

Worship on August 15, 2021

Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song – Father In Heaven
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: James 3:13-18
- Sermon: Cultivating Community
- The Lord's Table

We Respond

- Offering – One Voice

We Serve

- Benediction

Ponder Upon Questions

Announcements:

. Welcome! Grace and peace to you all who are worshipping God with us live right now. This is Sunday, August 15th, 2021. God is good and his faithfulness endures forever. Let us give our whole hearts to him.

. The Rev. Soong had a great two weeks vacation Thank you for your prayers and support.

. There is Bible study after worship. Please stay for sharing lives, thoughts, and prayer for each other.

. Worship volunteers are always welcome.

. Thank you for your support with your gifts. God may use our gifts and us for this world and our community.

As we come into the presence of our God, let us calm down our hearts and minds, and focus on our Lord.

Responsive Call to Worship

One: Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; Come, buy wine and milk without price.

All: Why would we spend money for that which is not bread, or work for that which does not satisfy?

One: Incline your ear, and come to me, says our God; listen, so that you may live.

All: We come to worship the living God, who satisfies us with good things. You, O Lord, deserve all our praise, now and always.

Praise song – Father in Heaven

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Creator, Christ, and Spirit, when our souls hunger for fulfilment, you give us the Bread of Life. You touch our deepest hungers and fill us with good things.

Creator, Christ and Spirit, when our souls thirst for communion with you, you offer us the fullness of life itself. You refresh us with living water.

Creator, Christ and Spirit, when we long for what is authentic and for what endures, you show us the Way, the Truth and the Life. And so we come to worship you,

Creator, Christ and Spirit. Receive all our praise and gratitude,

Living God, for you are the Source of all that matters, now and evermore..

God of all that matters, Forgive our forgetfulness of what matters to you.

Forgive the sins we know and those we have forgotten, the sins we have tried to hide and those we were once proud to commit. Forgive the sins we have done to please ourselves and the sins we have done to please others. Heal our lives and our relationships with your mercy, and bless what we can become through your faithfulness to us.

This time we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers in Christ at St. Andrew's, In Christ, all things are made new.

Know that you are forgiven by his great mercy.

Trust God's mercy and have the courage to forgive each other in Jesus' name.

Prayer for Illumination:

God of all wisdom and understanding, prepare our hearts and minds to hear your Word speaking through the scriptures. Quiet all that distracts us, so that we may learn how best to follow you, in the example of Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

Scripture: James 3:13-18

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. 15 Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. 16 For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."

SERMON: Cultivating Community

Today's sermon title is "Cultivating Community."

First of all, thank you for my two weeks vacation. It was a wonderful time. It was filled with family time. I wanted to have my own quiet time, but I was not able to. After I came back to my

office, I was able to catch up my Bible readings and all I needed, alone. I am thankful for that and thank you for the good vacation.

Coming back, preparing today's worship, I read chapter 19 of The Purpose Driven Life. It was continuation from last time. Last message was about true fellowship. When the Holy Spirit is within our community, we experience authenticity, mutuality, sympathy, and mercy. This week, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are cultivating community with honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, and frequency.

These 9 characteristics are our goal as we build our community together. Authenticity, mutuality, sympathy, mercy, honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, and frequency.

Today's scripture talks about different kinds of wisdom we can pursue. Sometimes, at home, I really want to make my own time for my Bible reading. At that time, my boys want to come and cling to me. Then, I cannot read the Bible, so I go to the balcony and close the door. They bang the balcony door and cry out for me. If that happens, my wife has to calm down the boys and take them away. Then, I try to quiet down myself and think about this situation. To read the Bible, do I have to upset my family? What's the meaning of satisfying my daily reading? It is important, but is it really important than the happiness of my family? Maybe, having fun with boys and enjoying the togetherness would be more pleasing to the Lord. I thought of what I was pursuing. The relationship with God? Would God be happy when I am reading the Bible abandoning my family?

V14 – if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth.

Isn't this my example of reading the Bible and upsetting my family? It is selfish ambition of mine. The Bible continues, v15 and 16, **“15 Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. 16 For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.”**

I gave my example of reading the Bible. Usually, when we think about reading the Bible, it is a good thing. God would be pleased. But, what about my example?

Reading God's word could be considered as a selfish desire. Am I the only one? When we serve the ministry of God at church, deep inside our hearts, we have selfish desires. We want to be recognized. We want all the credits of our services. If not all, at least some parts.

