

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

One of the curses of growing up and going to Walt Disney World for years and then working for Disney for a time is that random quotes will come into your head from various movies and songs. They get stuck in there and then all the sudden they reappear and what was once something you thought you had moved beyond is now stuck in your head. Case and point, *The Lion King* when Simba’s father, Mufasa who had died, appears as a ghost to his now grown lion son said, “Remember who you are. You are my son and the one true king. Remember who you are. Remember. Remember.” The call of a dead lion to his lion son is nothing significant but the point in the movie is for Simba to live as he was born to be, king. He is to remember who his father is and for what purpose he has been appointed. He is to remember and live as he was born to be.

Ok, this is by no means anything on the gravity of what the Scriptures are teaching you today but there is something to be said when you see this notion of being admonished to live as you have been called. For you, Christians, this is more than just simply a word of encouragement. It’s a call to a new life even as you have been given a new birth. God is calling you to see and live as he has called you and to live together as the church remembering what it means to be the church. Both callings are before you this morning and God is speaking to you with words of warning and words of instruction and encouragement. Remember who you are and remember who you are together.

Listen again to the words of the short Epistle reading again from Ephesians 4. St. Paul wrote, “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

The Epistle reading today picks up where last week’s Epistle reading ended. St. Paul spoke about how God is able “is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us” and leaves you with a praise to God for his glory in the church and Christ Jesus. When today’s Epistle’s reading begins, then, with “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called” the “therefore, is a conjunction related to what had been previous said. Everything in your life is dependent upon who Jesus is and what he has done and continues to do for you. Now, God is urging you to walk as he has called you.

The word here in Ephesians 4:1 for urge is a word that has a meaning of admonishing you. The word has a sense of “calling alongside” and God is speaking to you as Christians. He is addressing you as people who are redeemed in Christ and his children by grace through faith in

Christ. God is preaching to you about the good works you do as Christians. God is calling you to live and teaching you how to do so.

Martin Luther preached on this text throughout his life and one time made this comment, “The chief and principal point according to which a Christian should regulate his external walk in the world is that he should remember and consider for what purpose he was called and appointed by God, that is, why he is called a Christian. He should then conform to this and let all the world see this, namely, that through his life and works the name and Word of God and the Lord Christ are praised. Christ Himself admonishes His own: ‘Let your light shine before the people, so that they see your good works and praise your heavenly Father,’ etc. (Matthew 5 [:16]).”

Luther’s point is helpful as you listen to this reading this morning and consider your place in life as a Christian and together as the church. Your life is lived with a greater purpose because you have been born anew in the God’s Kingdom. Walking in the new life God’s has given you is a life walked clothed with Jesus and living out your baptism. God calls you daily to remember who you are in Christ. Remember.

Remembering your baptism is more than a thinking on it fondly. So, what does this look like? The content of this new life can be seen in several qualities that you should seek to cultivate in your life. Hear God’s word and live it. You are to walk, that is live your Christian life, “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.”

This past summer you heard some sermons on the Epistle reading which spoke to you about your new life in Christ. God was teaching all of us how to love one another in Christ in real concrete ways. To be God’s people is to live in humility, forgiveness, and seeking peace with each other. It’s bearing one another’s burdens living as one body. This is the church, this is who you are as Christians individually and together as God’s people. These words today sum this all up well when you see what God is teaching you about yourselves and his body. Jesus teaches this in the Gospel reading as well when he preaches the parable. The reading concludes with the statement that Jesus makes on more than one occasion in the Gospels, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Pride, anger, harshness, holding grudges, stirring up discord not only make life unpleasant but they seek to undermine everything you have in the waters of your baptism and in the church. Those vices or sinful hearts and behaviors are not what it means to remember who you are in the waters of your baptism. Living in sin and not loving your neighbor is remember who you are as a sinner and leaning into it. God teaches you though, to look at those things which you should strive to live for and encourage one another to live in this life together. Humility, gentleness, and with patience you bear with one another in love.

