

Session VII EPHESIANS 6: 10-23

Review: Blessed, destined, made known, inherited and marked by God so that the "saints" are to be holy and blameless, redemption, united in Christ, alive for praise, and heirs. Alive and one in Christ and built on Him as a foundation, the saints are strengthened by the Spirit and that Christ would dwell in their hearts. All this is accomplished by God, who does more than we can ask or imagine. ONE body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and God... This is the new life in Christ: everyone speak the truth, conflicts resolved, works at honest labor, shares with the needy, saying only good things the person needs to hear, kind, tenderhearted, mutually forgiving, imitators of Christ, follow the way of love and giving thanks. Instruction is given to how each is to be subject to one another whether husband and wife, child and parent, master and slave.

Pray *silence...openness...prayers for others*

Read Ephesians 6:10-17

...be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. V.10

- 1) What is our struggle against? How do the flesh and blood enemies of the church reflect a bigger enemy? How does that enemy reveal its today?
- 2) Spiritual "Armor" of God:
Truth Righteousness Gospel of Peace Faith Salvation Spirit
- 3) After speaking of enemies, a military image is used with non-military images? What does this armor tell the saints about how they should "fight" against the enemy?

Read Eph 6:18-20

- 4) Prayer is the final piece of "armor" and/or the final command to the saints. How are the saints to pray and to what end should they pray?
- 5) What has been the message that this "ambassador in chains" is to speak boldly?

Read Eph 6:21-24

- 6) Why did these letters always announce or introduce the bearer?
- 7) What does the final blessing say to the saints of Ephesus?

Bible Works.... Epistle to the Ephesians

Life in Jesus Christ calls us to be in the Word. It is the scriptures which give our faith and understanding a deepening relationship to the Living Word, Jesus Christ. This means that every Christian is to be reading and praying the scriptures weekly, even daily.

Many congregations offer bible study or weekly devotional materials. This is to be supported and encouraged. Yet, some Christians and faith communities are looking for ways to be in study and prayer with their sisters and brother throughout the synod. As part of the teaching ministry of the synod, we plan to be offering a series of bible studies throughout the year which can be used by study groups in congregations, church council retreats and planning sessions, and individual members.

The first of these series is the New Testament epistles of Ephesians. Ephesians is an extraordinary text for reflection and challenge for Christians called to be "saints" in Christ Jesus and the Church to be the living embodiment of Christ in the world. This text is an "insider" conversation. It is to the "saints" about the saints. It reflects a highly developed ecclesiology, the understanding of church structure and theology. It raises issue about competing doctrines pulling believers away from the Oneness commanded by Christ. This is most likely a text written in the midst of persecution from authorities. Internal conflicts and external persecution places this community in crisis. Yet, Ephesians is most powerful in revealing the Gospel, the good news in Jesus Christ and God's plan for humanity, especially believers.

Prepared for the Alaska Synod ELCA September 1, 2006

Session I EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Preparation: Read the introduction from your Bible; pick up a "used" Handbook of the Bible (e.g. Halley's); Internet search an online encyclopedia; borrow a commentary from the church/pastor library.

Pray *be silent for a few moments, be open to the Holy Spirit moving in you and the text, who needs your prayers this day*

Read Ephesians 1:1-2

Apostle-one sent by God Saints-one set apart, made holy by God

- 1) Paul identifies himself as an apostle. What does this communicate to the community?
- 2) As saints, what does Paul hope for from the Ephesians?

Read Eph 1:3-14

See the pattern in this introduction:

What God has done	Meaning of God's Act	Promise
v.3 blessed us	+every spiritual blessing +chose us before the world	Be holy and blameless
v.5 destined us	+in love to be God's children according to God's purpose +glorious grace bestowed	We have redemption-forgiveness of sin
v.9 made known to us	+all wisdom and insight of his will + good pleasure of God set forth in Christ	A plan for all time to unite all things in Him
v.11 obtained an inheritance	+destined by God who accomplishes all things	We might live for the praise of His glory
v.13 marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit	+when we heard and believed the gospel of salvation	Our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people

- 3) What has God done for us? What does this tell us about God?
- 4) What are saints to do in response to what God has done?
- 5) How does this inform or define Christian living?

Session VI EPHESIANS 5:8-6:9

Review: Blessed, destined, made know, inherited and marked by God so that the "saints" are to be holy and blameless, redemption, united in Christ, alive for praise, and heirs. Alive and one in Christ and built on Him as a foundation, the saints are strengthened by the Spirit and that Christ would dwell in their hearts. All this is accomplished by God, who does more than we can ask or imagine. ONE body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and God... This is the new life in Christ: everyone speak the truth, conflicts resolved, works at honest labor, shares with the needy, saying only good things the person needs to hear, kind, tenderhearted, mutually forgiving, imitators of Christ, follow the way of love and giving thanks.

Pray *silence...openness...prayers for others*

Read Ephesians 5:8-20

- 1) "...but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—" Vs. 8 In 4:25-32 we see what the new behaviors in Christ are (see review above). Are these new behaviors the "fruit"? Or is something different or more expected?
- 2) What does living look like that is unwise, foolish, & debauchery? What is meant by being careful?

