

BAPTISM & COMMUNION

THIS MORNING IS A SPECIAL DAY FOR ALL OF US GATHERED HERE. WE HAVE ALREADY WITNESSED AND BEEN A PART OF WELCOMING MATT AND KEMBER INTO THIS FELLOWSHIP, THIS FAITH FAMILY OF CENTENNIAL. WE WILL LATER IN THE SERVICE GATHER AT THE LORD'S TABLE TO BE A WITNESS TO AND TAKE PART IN COMMUNION.

IN THE METHODIST CHURCH AS IN MANY OTHER CHURCHES, BAPTISM AND COMMUNION, ARE THE TWO SACRAMENTS WE CELEBRATE. AS MY CONFIRMANDS KNOW, BAPTISM AND COMMUNION ARE SACRAMENTS BECAUSE OF THE THREE ELEMENTS – JESUS COMMANDED IT, GOD IS PRESENT, AND COMMON EARTHLY ELEMENTS ARE USED – WATER, WINE AND BREAD.

TODAY, WE ARE HERE FOR A TIME OF CELEBRATION, AND MORE. THERE IS MEANING BEHIND EACH OF THESE SACRAMENTS AND WHEN WE ARE AWARE OF THE MEANINGS WE TEND TO TAKE OWNERSHIP, BEING MORE INVOLVED WITH IT. **WHEN WE ARE NOT “INVESTED”, NOT INVOLVED, AND NOT INTERESTED, WE TEND TO IGNORE IT.** IT IS SOMETHING WE TEND TO TOLERATE UNTIL WE CAN GET THROUGH IT.

THE SACRAMENTS SHOULD NEVER BECOME LIKE THAT FOR A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST. YOU SAY, BUT PASTOR, “I’M HERE, I SING, I RECITE THE WORDS”. THE QUESTION IS “WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?”

A VERSE I HAVE QUOTED NUMEROUS TIMES IS FROM ISAIAH 29:13 “ *The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.”*

WHEN YOU COME TO WORSHIP WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS? IS IT ON SOMETHING YOU SHOULD HAVE LEFT AT THE DOOR? IN THE OVERALL PICTURE, IS IT REALLY THAT IMPORTANT THAT YOU TAKE YOUR FOCUS OFF OF GOD AND WHAT HE HAS FOR YOU THIS MORNING?

THE WORDS WE USED IN THE CALL TO WORSHIP SHOULD GIVE US COMFORT, WHY? BECAUSE ALL OF THOSE WORDS ARE BASED ON THE PROMISES GOD HAS MADE TO US!! HE IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW – **FAITHFUL.** IF THERE IS ANYTHING YOU CAN COUNT ON, MORE THAN PAYING TAXES AND DYING, IT IS THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD!!!. AMEN??

THIS MORNING, MATT WAS BAPTIZED AND ANSWERED WITH HIS WIFE, TABIE, FOR THEIR DAUGHTER KEMBER. OBVIOUSLY THEIR DECISION AS A FAMILY WAS IMPORTANT, BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IS GOD'S PRESENCE AND ACTION IN MATT'S AND KEMBER'S BAPTISMS. WE BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE.

NOW AS A FAMILY OF GOD, WE PROFESSED THAT WE WILL **ALL** HELP IN THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH. IN GALATIANS 6:10 *"Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone--especially to those in the family of faith."* OR Deuteronomy 6:6-7 *"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."* IN OTHER WORDS ANY WHERE, ANY TIME CHILDREN CAN LEARN A LESSON, TEACH IT, AND ONE OF THOSE PLACES SHOULD BE IN CHURCH BY OUR EXAMPLES AND OUR LOVE DEMONSTRATED TO THEM.

WE JUST SPOKE THE WORDS, A PROMISE TO NURTURE ONE ANOTHER AND SURROUND THEM WITH A COMMUNITY OF LOVE AND FORGIVENESS. DID WE JUST RECITE THE WORDS OR WILL WE MAKE SURE WE FULFILL OUR PROMISE MADE TO MATT AND KEMBER AS THEY GROW IN FAITH?

IN THE CONGREGATIONAL PLEDGE WE SAID *"WITH GOD'S HELP TO ORDER OUR LIVES AS EXAMPLES"*. **"LOVE" IS AN ACTION** AND IT IS OUR LOVE OF CHRIST AND HIS WORDS THAT PROMPTS US TO ACTION ON THESE CHILDREN OF GOD AND PART OF THE FAMILY OF CENTENNIAL.

I HAVE BAPTIZED A FEW CHILDREN IN CENTENNIAL, AND THERE WERE MANY BEFORE, BUT NO MATTER IT IS **OUR TASK AS MEMBERS OF THIS FAITH COMMUNITY TO KEEP OUR PROMISES MADE TO ALL THESE CHILDREN**. WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HAD INTERACTION WITH ONE OF OUR "LITTLE ONES" OR THE "NOT-SO LITTLE ONES"? TAKE TIME FOR THEM TO GET TO KNOW YOU, BE THAT LOVING CARING EXAMPLE. I REMEMBER GROWING UP AND SEEING IN MANY OTHER CHURCHES THAT PICTURE OF JESUS AND THE CHILDREN. **WELL, JESUS ISN'T HERE IN PERSON, SO GUESS WHO HIS STAND-IN IS – YOU?**

REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE MISSION STATEMENT PRINTED RIGHT IN THE BULLETIN EVERY SUNDAY *"TO BE A CARING FAMILY OF DISCIPLES WHO KNOW CHRIST AND MAKE CHRIST KNOWN IN THE COMMUNITY AND AROUND THE WORLD."*

IT BEGINS IN THIS FAITH COMMUNITY CALLED CENTENNIAL. WE CAN HEAR SUNDAY AFTER SUNDAY THE WORD OF GOD, BUT IF WE DON'T PUT THE WORDS INTO PRACTICE THEN WHAT GOOD IS ALL THIS? CHRIST CAME TO BRING PURPOSE TO OUR LIVES. IT IS OUR JOB TO DISCOVER THAT PURPOSE AND FUNCTION FULLY AS A UNIQUE PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST!