Humility, forgiveness, and peace. Those things are only possible in Christ and are more than just sentiments but it’s a way of life. It’s a new life brought about by the Holy Spirit. Walking by the Spirit is done in real concrete ways and in love to real people. While imperfectly accomplished in this life, the teaching for you as God’s people is still for this world and

something you do as his people. And think about all this today as you listen to God's word. That's a beautiful image before you and a description of the baptismal life. This addresses you as members of the body. It's for each of you as you live in this world. It's true and good and what you eagerly seek and live. Just in those few words God teaches you so many good works you can occupy your whole life with as you live in your vocations and in service to your neighbors. Life is good when these qualities are lived out in your life.

All this comes to a head then in the final statement, "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." God shows you what defines your identity together as God's people. The church is not an organization like or community service team. The church is holy. [Luther,] "In this way St. Paul shows and teaches what the true Christian Church is and how we are to recognize it, namely, that there is not more than one Church or people of God on earth, which has the same faith, Baptism, the same confession of God the Father and of Christ, and all his word to which, in concord, they hold and in which they remain with one another. Whoever wants to be saved and to come to God must be found in this Church and be incorporated into it. Outside of it no one will be saved."

Living in the church is to live with one mind together because there is one Spirit. The Spirit is at work through his word. God brings about this unity you have as the church and he is teaching you here, as well, to remember what it means to be called and gathered as his body. The temptation is to lose sight of this and want to redefine the church in a different way or view your relationship to church differently. Just as you are called to remember daily your baptism and live in the new life you have in Christ you are to remember who the church is and where she is found. What does this mean? First and foremost, the church is known by where the Spirit is at work to deliver Jesus and his salvation. This happens through the word and sacraments.

When you view the church, this is how you should first picture it in your mind and how you should live your life in the church. Receiving the means of grace is not just primary, it's fundamental and necessary. Everything else in the church is secondary. Even things like Bible studies, Sunday school and all the events and groups the church may have or we may want, these things do not define the church. They flow out the work of the Spirit through the means of grace. Get caught up in the secondary things and neglect the primary and there's a serious problem. The temptation is real though to let the other things steer the ship of our hearts and minds. We are tempted with thoughts like, "this church has the best mahjong group or youth group or the best potlucks, or they really help the poor, or insert whatever else you might think or want." Those things can be great but take those away and what do you have or do these things have to be done by Christians or could a community organization do some of these things just as well or better? Sometimes the answer is yes. Remember who you are as the church.

Now, the flipside of this is not to refuse to do those things. That's deadly too and something to not be tempted against so don't think the other things shouldn't happen. They absolutely, positively should. Before the LWML jumps me in the parking lot and you find my lifeless body in a ditch covered in purple, it's good for those things to happen and those things should absolutely be occurring in the congregation. We thank God for all the service in the church and as the saints of God do this in many ways. Faith is living and active and wants to live out a life of

love and service. The church is truly a community too where we should make efforts to gather like we did for Oktoberfest last weekend. It's good for the members of the body of Christ to sit down talk, eat some brats, and drink beer together. Last weekend was exhausting but absolutely a gift to our congregation. The sacrifices of God's people were tremendous and done so out of love for each other. Those are all good things and our life together as the church. The issue is when we do those things to the exclusion of or view them more important for our lives than the means of grace. Take all those other things away and you still have the church. Take the faithful preaching of the word of God and the right administration of the sacraments away and you are no longer the church but just a run of the mill group of like-minded people who like to do things together.

So, what then? Remember who you are, remember God has called you to be his own dear child as individual Christians and together as the body of Christ. These both go together. "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Remember and rejoice today for all the wonderful things God has done for you in Christ for he truly has done it. Rejoice in being today as the body of Christ, the church and for all the wonderful things God has truly blessed us with as we gather around his word and sacrament and for the times of community where we live as people who are one body laughing, rejoicing, and gathering. All this is because your Lord Jesus has done it for you. You are his dear saints whom he has redeemed by his blood. You are forgiven and Jesus is the one of whom it is written, "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

You are exalted in Christ, the one who humbled himself. Remember who you are each day. You are God's own child. This is who you are and who you are together as the church. And you know what? This life doesn't end. Baptized into Christ you are his and he is yours and together you are his people. You feast now and the day will come when you are raised from your grave, and you will be feasting forever at the wedding feast of the Lamb who was slain but has been raised. Until then, remember who you are and walk in this new life God has given you. Daily repent of your sin and look forward to the day when Jesus looks at you and says, "Friend, move up higher" and go sit where your Lord has prepared for you to be exalted forever.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.