cares, helps and sustains one another in love. If our Face Book friends know more about us than our fellow church members than something is wrong. If we confide in Face Book friends more than we do with fellow believers, our relationship with our fellow believers is breaking down. Yes, I understand there can be an overlap, and for some it is the same people, but not for all. Our unity is in Christ. Jesus is the bond that brings us together. The great love with which He loved us is the love with which we are to love one another.

This is true for all the Church. Another edition of a missions prayer list is inserted in our bulletin today. It missed last week's bulletin publication, but we have this news now. This insert tells us about fellow believers in countries around the world. It tells us of their struggles in life, struggles against persecution, as well as struggles with health issues and injuries. We learn their names, so we can remember them in our prayers. I encourage you all to do this as part of your walk in life.

This is what we need to do as a congregation as well. Let us not hesitate to share our burdens with one another, and then let us love one another, and so practice that unity of Spirit in the bond of peace. That's not talking about earthly peace, but spiritual peace that we possess in Christ. When Christ has brought us peace in His love and forgiveness, we will be bound together with those who also know that peace of God which passes understanding.

The Holy Spirit then encourages us in --

## **II. Participating in the Building Up of the Church.**

The Lord has placed us in His Church with gifts given us according to His grace. That is what the Spirit tells us in our text.

*“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ... <sup>11</sup>. And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” (v.7,11-12)*

To each one of us grace was given. Yes, the Lord did present to the church those special gifts in the apostles and in pastors and teachers. However, it is important to note that their function is in building the Church so that its members can function in building the church. I am not hereto function as THE church worker among us, but to be the trainer of church workers among us, so that all the members are equipped to serve the Lord in His Church in whatever capacity the Lord has blessed them with gifts to fulfill.

How do we reach that goal? It starts with growing in our knowledge of Jesus Christ and strengthening our faith in Christ Jesus through worship and meditation on the Word. This strengthens each believer in His love and appreciation of the gospel, which in turn increases the Christian's desire to serve the Lord by serving one another in love. This is a wondrous upward spiral of grace.

The Lord places an important priority before us in regard to our service to one another, a priority that is often lost sight of, and unappreciated. That priority is that we build one another up in true faith. Our text lays this before us as our goal that we edify one

another “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; <sup>14</sup> that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, <sup>15</sup> but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— (v.13-15)

We need to stay in the Word. We need to learn and be reminded and refreshed in the truth of God’s Word. Some ask, “Why? Haven’t we learned it all already?” The answer is twofold. First “No! you haven’t learned it **all** already. None of us, including the pastor, have learned it all. And we should all desire to learn more of the truth of our salvation. God has revealed such wonders of grace for us to find in His Word, gems of truth for us to find in His Word, for us to think that we don’t need it, or don’t want it, well, that is just rude! It’s telling God, I really don’t care about that. Why would God reveal something to us He didn’t want us to know? Surely, He has good reason to reveal what He has revealed in His Word!

Yes indeed. The reason lies in the deceitfulness of this world. If we remain children in faith, immature in faith and knowledge, then we will be far more susceptible to the trickery of this world and the false ideas and philosophies of this world. So we ought to stay in the Word, and teach the Word to our children, and attend Bible class while our children are in Sunday school, so that we know the truth and grow up in our faith, grow to be mature Christians, who see through the lies and deceptions of this world that would attempt to trip us up in our faith.

The opposite is also true. If we are not active in church we will become weaker in faith. Our knowledge of the truth will slip. Silly ideas from the world will creep into our thinking. As a result, we will feel less and less of a need for church and Bible study because we will feel less and less of a need for Christ, and we will think of Him and the sacrifice He made to save us less and less as each day goes by. It is a terrible downward spiral!

How weak can we get? So weak we blend right in with the world. Several years ago I was at a wedding, and as part of the service the

congregation was invited to join in saying the Lord's prayer. One side of the church was not made up of people raised in church. That side of the church didn't say the Lord's Prayer, not because they objected to it, but because they didn't know it. I have been a pastor for over forty years. It is alarming to have children arrive for catechism instruction who couldn't say the Lord's Prayer. How weak can a church get? That's critically weak.

Sitting on the sidelines doesn't get the job done. The Lord calls for ALL to participate and walk worthy of the calling to which we have been called. *"The whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."* (v.16) We are all part of the body. When part of the body doesn't work you are handicapped. Adjustments have to be made. Function is hampered. That is as true in our spiritual body, the Church, as it is in physical bodies. Maybe even more so. Other parts of the body who haven't been given all the gifts strive to do that which others with the right gifts ought to be doing. We're handicapped. Sitting on the sidelines doesn't do any good for anyone.

The Lord is clear. He gave each individual gifts according to His grace, gifts to use to the praise and glory our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These gifts are to be used to build up our fellow believers and make them stronger as we love one another with that same love with which Christ also loved us. Our bulletin cover presents the question for us, the following verse of that psalm gives us the answer. *"What shall I render to the Lord For all His benefits toward me? <sup>13</sup> I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord."* (Psalm 116:12-13) It starts with opening our Scriptures at home, and coming together to call upon the name of the Lord at church, and striving together as one body in Christ to build one another up in love.

Let us *"walk worthy of the calling with which (we) were called, <sup>2</sup> with all lowliness and gentleness."* (v.1,2)

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.