

1 Chronicles 16

“We Come Here to Meet God”

18th Sunday af. Pentecost

September 27, 2015

Our Redeemer

Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

A wife remarked to her husband after a church service, "Did you see what Mrs. Jones was wearing?"

"No," said her husband, "I didn't."

"Did you see how tired Mr. Smith looked? I bet his wife doesn't give him a moments peace?" she asked.

"I'm afraid I didn't," said her husband.

To this his wife replied, "Well a fat lot of good it does YOU to go to church!"

Why do we come here on Sundays?

What is it that draws us here?

What makes some of you come every week without fail?

Why don't you, like the majority of Americans, only come
for weddings and funerals? For Christmas and Easter?

[Church]

We come together in this church because it is here in our worship service that God comes and meets us.

In the time of Moses, the people of Israel came together in a tent to meet God.
They tabernacle!

Since the very beginning of the Church at Pentecost, Christians have made a point of coming together on Sundays to experience the presence of God.

Sometimes we come here carrying a heavy load on our shoulders.

Perhaps the past week has been a horrendous one.

Maybe your health has been poor,
or relationships with others have turned sour,

or work has been dull and uninteresting
and you are deciding whether to make a change.

Maybe your financial situation is causing you a headache,
or you're struggling with a death,
you can't understand how God could let this happen.

Perhaps you were faced with a tough decision,
and you made the wrong choice.
Perhaps you came today with something that has happened
that kept you up all night.

Whatever baggage we bring with us to our worship service,
God is ready to minister to us, to help us and reassure us.

We come here to meet God.

God ministers to us as he speaks to us after we have confessed our sin.
He announces that our sins are forgiven through the death and resurrection of
Jesus.

The burden of guilt has been lifted from our shoulders and we are assured that
God's love is still red hot for us, even though we have disappointed him so much.

We come here to meet God. And he ministers to us through his Word.

We hear again the words of promise, comfort, and hope from God himself.
We are reminded that God has made a promise to us to always be close at hand in
our time of need.

Our baptism reminds us that God's loving arms are always encircled around us,
even at those times when we feel that God is far away or that we don't deserve his
loving embrace.

He warns us through the Holy Spirit at work in us
when we are being side tracked off the straight and narrow,
when we are getting our priorities all mixed up and lose sight
of what is really important in this life.

We come here to meet God.

And when we come to Holy Communion, God meets us in a very special way.

We receive the body and blood that Jesus gave for us on the cross
because of his great love for us.

We are strengthened,
we are assured of our forgiveness,
our faith is reinforced,
and our trust in God's commitment to us is reaffirmed.

[Heavy Hearts]

We may come with heavy hearts and confused minds and God ministers to us and strengthens us to meet the challenges ahead of us.

Oh, the problems may still be there when we leave the church, but in our meeting here with God we are given the power to deal with them .

[Good]

No matter what is happening in our daily life, we are reminded that God is real; his power to help is real; we are his people; his love for us never ends.

We come here to worship God because he is worthy of our praise.

We see a lot of hurt in our world.

We see what evil and sin are doing to people's lives.

We experience pain, grief, depression and anxiety.

We often don't understand why we are suffering;

 why we have to experience such intense pain; why innocent people suffer.

We ask, "If God is good, why am I hurting?"

 If God is good, why doesn't he take it all away?"

But simply because we don't understand, doesn't mean that God isn't good.

The problem is not with God but with our perception and understanding of God.

King David doesn't hesitate to say, ***"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!"*** (1 Chronicles 16:34)

God is worthy of our thanks and praise because he is good to us in so many ways.

God is good because he has provided the answer to sin and death through his Son, Jesus.

We can do nothing about our sinfulness.

 We just keep on sinning – we can't help ourselves.

 God however has provided the answer in Jesus.

 His death has brought us forgiveness and eternal life.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good work, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:8, 9, and 10)

God is good – all the time. All the time! God is good!
He has made us; he cares for us and provides for us.
He has given us family, friends, and fellow members of the church who provide us with human strength and support in both good and bad times.
God's plan was never for us to go through life alone. God, in his marvelous goodness and wisdom, has provided family and friends to affirm, encourage, and support us during the difficult times of life.

God has given us family and friends to lean on in times of mourning, hurt, suffering, or pain.

Yes, God is good!
We could go on all day talking about the ways God is good to us
and we could all tell of times when
we have been especially blessed by the goodness of God.

We come here to worship to have God minister to us,
and then responding with praise for all the good things that God does for us every day.

We come here to meet God.

[*Alex*] One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the narthex of the church.

It was covered with the names of members who had died at war.

The seven-year-old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the boy and said quietly, "Good morning Alex."

"Good morning Pastor," replied the young man, still focused on the plaque.
"Pastor, what is this?" