

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
May 16, 2021

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ.

**HE IS RISEN!! HE IS RISEN INDEED!! ALLELUIA!!**

OUTSIDE in-person worship on the parking lot, May 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m. in front of the Fellowship Hall. Masks and social distancing are required. Bring your lawn chair. When you arrive, you will be directed where to park your car. If you would like to stay in your car for the worship service, let the parking attendant know and they will direct you to an appropriate parking place. Once you have parked your car and set up your lawn chair. Then, go to the table to pick up a bulletin, a communion kit (choice of grape juice or wine) and place your offering in the box.

We are excited about gathering in-person again and we ask you to be considerate of other's needs at this time. This transition back to being together may cause a great deal of anxiety for some people. So, although you may be fully vaccinated and/or may be comfortable being a little more lax with the CDC guidelines; there will be those there on Sunday morning that are not. So, please for the sake of others who are working through their anxiety adhere to CDC guidelines of wearing your mask properly (with your nose covered), maintain the 6 ft separation from others who are not family members, and do not engage in any physical contact (hand-shaking or hugs). We want this outside sanctuary to be a place where all people who choose to attend feel they can participate safely.

The Church Council will be meeting on Tuesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss our plans for moving forward with regard to worship.

If Outside worship is canceled due to the weather, we will join for worship on Zoom (the link is above). The cancelation will be made by 7:00 p.m. on Saturday and will be posted on channel 69 News, on our website and in an

email blast. If you do not have access to any of those, contact me or someone who you know has one of those internet resources.

The witness committee will be selling pinwheels to benefit Family Promise in May. This is a partnership with Thrivent Financial. We have purchased the pinwheels with a grant from Thrivent and will be selling them for \$2.00. All the proceeds will be donated to the ministry of Family Promise, which provides housing for those who are homeless.

If you have prayer requests, please send them to me so that I can include them in my weekly newsletters.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Denise

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## Galatians 3:23-29

A reading from the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Galatians beginning at the 23<sup>rd</sup> verse.

**3** You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a spell on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it's obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough.

**2-4** Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness?

For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it?

Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up!

**5-6** Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving *or* because you trust him to do them in you?

Don't these things happen among you just as they happened with Abraham? He believed God, and that act of belief was turned into a life that was right with God.

**7-8** Is it not obvious to you that persons who put their trust in Christ (not persons who put their trust in the law!) are like Abraham: children of faith?

It was all laid out beforehand in Scripture that God would set things right with non-Jews by *faith*.

Scripture anticipated this in the promise to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed in you."

**9-10** So those now who live by faith are blessed along with Abraham,

who lived by faith—this is no new doctrine!”

<sup>23-24</sup> Until the time when we were mature enough to respond freely in faith to the living God, we were carefully surrounded and protected by the Mosaic law.

The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure the children will really get to the place they set out for.

<sup>25-27</sup> But now you have arrived at your destination: By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God.

Your baptism in Christ was not just washing you up for a fresh start. It also involved dressing you in an adult faith wardrobe—Christ’s life, the fulfillment of God’s original promise.

<sup>28-29</sup> In Christ’s family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also, since you are Christ’s family, then you are Abraham’s famous “descendant,” heirs according to the covenant promises.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

### Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father  
and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN.

Let us pray:

Lord of justification,  
With great joy we receive the gift  
of salvation which is ours not

because of our own efforts, but because of the saving work of Christ. Grant us full access to the glory of your salvation, an abundance that is more than enough for all humankind, for the sake of our redeeming Christ. Amen.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen

This morning we move from last week's reading from the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians into the third chapter. And you can right away tell that Paul is quite annoyed and frustrated with what is happening with the church in Galatia as he addresses them as - you crazy Galatians, what are you thinking, where is your focus. Have you forgotten what Jesus taught you and modeled for you as you are considering putting into place rules that separate and label people, rules that elevate some followers over others, rules that go against the

sacrifice of what Jesus has done for us on the cross.

Really, what are you thinking??

Isn't this what God has been up to all along – as God called our Father Abraham to trust the promises that God had made for him and his descendants and wasn't one of those promises that through his descendants all people would be blessed. Not because of their own actions, but because that is what God was up to. That was God's original plan – to work through the descendants of Abraham to bless all people.