Read Eph 5:21-6:9

These are contextual concerns about life in the 1st century. Some do not or should not apply today. This section starts and ends with: *Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ (v.21) Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband (v.33).*

- 3) *Be Subject to...* Is this cultural context or a Biblical mandate? *Love as Christ loved...* Is this cultural context or a Biblical mandate?
- 4) *Children, obey your parents...* Why should they? *Fathers do not provoke your children to anger* What should they do?
- 5) *Obey your earthly masters ...* Does this support slavery? *Masters and slaves have the same Master in heaven...* What does this mean to their relationship? What is required of both?

Session V EPHESIANS 4:17-5:7

Review: Blessed, destined, made known inherited and marked by God so that the "saints" are to be holy and blameless, redeemed, united in Christ, alive for praise, and heirs. Alive and one in Christ and built on Him as a foundation, the saints are strengthened by the Spirit and that Christ would dwell in their hearts. All this is accomplished by God, who does more than we can ask or imagine. ONE body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and God...

Pray *silence...openness...prayers for others*

Read Ephesians 4:17-24

- 1) What is the matter or concern with pagans? How are the saints still pagans?
- 2) "...to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to clothe yourselves with the new self..." What is this "new self" like?

Read Eph 4:25-32

Pagan Behaviors	New Behaviors in Christ	Why Behave in this Way
Lying	+everyone speak the truth	=We are members of one another,
Anger	+resolve conflicts	=Do not make room for the Devil
Stealing	+works at honest labor	=Marked with a seal for the day of redemption
Evil Talk	+share with the needy	=God in Christ has forgiven you
Holding Bitterness	+say only good things the person needs to hear	=As Christ loved you and gave himself up for us
Anger/harsh words	+be kind	=these bring down the wrath of God
Slander /malice	+compassionate/tenderhearted	
Lewd conduct	+ mutually forgiving	
Promiscuousness	+be imitators of Christ	
Obscene, silly talk	+follow the way of love	
Fornicators	+give thanks	
Impurity		
Greedy		
Idolaters		

- 3) Is redemption and the grace of God conditional on "new" behaviors?

Session II EPHESIANS 1:15-2:22

Review: The community is identified as saints who are to give praise for what God has already done. God has Blessed, destined, made known, inherited and marked us. And the promise of God is: be holy and blameless, be redeemed, be united in Christ, be alive for praise, and inherit.

Pray *be silent for a few moments, be open to the Holy Spirit moving in you and the text, who needs your prayers this day*

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

- 1) What is being affirmed in the community?
- 2) Paul's prayer for the saints is...
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
- 3) What does Paul compare Christ's work in the community to? Where is he going with this new image?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

- 4) Who is dead? And what killed them?
- 5) But who, how and why are they brought back to life?
- 6) What did these dead do to deserve life?

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

- 7) What is the division identified in the Ephesians community?
- 8) *But now in Christ Jesus...* What has happened now to change this division? How did Christ Jesus do this? With the Law? With the two factions?
- 9) What are the divisions faced in your own faith community?
- 10) How does the text inform the reconciling in family and church?

Session III EPHESIANS 3:1-21

Review: Blessed, destined, made known, inherited and marked by God so that the "saints" are to be holy and blameless, redeemed, united in Christ, alive for praise, and heirs. Though dead because of sin, we are made alive and one in Christ. No longer strangers, the whole household of God is built upon Christ.

Pray *be silent for a few moments, be open to the Holy Spirit moving in you and the text, who needs your prayers this day*

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

- 1) How does Paul define his ministry? And the message? To whom is the message delivered?
- 2) How might this Gospel not be good news to some?

Read Eph 3:14-19

- 3) Paul again prays for the saints but always with a purpose. What is that prayer? What is he trying to accomplish?
- 4) "...so that you may attain to the fullness of God." V.19b Given what has been revealed about God and what God does, what might that "fullness of God" look like?

Read Eph 3:20

"To him whose power now at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all can ask or imagine..."

- 5) How big is your imagination when it comes to what God is able to accomplish?
- 6) What would you ask of God for yourself? What would you ask of God for your church?
- 7) How might God fulfill your request or imagining?

- 8) What does this reveal about God and God's desire for us?

Session IV EPHESIANS 4:1-16

Review: Blessed, destined, made known, inherited and marked by God so that the "saints" are to be holy and blameless, redeemed, united in Christ, alive for praise, and heirs. Alive and one in Christ and built on Him as a foundation, the saints are strengthened by the Spirit and promised that Christ would dwell in their hearts. All this is accomplished by God, who does more than we can ask or imagine.

Pray *silence...openness...prayers for others*

Pre-Question: Given what is shared in Chapters 1-3, what has God already accomplished in and for the saints?

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

- 1) What is the calling the saints have received? To live life worthy of the call...vs 1 See the prayers 1:15-23 and 3:16-21
What does the "worthy life" look like?
- 2) ONE Body ONE Spirit ONE Hope ONE Lord
ONE Faith ONE Baptism ONE God
Why is the Oneness so important?
- 3) This concern is for unity. How might there be two bodies, two spirits, two hopes, two lords, two faiths, etc.?

Read Eph 4:7-13

Each of us given grace	Apostles Prophets Evangelists Pastors Teachers	FOR the *equipping of the saints *building up of the body * the unity of faith
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- 4) How are the roles in the church to be viewed and for what purpose?

Read Eph 4:14-16

- 5) AHA! The problem at Ephesus is...
- 6) Grow up...Joined & knit together... Working properly
What are the issues and how are they to be resolved?