Good morning. We’ve talked for the past couple of weeks about our role and blessings in the body of Christ. We have shared how we are, as born-again followers of Christ, a part of the eternal plan of God. We have affirmed that we are loved, we are to enjoy Him, and we have duties as followers that we readily and lovingly accept. This morning, we hear from Jesus concerning the greatest commandment—to love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:34-40), and Paul’s message about spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-14). We are to serve God and love Him by the same Spirit for the common good. But listen. A church body is not connected because of a common interest. The people of the church are connected by a common life—Jesus Christ. You see, a common interest leads to casual culture. But, a common life, living in and being led by the same Spirit, for the common good, leads to definitive devotion and a place of belonging (\*1 Corinthians 12:11-13). In this place of belonging, all drink from one Spirit. God’s provision is sufficient for every need.

Psychologists say that one of our greatest primary human needs is to belong. And God, Himself, with one Spirit meets that need in the body of Christ (\*\*Psalm 68:6), a family to belong to! This belonging is not necessarily about fitting in. This belonging gives evidence that God is building for Himself a people (\*\*\*1 Peter 2:9-10). And it is by a triumphant victory and triumphant dedication that He, Himself, is causing us to

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\*1 Corinthians 12:11-13

11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by[a] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

\*\*Psalm 68:6

God sets the lonely in families,[a]

 he leads out the prisoners with singing;

 but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

\*\*\*1 Peter 2:9-10

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

belong and building His people—meeting needs, engendering sharing, service, selflessness—a family to belong to, a mission to carry out together, an eternity to live out. (\*Matthew 16:15-18). It’s triumphant because Christ is the cornerstone and God does the building, and yet, we are included. We belong (\*\*1 Corinthians 3:4-9).

 The church is not built on a foundation of our own thoughts, principles, preferences, opinions, or desires. The church is built on and by Christ and His Holy Word. It is a hospital for the hurting and the broken. It is a place of healing and holiness. It is a community who welcomes the stranger with the intent that they won’t be strangers for long. In this community, Christ is building for Himself a people, not an institution. Although we have comer to Christ, individually, we do not live in Christ in solitude. We of the church are connected not by a common interest but by a common life in Christ. Christ gives us assurance that *in Him we belong* (\*\*\*John 10:27-28). In the belonging, we have our identity: HE is our identity. Belonging means we share the same truth , the same mission, led by the same Spirit, same Savior, and same eternity.

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\*Matthew 16:15-18

15 “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

\*\*1 Corinthians 3:4-9

4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?

5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.

\*\*\*John 10:27-28

27 My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.

Jesus is our fixed point of reference. The primary focus of the church has always been to bring people into the Kingdom. The saving grace of Christ is the common ingredient (\*John 3:29-30). We belong as the Bride of Christ, and in Him our intimate belonging is secure, but only if you have placed your faith in the Lord Jesus. There is no other way but by repentance and faith. This is the first question in the Heidelburg Catechism: What is our only comfort in life and Death: Answer: That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.”

Family, listen! The true belonging is a result of Christ. We don’t belong to ourselves but to God, and through Him, to His people, fully known and fully loved. Let’s decide today to live that way.

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\*\*John 3:29-30

29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. 30 He must become greater; I must become less.”[a]

Passages in Support of This Sermon:

1 Corinthians 12:4-14

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues,[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues.[b] 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by[c] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Matthew 22:34-40

34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

37 Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’[a] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’[b] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”