

1/19/2020

“Called and Equipped in Christ’s Fellowship”

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Theme: All who are called into Christ share in his fellowship and are gifted by a faithful God.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the early believers in Jesus Christ at Corinth, who were having disputes over a number of matters, including who they followed as leaders. To help focus their attention on the One who truly called them, he said, **“God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”** (1 Cor. 1:1-9 NRSV)

Or as the New International Readers Version puts it . . . **“God is faithful. He has chosen you to share life with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Let me say first that we have a faithful God. When all else fails, God is still faithful. God can be trusted to do as God intends and promises.

Then we can hear and see that God has chosen us; that God has chosen you!

† **You / we are called into the fellowship of Jesus Christ.**

The bible tells us that after being baptized by John . . .

³⁵ The next day John was there by the Jordan River again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” ³⁹ “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter). (John 1:35-42 NIV)

The word Paul uses to describe our relationship with and in Christ is *Koinonia* in Greek. It has several kinds of meaning and translations, such as “fellowship,” “partnership,” “communion,” “participation,” “distribution,” and the like. Our relationship with Jesus, and with one another as his followers, embraces all of these aspects.

One good witness I received this week was from Leland P. Gamson of Arizona in the Upper Room (1/17/20). He says . . .

“As a young boy, I fantasized that my first day on the baseball team was the beginning of a major-league career. However, my father’s war injury had prevented him from teaching me how to play baseball so my inability to catch, throw, or hit relegated me to being a benchwarmer. What hurt the most were the coaches ignoring me in order to focus on the more promising team members.

“The next year we moved to a town with a YMCA. In their baseball program, everyone got to play, regardless of talent or experience. Friendly coaches worked with me to improve my basic baseball skills.

They emphasized self-improvement, goal setting, and teamwork. The Christlike attitude I witnessed at the YMCA led me to a deeper life of faith.”

“The church is the body of Christ,” he says, “and Jesus wants everyone to play on his team. He does not want anyone to be ignored or to be a benchwarmer. In the body of Christ, everyone can find opportunities to grow spiritually through worship, study, and service.

He prays: “Dear Lord, thank you for making us a part of your church. May we help to lead others to a life of faithful service. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

I think this witness is a good one, because it illustrates that God calls us into the fellowship of Jesus. We partner with him and others. We are part of his team.

So, how have you experienced Jesus calling you into fellowship with him? How has that made you feel?

The next thing we can see from the scripture and this story is this . . .

† **Those who are in/of Christ’s fellowship are sanctified, set apart, for God’s purpose.**

Paul addresses those early believers with the words . . . “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. 1:2-3 NIV)

It’s interesting that Jesus changed Simon’s name to Peter, which means “rock”, because it was upon Peter, or his confession, his faithfulness, and his gifts, that Jesus said he would build his church. And it was Saul, later known as Paul, whom Jesus chose to go from persecuting Christ’s followers to making them, especially among non-Jews.

Jesus calls us apart from the worldliness of living to something much better, much more fulfilling.

Sometimes we need to give up and let go of those things which harm us or others. Remember that God wants the very best for us, as well as of us. Have you felt drawn away from, or apart from, a bad or unhealthy habit or lifestyle so that you may better serve Jesus?

And it's so easy at times to get so caught up in the needs and cares of this world, that we forget what Jesus has to offer and fulfill in us.

I know that life can be demanding. Life can be challenging. Sometimes just making it by, or trying to get ahead, can be a struggle. Don't give up. Don't give in.

Remember that God has a purpose and a plan for you. God has, or will, seal you with the Holy Spirit. God will equip you and strengthen you to accomplish that which he intends for you.

All through my life's journey, I can attest to what God has done for me, in me, and through me. It hasn't always been easy. There have been times of uncertainty about the future. But when I look back, I can see God's hand at work. And when I look above, around, and within in the present moment, I can see and feel God's presence. For me it's through family, friends, the church, and even in nature. That's what keeps me going.

I am pleased to be a part of Christ's fellowship, not only here at Trinity, but with other sisters and brothers in Christ through our Ecumenical Association, and our denomination. As we observe a Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we also work year-round together in sharing God's love, provision, and guidance in many ways, for all ages and all backgrounds, regardless of the differences we may have.

Our denomination observes Human Relations Day today, to further the development of better human relations; offering funds to Community Developers, Voluntary Services and Youth Offender Rehabilitation.

And tomorrow, many of us will celebrate the birthday of the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., as well as acknowledge his contribution to freedom and equality for all people, which was inspired by his faith in Jesus Christ and God's purpose and plan for him and others.

Further . . .

† **We are enriched and strengthened by the gifts we are given by God.**

As you have received Jesus as Savior and Lord and have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, you are given gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Remember, as Paul said to the followers in Corinth, "I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge — God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. "Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**" (1 Corinthians 1:4-9 NIV)

Friends, day by day, remember to take time to pray. Take time to read and reflect on God's holy word. Take time to be together with family and friends who encourage and support you; and yes, at times question you or challenge you to be and do better. Come together for fellowship, communion, and partnership with one another in Christ. In doing so, you and all of us will experience the mighty, faithful, and loving God we serve. You will experience and witness to the abundant and wonderful life everyone can have in Christ Jesus!