

SERMON FOR AUGUST 5, 2018  
TEXT: EPHESIANS 4: 1-16  
THEME: WALKING TOGETHER WITH JESUS

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **7** But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

In the name of Jesus:

Redeemer Lutheran Church is a member congregation of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. People may have an understanding of what the words Lutheran, Church and Missouri means, but many would have no clue as to what a Synod is or what a Synod means. Many would understand that the term Lutheran means that it follows in the steps of Luther, believing that the Bible is the Word of God and that sinners are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. A Church is a gathering or community of people who believe and follow Jesus. Missouri is a state, so if we put it together thus far we have a group of people, a Church, following in the steps of Luther and believing in the Word of God and that Jesus is mankind's only hope for salvation. This group of Lutherans who call themselves Missouri Synod Lutherans are a group of Lutherans who first settled in Missouri, after coming over on boats from Germany seeking religious freedom. So while that is all well and good, what in the world is a Synod and what does it mean?

Synod means walking together. That is it. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod is a group of congregations who believe in the Bible, following in the footsteps of Luther, trusting in Christ as the only Savior of the world, and these

congregations walk together and work together as followers of Jesus to tell others about Christ's love.

I will confess that one of my bad habits is that I tend to walk alone. Whenever I am walking with someone, I am apt to go off on ahead of the person or people that I am walking with, either alone in my thoughts or rushing to get to somewhere. One of the things that I need to work on, and need to continue to work on, is walking together with the one I am with. I need to slow my pace, to walk with whomever I am walking with, so that I walk together with them. It happened early in our marriage, I would walk with Luann, but instead of walking with her I was walking ahead of her. That isn't what a marriage is about, it is about walking together, in concert, unity, with one another. So it is in the Church, and this is what the Apostle Paul is talking about today.

In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, he has already stated that you have been chosen by God, before the foundations of the world, in His Son Jesus Christ, to be members of God's Kingdom, so that Christ might live in and through you. Today Paul explains what this looks like as Christians walk together with Christ.

Note what Paul says, and what he means. It doesn't mean that you, as a Christian, walk ahead of Jesus. You have been joined with Christ in Baptism, so that Christ lives in and through you. You are not to walk ahead of Jesus, but to walk with Jesus.

This runs counter to how we have been raised in our culture and society. You are conditioned and taught at an early age that you are an individual, a unique person. You remember the saying: "I think, therefore I am." Individuality you are

taught to think for yourself, to take a stand for yourself, to be yourself. The mantra of our culture and the age that we live in is do live for yourself, to do your own thing. Consider, though, what this means. It means that the sin is in your heart, is to be manifested in your life, and society says that it is okay. I am okay, you are okay, all is right with the world because as individuals we are free to be ourselves. And so we have people today declaring that they have declared that they have a new sexual identity, even if this identity runs counter to biology. People want to live today in a manner that is fitting and pleasing to the individual. But this stands in opposition to God. It denies the truth of God's Word about sin and about your relationship with God. Remember what Paul has already said: "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind." You were spiritually dead, you who have walked not with Christ but in concert with the Devil, you who do not walk with Christ follow the course of this world, you are following the prince of the power of the air, you are a son, a daughter, a child of disobedience. If you live your life as an individual, living in the passions of the flesh, according to the carnal desires of the body and mind, you will meet the wrath of God, as will all of mankind who walk according to the desires of the flesh.

Paul, though, shares that there is another Way, a better Way, a Way of Truth, the Way of Life, it is the way of Christ. Paul says:" **4** But God, being rich in mercy,

because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— **not of works, so that no one may boast. For you are God’s workmanship, created in Christ to do good works to the glory of God.” (Ephesians 2: 4-6, 8,10).**

So, Paul having stated this truth, now says therefore, seeing as you have been saved by God’s grace in Christ, now “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **7** But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.”

We struggle with this as Christians, because each of us wants to do our own thing. But this is not the way of Christ. Look at how God has build the Church, He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some pastors and teachers. God gave to His Church these people with these gifts for this purpose: to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,...we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (11-16). The

Church and this congregation is the Body of Christ. Jesus is the Head, and each of us are members, each playing a part, a significant part, in the life of Church.

So consider this: take a moment to look at your hand. Go ahead, look at your hand. Look at the front, the back, the palm of your hand, the fingers, the fingernails. Consider your hand, what do you like about it? What is it that you don't like about it? It may sound trite, but consider now what your hand does, what does it enable you to do? In what way has your hand hurt you? Maybe you have or have had carpal tunnel syndrome, you would then know how painful that is and how valuable your hand is, especially if it is free from pain to do what it is intended to do.

Now look at your knee. For many of you, your knee is covered, so you will have to use your memory to remember what it looks like. But think about and consider your knee. What do you like about it, what does it enable you to do? Are there strengths that your knee has that enables you to do certain things? Perhaps your knee or knees hurt, maybe they are painful, how does that feel, how does that inhibit what you are able to do?

Consider how valuable your hands and your knees are. How do these benefit you? What is it that they enable you to do? How do they help you to live the life that you are able to live? What would your life be like if you didn't have a hand? What would your life be like if you didn't have your knee? What would your life be like if you didn't have any hands? If you didn't have any knees? How would your life change? I can say, with certainty, that if you didn't have your knees, or your hands, the life you would live would be quite different than the life that you are living now.

Your hands, your knees, indeed EVERY MEMBER OF YOUR BODY IS A GIFT FROM GOD. Sometimes these members of your body may be painful for you, sometimes they may not do what you would like them to do or even what you would expect them to do, but they are yours and you are much better off with your hands and knees, and with every part of your body that without them. They are yours, each part of your body, parts of a unified whole, parts of one body.

This analogy is extended to the Church, to this congregation, for YOU ARE MEMBERS OF THE BODY OF CHRIST. So now I want you to look around the sanctuary, not at the walls, but at the people sitting here in the Church. I don't want you to look at the hands, or knees of the person sitting next you to, but I want you to look at the people, look at the individuals here in Church with you. As you look around, what strengths do you see in the members of this congregation? What do you like about them? Look and consider the people here around you in worship today. They, like you, are members of the Body of Christ. They are just like your hands, your knees, they are God's gifts to you. Sometimes they may be very pleasant gifts of God. Sometimes, they may hurt and ache with pain. No matter, each is a member of the Body of Christ. Each person has been blood bought by Christ, their sins have been drenched in the blood of Calvary's cross. You are a part of them, they are a part of you, we are all parts of the Body of Christ. Jesus is our Head, and just as your knees and hands are God's gifts to you, so too those around you are God's gifts to you. And God wants to work in and through you, and in and through those around you, to accomplish great things for God. These are things that we can not do

alone or individually, but they are things that God will do in and through us, working together, so that the Church of Christ will grow and flourish.

Christ has died, He has risen, and He gives to you newness of life in your Baptism. You are forgiven in Christ, empowered by His Word and Supper, so that Christ working in and through us, together as God's Church, you in His might do great things for God. But you are not to do it alone, as a lone individual. You have been called in Christ, baptized in His name, into the Holy Christian Church, and as a member of this congregation, to live your life to the glory of God, Christ living and working in and through you, for you are members of One body, "growing up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Amen