

Our Mission:

To share Christ with the world
and grow disciples for Jesus



Loving God and Loving Neighbor as Ourselves

Background:

There is much to be found in this text. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, is an echo of the Shema, "Hear, O Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is One." Paul, acknowledging our unity in Christ, goes on to speak of the variety of spiritual gifts that make each of us unique in God's Kingdom. Yet all spiritual gifts are intended for something more than self-satisfaction. Paul reminds us they are to be offered in love for the support and building up of the Body of Christ.

Theology Connection:

We don't often speak of spiritual giftedness, but Paul is very clear that each of us in the Body of Christ have been given unique gifts and that we are to use them as a means to bless others. We should not covet or be jealous of another's gifts, nor should we selfishly withhold our gifts when needed. Like any healthy organization the church is at its best when everyone is actively engaged in its mission and ministry.

Application:

There are many spiritual gift inventories available online. One can be found at the ELCA website (elca.org). Taking an hour to answer the questions and ponder the results may be affirming, enlightening, and empowering. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, God has gifted us all; he has provided us passion and talent, as well as experience and wisdom. We are called, however, to act in faith to make use of these gifts for the Kingdom of God.

The Text: Ephesians 4: 1-16

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 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 to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

⁸ This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people."

⁹ (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers,

¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows, and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

ADULT

There is an old parable where an eagle, a squirrel, and a turtle are classmates at school. The instructor wants to make sure they are all well-rounded individuals. So, the eagle is required to learn how to swim. The turtle is required to learn how to climb. The squirrel is forced to learn how to fly. The point of the parable is to suggest that we might want to focus more on what we are good at, rather than struggling with what we are ill-equipped to do. What gifts, passions, and dreams has God given you? Are there some action steps you might want to take?

YOUTH

Please read Ephesians 4: 1-16
The Unity of Christ

“There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to one hope when you were called one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:4-6).

God has called his new covenant people, (us, the church) to live out in a worthy manner in unity with Christ. This calling of Christ is not for the purpose of us as individuals but in recognition of all of us as the body of Christ.

How effectively are you contributing to the body of Christ by serving, being united and loving everyone?

Let us pray: Dear God, thank you for calling us to live in peace and unity. Please help us continue to be united and share God’s love. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

CHILDREN’S

God has called us to live in peace and unity with each other. Sometimes it can be hard to get along with others and see their perspective on things. While there is room for disagreements, one thing that stands true is the power of Christ. The Bible is our blueprint on how we are supposed to live our lives. All we need to do is spend time with Him, learning about the Bible and praying daily. Jesus has given all of us an abundance of gifts! We need to be ready and willing to hear what His calling for us is and grow in Christ together! Let’s spend some time this week discovering our gifts in God and exploring how we can use these wonderful gifts that He has blessed us with!

Think:

1. What are some of your Godly gifts?
2. What are some ways that you can discover Your Godly gifts?
3. How can you use your gifts for the family of Christ?

Remember:

God gives us some amazing gifts to build up His family of believers. He has given gifts to every member of His body, the church, in order for us to share His amazing love!

Pray:

Dear God,

Thank You for making us unique and special. Please help us to see the gifts that You have blessed us with and help us to use them for Your glory. We pray all this in Jesus’ name. Amen.