

Order of Worship for November 13, 2022 (8:30 AM)

Prelude:

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: We hear in God's Word: "For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." We are on God's team. With that knowledge we sing our opening hymn.

Opening Hymn: "Built on the Rock the Church Doth Stand" - Hymn #645

Confessing our sins and receiving God's forgiveness

1 Peter 4:7-11

R: The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

R: This is the Word of our Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

P: We hear in 1 Corinthians 3:9, "We are God's fellow workers." But do we live that way? Instead we say:

C: "I can't do anything. I have no special gifts and talents. And I don't have a lot of discretionary funds to give to the church."

P: We are busy with other things:

C: "I don't have any time. By the time I get home from work and get the kids fed and put into bed, I am exhausted." Or "Between classes and the job I have to have to pay college expenses, I just don't have time."

P: We get distracted:

C: Computer games, surfing the net, hobbies, Facebook, procrastinating.

P: We say we are too old or too young

C: Too weak or too restricted by obligations or poor health.

ALL: Lord, forgive us for how to fail to be a part of Your team. In that forgiveness help us to see that You have chosen us to be a part of that team not because we are good or talented or rich or popular or charismatic, but simply because You do by Your grace

on account of Christ Jesus. Give us Your Holy Spirit so we trust both that You want us and can indeed make use of every one of us on Your team.

P: By the command and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Hymn of Praise: *“Praise and Thanksgiving”* - **Hymn #789**

Lesson: Luke 21:1-4 told in a children’s sermon.

Sermon Hymn: *“The Gifts Christ Freely Gives Us”* - **Hymn #602** (1st verse soloist)

Sermon: *“On God’s Team”* - **1 Corinthians 3:9**

Teamwork is supposed to be smart and effective. Just listen to these quotes about teamwork:

“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.” “Alone we can do so little together we can do so much.” “A boat doesn’t go forward if each one is rowing their own way.” “The Key to teamwork is to learn a role, accept a role, and strive to become excellent at playing it.” “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Think of what that means in sports. Dennis Rodman became a hall of fame player in the NBA, not by scoring, but by playing good defense and getting so many rebounds. John Stockton did it by all his assists. In 1973 everyone was amazed as the first round pick made by the then Oakland Raiders. Instead of picking a quarterback or running back or defense end, they chose a punter—Ray Guy. But it turned out to be a great choice. Not only was he the greatest punter of all time, he came when the rules changed so that instead of going for a field goal which would be returned back like a punt, teams missing field goals had the ball returned to the other team at the line of scrimmage. Guy became an expert not only at long punts, but the “coffin corners” punt that made other teams start at offense near their own end zone. Specialists like Guy become so important to football teams.

So when Paul tells us that we are “fellow workers,” he seems to be emphasizing teamwork. The Church, the body of Christ, is a team. If we do things as a team, we should succeed.

We can see videos of school teams that place a handicapped player on the field or court and both teams allow the player to score. It can be very heart-warming to see that. By extension we see ourselves as people who help the less fortunate, giving to those who need it.

But is that what Paul is talking about in the Church? He says, “We are fellow workers.” The idea is not that some have needs, some have talents, and those with those talents give.

Then the idea is that it is really only some who are needed. The others are just those to be kind to.

We can feel like one of those. “What do I have to offer?” “I am on a limited income and have little to give in my offerings.” “I don’t speak well in public. Don’t ask me to share a message or teach children.” “I can barely take care of myself. I can’t greet or usher or do altar guild.” “I am so technologically challenged. Don’t ask me to run the sound system or PowerPoint.” “Between work and children, I just don’t have time for anything else.” “I need all the help I can get as a struggling student. What do I have to offer?”

I could give you then some kind of story about how even seemingly little things are important. Our office secretary’s car was flashing its check engine light. The Toyota dealer couldn’t figure out why and checked with other Toyota services. It remained a mystery until they found out that two wires under the passenger seat caused it. To fix those little things that had to replace the seat. On a more serious note it was a little bit of Teflon that came off the wires in a tank of oxygen that caused the tank to explode and almost cause the destruction of Apollo 13. So even “little” people are important in the Church.

Yet those are isolated incidents. Athletic teams have players who never play. Bands have musicians who actually play wrong notes and are in the band because the school thinks it is important to include them. We can feel like the last one picked on a sandlot team, the one who eventually has to be picked, but no one wants.

But in the Church everyone is needed. It has nothing to do with how wealthy, how talented, how healthy, how free of time any of us are. We are needed because God has chosen us. Really God doesn’t need any of us. He is almighty. He can get along fine without us. But He has decided that He wants us to do things with Him, to be a part of His team, the Church.