Not always, but many times. In church community, boasting what we have and sharing what we have could be the same in appearance. But, we all know that it feels different. The two wisdoms, wisdom of the earth, and wisdom from above are opposite, but the difference is very subtle. There is a very very fine line between these two wisdoms. Godly ambition and selfish ambition look the same, in appearance. But, the consequence is as far as heaven and earth.

Then, what is the wisdom from above? V17, **But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.**

Christ followers are peace makers. It is one of the most important values of Christian.

Are we making peace in our family, the smallest unit God created?

We are to make peace in our family first. It is the most foundational community we are belong to.

I titled today's message, **Cultivating Community**. To cultivate involves time. It is the developing process. It requires commitment. It needs sacrifice. To cultivate family or community, we should become like a farmer. We plant seeds. We water them. We wait for it to grow.

To grow plant, it needs right soil, right water, right wind, right sun, and many other elements. To cultivate community, especially, family and church, we need the help of the Holy Spirit. And in our actions and behaviours, we need honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, and frequency.

Honesty. Do you want a friend who is honest or who lies all the time? Without trust, the relationship cannot stand. Being honest is the foundation of relationships.

In community, we are called by God to be beneficial to each other. So, if someone backslides, we should be able to face it directly. Not easy, but this is how we are helping each other to stay in good faith. Not telling anything to the one who's doing wrong is easy, but eventually, the person will fall and our community will collapse as well. So, by being honest, we can build up each other and ourselves.

Humility. The opposite would be pride. Pride builds walls between people, but humility builds bridges. God's grace flows from people to people. If we build walls, the grace of God cannot be flowing freely. With humble hearts, let us embrace ourselves and each other. Humility is **not** thinking less of ourselves, it is thinking of ourselves less. Humility is thinking more of others.

Courtesy. It is respecting our differences, being considerate of each other's feelings, and being patient with people who irritate us. We can call them **EGR** people – **extra grace required**. We laugh at it, but sometimes, we become EGR people. So, for everyone, we should be kind. We call church family. It signifies that we are together and cannot be separated.

Confidentiality. In my old church, there was a person who prays for church members. But, she always asked personal stories. And she asked others to pray for the people who shared their personal stories by telling them their stories. Word travels fast. The people who trusted her were told their personal stories by total strangers. Good intention, but miserable consequence. When cultivating community, what is done in the group needs to stay in the group. So we can create safe environment.

Lastly, **frequency**.

How often do you meet your friends? In my case, I cannot meet my own friends that often. Instead, I meet my children's friends' parents. I meet church members, even though it's virtual. When we meet regularly, we share time. We build up our relationships. Good heart is important, but if we don't share it, there's no use of it. In cultivating community, we should express our hearts as often as possible. When we meet once a week, it is pretty frequent. This is why we can make life-long friends at church.

God's people are church. In building heart-to-heart community, we need 9 characteristics of fellowship: authenticity, mutuality, sympathy, mercy, honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, and frequency. By the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit, let us keep these in our minds as we cultivate our community.

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving Father God, we thank you for calling us in your presence. And we thank you that you called us into one church. As one church, one body of Christ, there is a long way to go. We are grateful that we are your children, but many time, we are not that thankful because of some people in our lives. Teach us your heart, so we can embrace them with your love as you have loved us. Building community is not easy, but we will try. Help us. Help us become one heart when we worship you and glorify you. Be with us all the time. In Jesus' precious name, we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Supper – Communion

Oh God you are my God and I will ever praise you. O God you are my God and I will ever praise you. God called all of us into his wonderful presence and his unending love. Let us say yes to his invitation and come to the table with thankfulness. God is good and his love endures forever.

(Great Prayer of Thanksgiving:) **(Please say BOLD print together)**

L: The Lord be with you. **P: And also, with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts. **P: We lift them to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **P: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

L: Holy God, source of life and goodness, at your loving word all things were made and the beauty of creation was called from chaos. Through your word, you formed us in your image and gave us life. By your word, you called us to love and to serve you and to live in peace with you and all that you have made. Though we turn from you, you do not turn from us. When we are captive, you liberate and give us freedom. When we are confused and stray from you, you give us faith to go in search of deeper understanding. When we are tempted to find easy and false comfort in idols, the challenging truth of your presence draws us into deeper relationship. So we join our voice with your people of every time and place in joyful praise of you as **We lift our hearts in joyful praise.**

(Sanctus) Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of Your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

L: We praise and give you thanks for sending your loving and beloved son into the world. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, he brings new life. Born of Mary's flesh he knew joy, pain, love, and loss. Touching the sick, he heals us. Breaking bread and sharing the cup with those on the margins, he shows his love and welcome for all. Dying on the cross, he is with us in our suffering. Rising from the grave, he brings new life.

