

# Sermon 24th week after Pentecost

Eph 2:14–22, . Luke 8:41–56,

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST !!!**

For He is our peace, Who has made us both one.

Jesus Himself took on our flesh, and in His circumcision he became a Jew; and in His death on the Cross he took upon Himself the curse of our mortality and became as One outside the law, as One Whom the law condemned, that He might unite all mankind in Himself, both Jew and Greek. And He didn't just change us so that we might be new and improved Jews; He created us a new man, breaking the fragmentation that divides us from God, and from each other — not just bringing the enmity to an end, but **KILLING IT**.

And He proclaimed Peace to those who were far off and Peace to those who were near. We see this even in His Nativity, where it is announced by the angels to the shepherds — those near, and by a star to those who came from a distant land.

And we are made fellow citizens with the saints. We are being built into a holy temple in the Lord; a tabernacle, a

dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. We are given citizenship in the Kingdom of God. We proclaim it in this Divine Service; we participate with it in communion; we live it in our day-to-day lives.

He is our peace, having made us one: Male — Female, Jew — Greek, English — Russian, White — Black ... HE has made us one; reconciling us to God, making us Fellow-citizens of the Household of God. In spite of our differences, God has called us together to stand as members of His house as we worship Him together. He has called us to be His body through communion. We may get on each others' nerves from time to time; but God is building us into a community of His Body, here in Silverdale, here in Central Kitsap County. not as another organization, but as an organism, a living, breathing microcosm of Christ's Body; to incarnate His Body in our lives, and His ministry in our encounter with others.

And we do not figure all this out on our own by reading about it — our foundation of faith is in the Apostles and Prophets. The foundation is in both the Old and the New Covenant. We must be obedient to the teachings of Christ, the Apostles, and the Prophets. Those teachings are not easy to do; those teachings constantly challenge us to live a life of repentance.

Christ Himself is the cornerstone, and we are His temple being built together. Sometimes we irritate each other; sometimes we rub each other the wrong way. Yet we are being built into His dwelling. In our worship we humans stand with the angels, offering up the noetic worship which is offered by the angels at all time, and we this morning come together to offer it with the angels. And we live our lives from this offering — offering ourselves as a living sacrifice — our reasoned worship.

We together are the Temple of God. We can't do that alone. We need each other, to pray for each other, to love each other, and yes, sometimes to annoy each other and learn to overcome our differences so that we realize His unity in us.

We must do this together. It is for this purpose that God has called us here.

Therefore we must bear one another's burdens. For just as we are in need of healing, so all of us are. In bearing our own burdens and the burdens of each other, we fulfill the law of the Kingdom of God.

And Christ heals us; He restores us to the likeness of His Image in Whom we are created, if we will let Him; if we will cooperate with Him.

Let us use this time of the Nativity fast to cleanse ourselves of bitterness, anger, falsehood, impurity, uncleanness, and covetousness. Most especially in this time of year, when commercial interests want us to be greedy and consume more, we must guard ourselves in moderation, for our soul is in this battle between virtue and vice — and there are many who want to make money on our vices. We are to give thanks in all things and be grateful. Which brings us to our Gospel.

The Gospel reminds us of this as well. The parable tells us the man had more than enough. The Rich Fool is only concerned with himself, and how things effect him; he does not look at how his behavior affects others. He only considers himself, and what life can give him. He is like Mr. Potter in “It’s a Wonderful Life”; he only looks out for himself and his own petty concerns.

Instead of building bigger tables to share his wealth, he decided on bigger barns – barns where his harvest would accumulate, and spoil.

He seems to think that he is the owner of his soul and that he is in charge . . . of everything!

Jesus then continues the parable, deliberately using the

line “Eat; Drink and be merry.” He knew that those listening to Him would recall how that line from Isaiah continued: “Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die.”

St. Basil the Great says of this very Gospel: “if you fill these larger ones, what do you intend to do next? Will you tear them down yet again only to build them up once more? What could be more ridiculous than this incessant toil, labouring to build and then labouring to tear down again? If you want storehouses, you have them in the stomachs of the poor.”

The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you put in the bank belongs to the poor.”

On this same passage, St. Leo the Great points out that this passage should read: “Fool; in this night **they** demand your soul from you.” These things that you own, now own you. Many of the fathers remind us that the only thing we get to take with us to the grave is whatever virtue we may have acquired in this life.

And so the Rich Fool dies without learning mercy and generosity. And the wealth of his harvest is left to rot.

We must guard our relationship to the many things our world tells us we MUST HAVE, especially this time of year. We have only to look at the average relationship with the smart phone to see how easy it is to be owned by our things.

As we are now in the Nativity Fast, let us guard against the noise of acquiring. And when we find ourselves having a surplus, let us find a way to build a table that invites others to partake of our good fortune.

So, let us guard our souls in sobriety, and turn down the volume of the noise from the world through prayer, fasting, and alms. And, let us not get so involved in whether our particular political side won today that we ignore the friends and family that we have. Let us spend less time on the internet, and more time loving the people whom God has given us. Let us not fall for the desires to have things that are very loud right now (Black Friday seems to have lasted two weeks this year). Let us rather BE . . . together . . . with those people God has given us and put in our lives. And with the current pandemic, we must find more creative ways to do this. As St Paul reminds us, we must bear one another's burdens.

To Him Who gives us all good things in due season, be all

Glory honour and worship. Always now and ever and  
unto ages of ages. Amen