**I’m a Member Now What?**

Ephesians 4: 1-16

Ephesians 4: 17-32

Last week, I spoke about change. Change that needs to take place in-order for the church to move forward. This week I conclude the two-part series about the church, talking about membership. Now, the broader picture here is that we are talking about the church of Christ! As believers we are all part of Christ’s church. I want to remind you that church is not a building or temple, or sanctuary, but it is a body. Church is a body of believers gathering together, to worship their God and to celebrate the life that has been given to us. Jackson Center Presbyterian church just happens to be a place with a body of believers gather each Sunday to celebrate our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So the question that I pose to you today is; I am a member now what?

Now being a member of something usually means getting a membership card, attending monthly meetings, participating in special events, sharing meals, doing work around the hosting place of the club or building. Some examples would be: The Lion’s Club, Local Shooting Ranges, VFWs, American Legions, Bowling Leagues, Golf Leagues, Women’s auxillary groups, quilting clubs, and many more. With many of these clubs, people come and go. But the good news of Christ’s church no one can sever you from Christ. Being a member of the church is permanent.

So, let us take a quick look at the local church membership and what it means. First it is a means to that End. The universal church is invisible. It’s a spiritual union of all followers of Jesus Christ around the world and up in heaven. It’s a beautiful thing once you’ve come to Christ. You become a member of that body. No one can ever take your membership away from Christ. It’s a permanent thing. The local church has an address. Like 1227 Franklin rd. It is a place that people gather to be with other Christians. The church at Ephesus was a local church that Paul was writing to.

In Revelation 2 and 3 there were seven churches identified. Ephesus was one of the seven. Others included Corinthians and Romans. The local church is the best and clearest way you can interact with the universal church. You might want to say it is a feeder system for the heavenly church.

Jackson Center Presbyterian Church is a local church. Covenant and committed membership in a local church is God’s way of helping individual Christians to grow and help other grow in their faith and their commitment in Christ. So, may I ask you, are you helping other to grow? Are you inviting new members to church? Are you welcoming strangers who come to JCPC to check it out? Are you greeting strangers? Are you getting involved with activities? Are you suggesting ideas? I would hope as we enter into the fall season and towards the holiday season, that you will become an active member. JCPC needs all of you and it can not function without you. Every single person sitting in the pews today is an important part of the local church.

Have you ever been driving with a GPS and suddenly it loses the signal? The voice says, "Signal lost," and you're left on your own. You have two choices: You can either sit there, stuck in the middle of nowhere, waiting for the signal to return. Or you can start driving and trust that the GPS will eventually find you again and recalibrate. New members often feel like they've lost their signal. They might think, "I'm new to this church, I don't know where I fit in, and I don't know what to do." But the Holy Spirit is like that voice on the GPS. You don't have to just sit there waiting for the perfect direction. Start moving. Join a small group. Volunteer in a ministry. God is in motion, and as you participate, he will find you, recalibrate your path, and guide you to your purpose.

Many times, I often hear from people; “I’m looking for the perfect church.” Let me tell you this. There is no perfect church. It would be much better to say, I am looking for a healthy church. If you are trying to find perfect in your world, you might be looking for a long time. So, lets all ask ourselves are we being faithful as a local church? Are we being faithful to the doors of opportunity that God has opened up for us here at Jackson Center Presbyterian Church? The session has agreed to open up some new opportunities this fall. There is going to be a women’s bible study, an adult Sunday school, a weekly bible study, and many more new things are coming. It’s time to get involved and make JCPC a healthy place to be! If I hear one more time; “well we have always done it that way,” I might lose my mind. It time to move in new directions, and not sit in the same spot wondering what is going to happen next.

On Saturday September 27, we are going to have a retreat of church members. This will be a time to come together to develop a mission statement and a vision statement. To update our bylaws and committees. We need to plan for special services, and special music opportunities. We need to look at the order of worship and see if there needs to be any changes. This is an opportunity for you as a member or non-member to get involved, share your ideas and to make sure JCPC is healthy. So, sign up today, let me know if you would like to be a part of this opportunity. Our goal is to have things ready to go for our October 2nd session meeting. Everyone has a voice, so come and get involved. As I said last week, it can’t be just a few people doing everything around here. It has to be a group effort.

The healthy church evangelizes the lost. We must embrace the journey of our missions and evangelism. Evangelism is something that we do with people who speak our Christian language and who are a part of our culture. Missions is what we do with people who do not speak our language or are not a part of our culture. We should be involved in both. I want you to evaluate your own habit patterns. When was the last time you invited someone to church? When was the last time you invited someone to become a member of JCPC? Are you involved in the life of the church? Do you know what missions we partake in? When is the last time that you prayed for an unreached people group? Like I said last week. Things have to and are going to change around here. That is the only way we can make JCPC a healthy place. So, take your blinders off and see the opportunities that await us.

A good title for our reading today from Ephesians 4, would be “Living to God’s Glory.” In the first 3 chapters of Ephesians Paul lays out what God has done for us. Now he tells us how we should be living for God. When we really understand how much God did for us, we will naturally want to serve and obey Him out of gratitude. Understanding who we are is the foundation of this worthy walk. We must endeavor to keep this unity – we do not create it. God never commands us to create unity among believers. He has created it by His Spirit; our duty is to recognize it and keep it.

In closing, I would ask that you keep your church leaders in your prayers. Pray that our church will get healthier and stronger that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. He calls us all. A-men!