In him, you have reconciled us and you lead us out of fantasy into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life. Remembering all these things, we gather at his invitation to break bread and share the cup and to **proclaim the mystery of faith:**

P: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

L: Gracious and giving God, pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered around your holy table, and on these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be for us the body and the blood of Christ, and that we, being nourished by them, may be for the world the body of Christ, made strong, made new, and redeemed by his blood. And now through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and with all who stand before you in earth and heaven, we worship and adore you, now and forever. Amen.

Breaking of the BREAD and Pouring the WINE

Take, eat, remember, and believe that the precious body of our Lord Jesus Christ was given for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. (BREAD)

“This is the body of Christ, broken for you.” (Let us take it)

Take, drink, remember, and believe that the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ was shed for the complete forgiveness of all our sins. (CUP)

“This is the blood of Christ, poured out for you.” (Let us drink it)

Prayer after Communion:

Gracious and loving Father God, we thank you for gathering us here in your presence to worship you and to praise you and honour you. We are thankful that you are our God. As we celebrate your feast, we remember who you are and what you did for us. You are the most glorious and powerful God and the most loving and merciful God. You listen all our agonies and worries. You are with us when we seek your presence, your face and your power.

Immanuel God. You are always with us. Thank you. And you cleansed all our sins by dying on the cross. It was our place to take the cross, but for our sake, you did not leave us alone but you took all the consequences of our selfishness and wrong. You died our death and you gave your life to us. How can we say all our thanks to you? Lord God, please be with us so we don't forget your grace and love. Give us pure hearts and give us wisdom to remember you.

We invite you into our lives. There are times that we live as if you weren't exist. We just live for our own desires. But Lord, with our sincere hearts, we ask you to be the Lord of our everyday life. Our everyday is yours. You are the King.

We ask of you for the wisdom. It seemed the COVID 19 Pandemic coming to an end. But, with the rise of different types of variants, the number is increasing again. Many churches are open for in-person worship. We would like to meet and get back to our usual Sunday Experience. Give us wisdom and courage, so we can take the right steps. We need you and because we are so weak, we need each other as well. Help us.

You called us to make up your body. We are the church and we are connected in you. One part is suffering with pain, all body suffers together. If there are people who are suffering with anything, help us pour out our hearts and pray for them. If it's physical pain, place your hands upon them and heal them. Provide them good medical care and good nutrition. If it's relationship related, give peace and love and patience in their hearts. Give courage so that they can take right actions to make peace in their relationships. If it is financial issue, provide them opportunities and provide them wisdom, so they follow your guidance. Heavenly God, Father, we offer up our families into your hands. Because we live together or because we spent too much time together, we think we know each other too well and we think we can be understood with all the things we do. Give us respect and fill our families with your presence and your love. We need you.

And we pray for Haiti. Like 10 years ago, an earthquake came. There are people who lost their lives, their homes, their families, their everything. Have mercy upon them. The world is connected more than ever. So, wake us up and let us help them with our hearts, prayers, and our money.

As we cultivate our community whether it's our family or our church, help us put you in the centre of our community. Holy Spirit, come into our hearts and lead us in your ways. We are yours. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. The Psalms urge us to give thanks to God at all times, for everything God has provided. In gratitude, we offer to God a portion of what God has given us, trusting that God will bless what we bring and multiply our gifts to serve God's good purposes. Let us pray.

Offering prayer:

Lord God, Loving God, we bring you our gifts with thanksgiving, grateful for all that we share in Christ and in creation. Bless us and our offerings, so that we may live to bring you glory, and share with the world the love you pour out on us day by day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Praise song – One Voice

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. We are church, God's chosen people. We are connected to each other. We are building the body of Christ together. Let us seek God and his grace and the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we cultivate our communities with authenticity, mutuality, sympathy, mercy, honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, and frequency.

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.

Ponder Upon Questions:

1. How can I help cultivate today the characteristics of real community in my family and my church? (authenticity, mutuality, sympathy, mercy, honesty, humility, courtesy, confidentiality, and frequency)
2. What are my favorite characteristics among these nine and why? What is my strength?