

Rev. Mel Smith  
Ladue Chapel Presbyterian Church  
World Communion Sunday  
Oct. 4, 2020  
Isaiah 25.6-10  
Ephesians 4.1-6, 14-16

## **“Follow the Calling”**

On this Sunday last year, I was in the fellowship hall getting ready for confirmation—students were slowly trickling in one by one...

Until one confirmand walked in, they were carrying a plate overflowing with different kinds of breads—they had obviously walked through the gathering place, stopping at every table along the way—so with a mouth full of bread they exclaimed “IT’S BREAD DAY TODAY—I LOVE THIS DAY!!!”

Foolishly, I responded: “you mean world communion?”

To which they said: “BREAD DAY!!”

That confirmand was absolutely right—bread day, is by far, one of my favorite Sunday’s in our church calendar. Each year, you, the members of Ladue Chapel spend weeks leading up to today, looking, researching and rediscovering old family recipes and baking bread from around the world.

And in recent years, you have also been sharing artifacts that help celebrate the beauty of the culture which each bread comes from.

All of this work, culminates on World Communion Sunday—when between each service, the gathering place is full of tables, filled overflowing with the smell of bread, the sound of conversation and the beauty of community coming together to celebrate the body of Christ.

But today, just like everything else in 2020, bread day, looks a little different. Instead of gathering together physically we find ourselves

scattered across St. Louis, across the country and maybe even around the world.

So, with this day looking so drastically different than previous years, how do we celebrate world communion this year?

It's with this question in mind that we turn to our text from Ephesians.

We aren't quite sure who wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus, it may have been the Apostle Paul, or most likely one of his disciples. And we aren't really sure when it was written or why the author felt the need to write this letter.

What we do know is that this letter was written to a church that was mostly comprised of gentiles—people who would have had diverse backgrounds, who probably wouldn't have rubbed shoulders had it not been for the call to follow Christ—a call which they had each heard and followed—a call which had brought them together and formed the church in Ephesus.

So the author writes a letter to encourage this diverse, eclectic and apparently struggling band of disciples:

Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort 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 of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in all.”

This passage begs a few questions—what is the calling to which we have been called? And what does it mean to live a life worthy of this calling?

When we talk about call, I think of Jesus beside the Sea of Galilea, when he saw Peter and Andrew and called them saying “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Peter and Andrew had a choice—to stay with

their boats and their nets and the way of living that they knew—or to follow Christ, into something unknown..

Because a call is something, where our status quo is upended, and God invites us not only into a new way of thinking, but a new way of living and being in the world. Like Peter and Andrew—God calls each of us with an invitation to come away from what was and follow into what will be.

In the second chapter of Ephesians the author explains what difference the call to follow Christ makes in every day life:

All of us once lived, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath...but God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which God loves us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.”

The call that God extends through Christ, is an invitation, to receive mercy, grace and love—not because of perfection or having earned it—but because of God’s deep abiding love for us is simply extended.

This calling, to receive God’s mercy, grace and love—in turn calls us to leave what we once knew, and to live a life worthy of that calling—a life marked by seeking the unity.

We have to imagine how these words landed on the ears of the people in Ephesus, a place where the young church was comprised of very different people—and it was in that context that the author was encouraging them—to seek the unity of the body of Christ with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

So church...how do these words land on our ears today?

After last Tuesdays Presidential debate—whether you watched in real time or heard others talk about it after—I think we can say it wasn’t a uniting experience.

This year more than others—the divisions among friends, family members, and in our own pews, only seem to deepen.

But it's in the cacophony of shouting voices that we hear these words from Paul; lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called—to live with humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with each other in love, maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Through Christ there is one body and Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God who is above all and through all and in all.

This passage ends with a warning and encouragement “<sup>14</sup> We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into Christ who is the head, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love...

Building itself up in love..

This is the calling, to seek the unity of this incredibly diverse, beautiful body of Christ and to build it up in love.

Of course it's easier said than done—in this time of division and social distancing, how do we seek unity and build the body up in love?

By coming to the table...

World communion is the day we remember that God's mercy, grace and love, unites the body of Christ and God's table extends around the world, from Lusaka to Bogota, Paris to Taipei, Moscow to Johannesburg, London to Toronto, New York to Mexico City, Munich to St. Louis. God's table extends to us—wherever we are even in our own homes.

Over the past few months our tables have become

class rooms and art studios,  
they are office spaces and meeting rooms,  
they catch and become holding places for bills and paper work,  
they house our unfinished, completed and latest projects  
dinning room, kitchen and coffee tables, along with ottomans, counters  
and any other flat spaces we can find—  
have all become the center pieces of our daily lives.

And its at these messy, colorful, busy and overflowing tables, where God calls us, inviting us to come—to break whatever bread we have and to pour the cup—and to see with our own eyes that Christ is present with us—calling us away from what was, and inviting us to follow into what will be--to lead lives worthy of the calling—to live with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and to build the body of Christ up in love.

On this world communion Sunday, as we gather separately, around God's table in whatever form it appears in our own homes, may we see and know that Christ is present with us, and may we hear the call, to leave what was, and to follow Christ into what will be, and may we too build the body of Christ up in love. Amen