

A Worshipful Spirit
Phil 2:1-11, Psalm 150, John 4:23-24
October 1, 2017 – World Communion Sunday

“Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ Is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” What a wonderful statement! What a worshipful statement!

Friends this is a wonderful day. This is a special day, for this is World Communion Sunday. On this day, Christian churches all around the globe celebrate the wonder and the grace of this holy meal. Some of those churches celebrate the sacrament every Sunday, and some only celebrate it a few times a year; but, if they are part of any main-line denomination, they are celebrating it today.

I’ve stated before that the sacrament goes by multiple names. Some call it Eucharist, a Greek word that means “Thanksgiving.” Some call it the Lord’s Supper. But I really like to simply call it Communion – “Holy Communion.” The word “communion” means to come together, to share in common; and I remind you once again of the words from our communion prayer: “By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.” Oneness, unity, the closeness of the family of God, that’s what this meal is all about. In this meal we come into a special relationship with Jesus Christ. Christ becomes part of us, as we remember Christ’s promise to be with us always. And out of that oneness with Christ, we share a oneness with all God’s people, first with every Christian across the globe, and then through our ministry we share a oneness with all humanity and indeed even with all creation.

But this is not just a sermon about communion. The founder of our denomination, John Wesley, spoke of several Means of Grace. Certainly, the Sacrament of Communion we primary among them, and Wesley stated that Christians should partake of this sacrament as often as possible. He, himself averaged about five times a week. But then there is prayer and worship, Bible study and song, fasting and reaching out to help others – all means of experiencing God’s amazing love.

Those who have been here the past few weeks know that we are in the midst of a series highlighting the “Guiding Principles” of our long range plan, a plan we call “Our Faithful Journey.” This week’s highlight is:

We provide varied opportunities for people to grow in their faith. We offer worship and study experiences that resonate with all generation within our congregation. We offer multiple opportunities for study and group

activities (within the bounds of what is practical for a small community church). Because music is a deeply spiritual and communal experience for many, we will maintain a rich music program. Rooted in the Methodist tradition of innovation and bold interpretations of Christian theology and spiritual practices, we will experiment with innovative worship styles and practices, to attract people of all generations. We seek the holy, not the comfortable.

Opportunities for worship, opportunities to experience God's love, opportunities to praise God... As a musician, I love Psalm 150. Praise God. Praise God with trumpet and lute and harp and tambourine, and strings, and pipes, and cymbals. The psalmist must have seen my house. Ginny was once asked, "If you were to be dropped into a strange surrounding, what would make you feel at home." She replied, "Books and Musical Instruments." Yes, our house is filled with books and musical instruments; and I pray that we use both to the glory of God.

As I stated in our recent newsletter, this church is indeed blessed with the quality of music we experience here every Sunday. Yes, I believe that music is truly a gift from God, and I believe we are called to return that gift by using our music to honor, praise and glorify our creator. I also believe, as a musician, that I am called to use the gift of music to help others experience the Grace of God.

But, as you might imagine, all the books in my house are not about music. I love to study, love to teach, and I love the Bible. It was a real joy to begin this year's Bible study on Tuesday evenings, as we seek deeper, fuller, richer meaning in scripture; and through scripture, we seek a closer relationship with God.

And that's what worship is about – a closer relationship with our creator, as we praise and glorify and worship that same God. It was two weeks ago that we heard the story of the Samaritan woman at the well; as, at that time we spoke about welcoming a diverse congregation. The Story of the Samaritan Woman is a long story; and I confess, in the interest of time, we skipped one of my favorite Bible verses, because it was not germane to diversity. Yes, I know you hear about my favorite Bible verses a lot: I have a lot of "favorite Bible verses." But here, Jesus is speaking with the woman; and she comments that her people worship in Samaria, and Jesus' people worship in Jerusalem, in a slightly different manner. Jesus replies, "The hour is coming when you will worship neither here nor in Jerusalem. . . God is a spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." God is spirit. God is love. God is incredible energy. God is light and warmth and strength. All this and so much more. We might simply say, "God is!!!" Remember when Moses asked God's name, and the Holy responded, "I AM." You see, it all fits together. God is infinite and ultimate. Infinite in time and space. . . God is everywhere at all time. There is nowhere without God. And God is ultimate; there is nothing greater than God. GOD IS (period).

And us, we are called to worship with the same loving spirit, basking in the light, in the warmth of God's love; and most importantly, we are called to worship in truth – not for show, not for the benefit of our neighbors, not even for our own self interests, but 100% for our relationship with and love of the Holy.

I truly believe it is the ultimate call of this church to help others experience the amazing love of God, to help each of us and others come to an ever closer relationship with the Holy; and in so doing, to help each of us and others come into an ever closer relationship with each other.

May God grant us as individuals and as a church the strength, the love, and the insight to always worship in spirit and in truth, as we honor God, praise God, and give God the glory in all we do.

Let us pray.

Let, lead us, that we might worship you
in spirit and in truth,
and through that worship, come into an ever closer relationship
with you,
for you are our love, our peace our all.
Amen.

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