

St. Andrews Lutheran, Tallebudgera

Sunday 17th January, Second Sunday after Epiphany

Vicar Ben Graham

I CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

You surely know that your body is a temple where the Holy Spirit lives

Won't it great to be back in our normal worship space? In some ways it's our spiritual home on earth. This is where we meet the Holy Spirit, we baptise, receive communion, are reminded of our sins and receive the assurance of God's forgiveness. This Temple is a place where God serves us and we worship him.

In the past 27 years some of you have seen baptisms, marriages and funerals here, or perhaps in our little chapel down the hill.

Last week, here in the Theatre we sang together "I am who you say I am." We are the Church, the bride of Christ Jesus. Regardless of where we worship we remain a part of the family of Christ Jesus. For us, the Worship Centre is our familiar temple and the place that we know we can encounter God.

Our church building has been designed with God in mind, when it was constructed it was set apart for service to God and made holy, Just as we are in our baptism. Beforehand it was just bricks and mortar, but now the Holy spirit lives here. With or without a fresh coat of paint.

Baptism is a very special event for us. Last week we heard about the baptism of Jesus and what that means for us being saved and the forgiveness that we receive in it. Just as baptism was the beginning of Jesus's ministry, so to for us; When we are baptised we are sanctified and set apart for service to God. But what does that mean? How does this effect our relationship with God?

In the beginning of today's reading Paul is criticising the Corinthians because they are abusing the freedoms that we have in Jesus. These Christians were so confident in God's mercy and that Jesus would forgive all their sins, that they were not particularly consistent in obeying any of the commands of God.

Sometimes we, like these Corinthians rely too much on God's mercy. I can do anything, and God will forgive me again whenever I come to this building.

Let's see again these words of Paul:

¹² Some of you say, "We can do anything we want to." But I tell you that not everything is good for us. So I refuse to let anything have power over me. ¹³ You also say, "Food is meant for our bodies, and our bodies are meant for food." But I tell you that God will destroy them both. We are not supposed to do indecent things with our bodies. We are to use them for the Lord who is in charge of our bodies.

And So, whenever we sin or miss the mark or break God's commandment. Whenever we are self centred, focussing just on what we want and what brings us pleasure. Whenever we do anything like this we disappoint God, we break faith with him and we damage our relationship with God.

It can start as a small thing, a little bit of flirting, or sharing some gossip, or possibly going for an extra helping of dessert - after all "Food is meant for our bodies". But each time that we sin or take advantage of the mercy and forgiveness of God it becomes a little harder to repent, harder to turn back to God. Each time it's a little harder to admit that we have done wrong. Little by little we may become a slave to our sin, we let our sin gain power over us, we may become dominated by these sins and then unable to stop.

It is hard to avoid being self-centred. Thank God that we do not have to do this alone.

Paul reminds us today that in baptism we become a temple for the Holy Spirit. With just a little bit of water and the words of Christ we receive great blessings. The gift of the holy spirit and forgiveness of all our sins. Just as the Holy spirit came down upon Jesus like a dove and remained with him, so to with us. God will remain with us as a comforter and helper, that's the guarantee we received in our baptism. By his death on the cross Jesus has absolved us of all our sins; forgiven every wrongdoing and restored our relationship to God the Father. It was a great price to pay indeed, but this is how much God loves us.

And so, are you wondering what is good for us, and what is helpful? What God created in the beginning was good. When we are patient, kind and loving to one another this is helpful. *When we share the good news of Christ crucified, this is God pleasing.*

Our Bibles teaches us many things about living as a baptised child of God. In today's reading we hear about relationships, when one man and one woman come together to the exclusion of all others this is a God pleasing thing. If they are blessed with a child and they bring this child to church, this is a God pleasing thing. If that child is baptised in the congregation of believers, this is a God pleasing thing.

This is the same for each of us here, when we were baptised we were brought to church, some by our parents. Occasionally with godparents. When we were baptised it is not alone. We now are a part of the family of God and our brother is Christ Jesus. Baptism is never a solitary event. When a baptism occurs it is good for the whole church to come together in celebration.

And So, we are all baptised into one family and united with Christ in his baptism, let's skip ahead a few verses where Paul tells us:

*You surely know that **your** body is a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. The Spirit is in you and is a gift from God. You are no longer your own. (CEV)*

*Do you not know that **your** bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; (NIV)*

On the one hand this verse tells us that each of us individually is a temple to the Holy Spirit. In your baptism when your relationship is restored with Christ you also receive the companionship of the Holy Spirit. You are a temple of the Spirit, and you are a temple of the Spirit, and so are you.

But we also can translate this as all'yall. (all of you all) are a temple of the Holy Spirit. We as a group of people are the Church and this Church is a temple of the Holy Spirit. We as a church are sometimes called the bride of Christ. Just as a husband and wife are joined together and become one flesh, so to in baptism our church is Joined with Christ and we become one in spirit and in truth.

So as the bride of Christ, what do you suppose is good for us? What is a helpful thing for us to now do?

In our church we emphasise that we are both a saint and sinner at the same time. We know that all humanity is sinful, we also know that we ourselves commit sins against God and each other. We are self-centred, angry or impatient. We want what others have. And we are not always generous with our thoughts words and deeds.

But at the same time we are also Saints; in baptism we have been set apart for service to God and made Holy. Because we are Saints we can join in with our brother Jesus when we pray "Our father in heaven..." As saints our faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Heb 11:1). When we doubt, we can look to our baptism, October the 6th for me. What about you? Do you remember your baptism date and light a candle? Or perhaps, more importantly do you remember every day that you are a baptised and you are saved?

Because when we do, remember our baptism, we also remember the promise of Jesus “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16) And by the faith that was granted in baptism and the nurturing support from this, the family of God in the church we can believe.

Every day that we sin we can return to the waters of baptism and remember what Christ has done for us and that our sin has been washed away. So we remain both saints and sinners.

¹⁹ You surely know that your body is a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. The Spirit is in you and is a gift from God. You are no longer your own. ²⁰ God paid a great price for you. So use your body to honor God.

So we sometimes take advantage of the freedom of the Gospel, just as the Corinthians did. But God’s forgiveness is always available. We receive it here at church in the confession/absolution, and in the sacrament of holy communion. And also wherever you are, whenever the Holy Spirit within you reminds you of your baptism and it’s blessings.

God has created you and redeemed you. So what next? How do we use our body to honour God? What can we do that is Good for us and helpful for others? Today’s reading ends with the words: God paid a great price for you.

As you find your answer: Know that God’s forgiveness and spirit are with you to help you on this journey.

Questions for Further Discussion/Reflection:

- What is a fond memory you have from being in a church building? A memory that you take comfort from?
- What is a reassuring memory that you have from being within the Church, with the people of God?
- Have you been doing what’s good for your Temple? What have you done this week to sweep the temple courtyard in a God pleasing manner?
- Can you explain the hope that baptism gives us in your own words?
- Finish this sentence; “Because I am baptised, I am a temple of the Holy Spirit and I hope other people can see this because I...”

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