Henri Nouwen lived in a special Christian home where some of the residents were severely handicapped. In our normal world view it would be easy to see them as a strain on the rest. That attitude is certainly part of what fuels people to think that it is okay to have an abortion or to ask someone to take your life because you are a medical strain on others. But in that Christian community Nouwen came to see that these special handicapped residents were just as needed as the rest. They helped the others by showing them how to give. And in return, even with their handicaps, God’s love shown through them.

Our bodies’ muscles work because they have “opposing” muscles. Muscles move in one direction by contracting. But what moves us in the opposite direction is the “opposing” muscle. That is why athletes who want to build up those muscles need to make sure they build up both the “opposing” muscles.

In a similar way all people are important in the church. All of us have been chosen by God to be important in His Church. Paul puts it this way in 1 Corinthians 1:

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him.

We see that apply to our friends like Kebede overseas. Kebede lives in Ethiopia, a third world country. We send funds over to him to support the work he does for our sister churches there. But that does not make it a one way street where we do all the giving and they the receiving. They need our financial assistance. But we need their example of powerfully sharing their faith and praying for the spread of the Gospel. Paul says about this is 2 Corinthians 8:

Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: “The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little.”

We are fellow workers with our Christian brothers and sisters all over the world. God has set things up so that we all need each other and all of us have something to offer.

God gives commands to His Church which begin with the word “You.” When we do that we have to remember that in many languages, like those of the Bible, there are both singular and plural forms for the word “you.” In the south they say, “y’all,” a plural form. That is the form God used for the Church. When He tells the Church to preach the Gospel, He doesn’t mean each one of us, but as a group. It isn’t just the preacher that is important. Equally important are the people who listen, those who pray for the preacher, those who support him, those who make it available online, and those who make a setting and location for the preaching. God has decided to use each of us as a group, as the body of Christ to do this.

That is why God calls us to worship together. Research shows that when people sing together, they grow closer to each other. We come together not so much to worship God, but to be blessed by Him not only directly, but through His people, the Church.

Offering Hymn: *“We Give Thee But Thine Own”* - **Hymn #781**

Stewardship Message:

Reflecting on our team:

P: 3 John 8 tells us:

C: “Therefore we ought to support such people, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.”

P: St. Paul spoke about his “fellow workers”---Timothy, Titus, Mark, Aquila and Pricilla, Luke, Aristarchus, Demas, Philemon, Epaphroditus, Lucius, Sosipater, Jason, Urbanus, Stachys.

C: We consider our “fellow workers.”

(slide showing our missionaries as told by the pastor)

ALL: We give thanks for being a part of this team, God’s team.

The Prayer for Priorities:

P: How we need to be renewed, O Lord, especially in our priorities, for without You as the compass point of our lives we are like children, “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles.” (Ephesians 4:14) Renew our priorities, O Lord, and then teach us to say and live:

C: The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want . . .He leads me.” (Psalm 23:1,2)

P: When we are tempted to place such a priority on studies and success and advancement that we say that only by cheating can we survive, renew our priorities, O Lord, and then teach us to say and live:

**C: “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?”
(Mark 8:36)**

P: When we are led to provide everything for our children except knowledge of You and faith in You, when the things of this world become more important to their lives and ours than the Kingdom, renew our priorities, then teach us to say and live:

C: “But seek you first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these shall be yours as well.” (Matthew 6:33)

P: When we have schedules that are so busy that we have no time for You and Your church, when we use the talents You have bestowed on us for everything and everyone but our fellow members of our Lord’s Body, renew our priorities, O Lord, and then teach us to say and live:

C: “Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sin . . . As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” (I Peter 4:8, 10)

P: When we are pulled into compromise by the desires and passions and promises of this world, forgive us, Lord, renew our priorities, and then teach us to say and live:

**C: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
(Romans12:2)**

P: When we are confronted by the temptation to ignore the good and choose evil, when we find ourselves rationalizing our compromises, when we have lost our integrity and feel lost and helpless and condemned, forgive us, Lord, renew our priorities, and then teach us to say and live:

C: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

P: We pray also...in Jesus’ name, who taught us to pray . . .

The Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: Christ Jesus, we thank You for placing us on Your team through baptism. Help us to see that each one of us is chosen by You to be on that team and each of us have something to offer to Your body, the Church. We pray this in Your most precious name.

C: Amen.

Blessing; (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “*Brother and Sisters in Christ*” (Norm)