BAPTISM IS ALL ABOUT TAKING THAT STEP TO COME INTO THAT FELLOWSHIP, THAT BODY OF CHRIST. IT IS ABOUT GOD'S PRESENCE AND THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. MATT AND KEMBER, AS MANY IN THE PAST, AS I LIKE TO PUT IT, HAVE BEEN HANDED THE SWORD THAT IS THE WORD OF GOD TO FIGHT OFF EVIL INSTEAD OF USING A BUTTER KNIFE!!! BY BAPTISM WE ARE BETTER "EQUIPPED".

COMMUNION IS ALSO BEING CELEBRATED THIS MORNING. HOWEVER, AS I SAID EARLIER HAS IT BECOME SOMETHING FOR SOME, WE, BECAUSE OF A LACK OF FOCUS, JUST TOLERATE SO WE CAN GET THROUGH IT? OR ARE WE EXPECTING GOD TO BE THERE AT THE "TABLE" TO "MEET" US? PURPOSE AND MEANING MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE THIS MORNING. **FOR IF WE SEE NO MEANING, WE MOST LIKELY WILL NOT SEE PURPOSE AND MEET GOD EVEN THOUGH HE IS HERE!**

HERE IS A STATEMENT BY BISHOP REUBEN JOB CONCERNING COMMUNION AND WHAT IT IS TO HIM. I WAS REALLY STRUCK BY IT. THIS DEFINITION GOES WAY BEYOND BREAD AND WINE AND THE WORDS OF THE THREE PAGES IN OUR HYMNAL.

There is one place where everyone is absolutely equal, a place where all class, social, racial, economic, educational and every other distinction evaporates as a morning mist under a bright summer sun. That place of absolute equality is at the Lord's table. Here, as at no other place, we realize our oneness with Christ and our oneness with each other. Each person stands on equal ground; none is higher or lower. We all come incomplete and broken, we all come seeking wholeness and healing. We all come needy and with empty hands. And sooner or later we all realize that only God can mend us, heal us, redeem us, and feed us on the bread of life.

THIS IS A SACRED MOMENT AND GOD IS HERE, IF WE ARE LOOKING FOR HIM. IN DEFINING "COMMUNION" it is the sharing or exchanging of intimate thoughts and feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level. IT IS WHEN WE COME TO THE LORD'S TABLE AND ARE FOCUSED ON HIM. WE CAN SHARE WITH HIM THOSE DEEP THOUGHTS GOOD OR BAD AND HE KNOWS OUR HEART'S DESIRE FOR FORGIVENESS.

WHEN WE FOCUS BEFORE COMING UP FOR COMMUNION AND AFTER COMMUNION GOING BACK TO OUR SEAT WITH A GRATEFUL HEART, NOT CONCERNED ABOUT ANYTHING ELSE WHETHER IT BE TIME OR WHATEVER. **IT IS IN THOSE MOMENTS THAT GOD COMES TO US** IN A WHISPER LETTING US KNOW WE ARE HIS CHILD AND THAT HE IS ALWAYS WITH US. **ONLY WHEN WE LET THE NOISE OF CULTURE RISE IN OUR EARS TO A POINT WHERE WE NO LONGER HEAR HIM, DO WE MISTAKENLY BELIEVE HE HAS LEFT US. IT IS THEN TO REMEMBER THE WORDS OF ISAIAH 46:10** “ *Be still and know I am God*” AND JAMES 4:8 “*Come close to God, and God will come close to you.*”

IT IS NEVER GOD THAT LEAVES US. LOOKING AT JOB'S STATEMENT ON COMMUNION THE HOLY GROUND WE COME TO MEET GOD IS LEVEL FOR ALL OF US.

JOB TALKS OF THE ONENESS WITH CHRIST AND ONENESS WITH EACH OTHER. NO LAW EVER PASSED BY MAN CAN MATCH THIS HOLY GROUND WE MEET CHRIST ON. ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS RECALL ROMANS 3:23 FOR TRUE EQUALITY - “*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*” YET WE ARE MET AT THE LORD'S TABLE SO THAT HE MAY MEND US, HEAL US, REDEEM US, AND FEED US ON THE BREAD OF LIFE. **THE COMMUNION OF THE REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST'S LOVING DEEDS AND THE CELEBRATION OF FORGIVENESS IS WHY WE HAVE GATHERED TODAY IN THIS PLACE.**

MAY YOU REMEMBER YOUR BAPTISMAL VOWS, THE PLEDGE AS A MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST.

MAY WE ALL CELEBRATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COME AND MEET HIM, WHO LOVES US, FORGIVES US AND NAMES US AS HIS CHILDREN.

THESE ARE THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF BAPTISM AND COMMUNION. CELEBRATIONS FOR AND BY THE CHILDREN OF GOD! AMEN.