And yes, things did not exactly go as God had planned as even the most faithful humans were not able to overcome the sin within to accomplish the right relationship with God that would free them to live the life of love that God had intended for them.

And that was why God sent Jesus, his one and only son who would be the one who was perfectly faithful and obedient all the way to the cross, so that our sins would be forgiven. And it is our belief in what Christ has done for us on the cross that reveals our right relationship with God. And frees us to be the blessing so that through us all people will be blessed.

So, it not the rules that we follow. It is not even being a good neighbor that puts us in right relationship with God. It is what Jesus has done for us and our faith in what God has done for us through Jesus and what God continues to do in us, through us and among by the work of God's Holy Spirit, that we confess each week in the Apostle's creed.

We believe in one God, creator of everything.

We believe in God's son Jesus, who is mysteriously also the same God as God the Father,

who came to earth to teach us of the true character of God the Father, the ways of God's kingdom, and to redeem us.

We believe in God's Holy Spirit, which dwells within each and everyone of us feeding and nurturing our faith. And is active every minute of everyday inspiring us, empowering us and emboldening us to do the hard work of bringing about God's kingdom here on Earth by mysteriously binding us together as God's church to get this kingdom work done.

But, as we hear in Paul's letter the reality of our differences and the reality that although redeemed and made holy through Christ's sacrifice, we still carry sin within us; which often leads us down the wrong path.

And in the case of the Galatians, although they professed to be brothers and sisters united in Christ; their differences created

tensions that they felt compelled to resolve in ways that were divisive.

Instead of seeing diversity as a strength and instead of seeing this bond of love through Christ that God has created in our communities as a way God has transcended our differences. They were attempting to eradicate the tension by making rules for how to qualify to be a bone fide Child of God.

And Paul is not only reprimanding them for these actions, but also reminding them of the covenant that God made with their ancestor Abraham and that Abraham was claimed and named as God's very own through faith and it is now through faith that all the followers regardless of the nationality, regardless of their gender, regardless of their societal status are all full-fledged heirs of God's kingdom.

What I also hear in this text this morning is just how hard it is for us to live in the tension of our differences.

And in the past few years, so many of those tensions have not only surfaced but escalated as people's perspectives on so many current issues such as health care, immigration, gender equity, social justice, poverty, the COVID pandemic, the CDC guidelines have become hot button political issues that have curtailed conversations and caused divisions among God's children.

Let us hear God speaking to us through the words of the Apostle Paul - In Christ's family there can be no division ... Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.

Paul does not say that there will be no differences in Christ's family – Paul says there is to be no division – for as God's

children we are all equal and share in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.

So how did the Galatians, and how do we work out these tensions that our differences create so as not to create division and so that we can not only survive as this body of Christ, but we can thrive as a living breathing healthy and vital community of faith.

We center ourselves in Christ and we strive to live out the love of Christ. Not by trying to wipe out our differences, but by not letting our differences and the tension and conflict that it creates define who we are and the life we are called to live together.

How did it happen in Paul's day?

It happened by claiming themselves and their fellow disciples with their true identity as beloved children of God, who

are bound together with the love of Jesus. The bond that does not erase their differences, but transcends them.

What does being centered in Christ and living out the love of Christ look like for us here at Good Shepherd today?

It looks like claiming ourselves and our fellow disciples here at Good Shepherd and throughout the world with our true identity as beloved children of God. Bound together with the love of the triune God, who will never erase our differences, but will always and forever use our differences to strengthen our communities so that God's will may be done and so that God's kingdom may come here on Earth as it is in heaven.

AMEN

***HYMN***

***Leaning on the Everlasting Arms***

What a fellowship, what a joy  
divine  
Leaning on the everlasting arms  
What a blessedness, what a  
peace is mine  
Leaning on the everlasting arms  
Leaning, leaning  
Safe and secure from all alarms  
Leaning, leaning  
Leaning on the everlasting arms

What have I to dread, what have  
I to fear  
Leaning on the everlasting  
arms?  
I have blessed peace with my  
Lord so near  
Leaning on the everlasting arms  
Leaning, leaning  
Safe and secure from all alarms  
Leaning, leaning  
Leaning on the everlasting arms

***Blessing***

May  
The love of God,  
The light of Christ,  
And the joy of the Holy Spirit  
Abide with you on this day  
and forever more.

**AMEN**