Verses: 1 Kings 17:12-13,15 and Ephesians 6:21-22 Occasion: Worship

Location: First Presbyterian Church of Lake Mary October 25, 2020

Pastor: Joe Raymond

**Song**

# Onward, Christian soldiers!

# Marching as to war,

# With the cross of Jesus

# Going on before.

# Christ, the royal Master,

# Leads against the foe;

# Forward into battle,

# See his banners go!

# Onward, Christian soldiers!

# Marching as to war,

# With the cross of Jesus

# Going on before.

**Communion of Saints**

Scripture readings**: 1 Kings 17:12-13,15 and Ephesians 6:21-22**

**1 Kings 17:12-13,15**

**12 But she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” 13 Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son.  15 She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days.**

**Ephesians 6:21-22**

21 **So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything. He is a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord.**22 **I am sending him to you for this very purpose, to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts.**

**This is the word of the Lord! Thanks be to God.**

**Let us pray**

 Heavenly Father, please quiet our minds and open our hearts

to Your truth,

and please

**…let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,
   O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

**Amen**

**Sermon**

As you heard the sermon title today, what came to mind?

Whenever we recite the Apostles’ Creed, we profess that we believe in the “communion of saints” yet, we may not know what it is.

* Does it refer to the Lord’s Supper with the apostles gathered?
* Why do we “believe” in it?
* Is it still important?
* What does it have to do with Paul’s letter to the Ephesians?

Studying our verses for today, I was impressed with the way that, in them, we see that Paul was a man who lived what he preached. Paul preached the importance of the unity of believers, and he worked to that goal himself!

As you know, Paul wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus. Let us not, in saying that, forget that he is writing to people, some of whom he had lived with for 3½ years in Ephesus. There, he had established a Christian church and

Κοινωνια (Greek)

* a community
* a communion
* characterized by mutual involvement and relationship.

As you may recall…

Ephesus:

* was in what is now modern-day Turkey
* was considered one of the largest cities in the world in the 1st century
* was known for its pagan worship of the goddess Diana at her temple

We must remember as we read Paul’s letter, that being a Christian in Ephesus was extremely countercultural. Believers faced opposition daily. They were a tiny Κοινωνια in a huge cosmopolitan tourist city whose economy flourished because of the worship of Diana. Ephesus would have seen Christians as detrimental to their city since Christians preached Christ alone.

How did God supply the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of these believers?

He gave them each other as ministers of His love!

God has always intended believers to live in communion-in Κοινωνια-with one another. Each has been given resources and abilities from the Lord for the purpose of ministering His love to one another in fellowship-Κοινωνια-communion.

Because those who worship Jesus and are children of God are called “saints,” their close interrelatedness, regardless of where they live, is often referred to as the “communion of saints.”

Paul wrote Ephesians in Rome, under house arrest, chained to a Roman soldier, yet dedicated to preaching God’s word. This is why he called himself, as we learned last week, an ambassador in chains. Here, at the end of his letter of instruction and encouragement to his fellow saints, he reminded them to pray for each other, and asked for prayer for himself from them.

**18 Pray in the Spirit at all times… for all the saints.**

**19 Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me that I may declare it boldly…**

Though he was no longer with them physically, as he once was, nonetheless, we see that their communion was still very much present.

In our verses today, we see Paul continue to emphasize mutual involvement and relationship as he explained his plan and purpose:

21 **So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything.**

22 **I am sending him to you for this very purpose, to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts.**

How do these verses exemplify Κοινωνια?

There are two predominant ways.

* First, we see that Paul cared that they cared about how he was.

He didn’t hold himself aloof from them.

Knowing they might feel discouraged, he was compassionate.

* Secondly, though it was a challenge, he worked to alleviate their distress.

What could he do from a distance?

He could pray, and he could send them a letter with Tychicus.

Who was Tychicus? He was another man in whom we see a commitment to the communion of saints. Paul considered him to be **“a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord.”**  He is mentioned 5 times in the New Testament, always faithfully serving! Several times he was Paul’s courier. This was no small feat!

It meant months of hard travel! For example, traveling from Rome to Ephesus required about 500 miles of walking and 600 miles aboard a ship each way!

Miraculously, God has allowed Paul’s compassion for the Ephesians and the faithfulness of his servant, Tychicus, to continue fostering communion in the saints ever since, hasn’t He?

We hold Paul’s letter in our hands and continue to share in its encouragement even now!

Our “communion of saints” extends past the walls of the buildings we meet in. It extends to all believers, in whatever country, at whatever time. As believers and members of the same body, we have the privilege of serving locally with our brothers and sisters as well as world-wide as God leads.

We might think we have nothing to offer anyone. Perhaps we will never move to a community and establish a church-but we might. Nonetheless, there are many resources our Heavenly Father has supplied, enabling our ministry to others.

What are your resources?

How can you share them?

Ask God to show you.

We might think, “This is a bad time for me. I cannot give.”

Consider the story of the widow in 1 Kings this morning. There had been no rain and no crops. The widow planned to use her last handful of grain to make one final meal for herself and her son, and then die.

(1 Kings 17-homework).

God had sent Elijah 85 miles to a destitute widow to request help for himself. He revealed that God had promised that her food supply would not diminish if she would serve him first. The widow chose to comply, and God supplied their needs throughout the drought. This woman did something simple out of faith. She gave what she could, and God rewarded her selflessness. He blessed her “little” and made it “much.”

Similarly, God calls us to serve each other in His body, in whatever capacity we are equipped, no matter how seemingly insignificant. Believers are not intended to live our lives detached from others, serving ourselves. We are to pursue active involvement and relationship-communion-Κοινωνια with other saints.

I encourage you to spend time in prayer this week and ask God in what ways you can live in communion, in caring fellowship with other saints.

Remember His words in Matthew 25:40

**‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’**

This means that in living in communion with all the saints, ministering to one another, we minister to the Lord! What a privilege! We are not in this life alone.

This is truly good news that is intended to be shared.

Friends, please remember, this good news came to you on its way out to someone else, using YOU as a messenger.

To those of you who do not yet know Jesus and are not yet a member of the communion of saints, I urge you, please call or come see me as soon as possible, so we can have that life and death conversation.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of serving You. Thank you for gifting each of us uniquely, so we can give Your provision to those in need and receive Your care from those who are united in communion with You. Please open our eyes to see their needs and show us how to serve in Your name.

Amen!

And now:

 “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ… the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Go in peace.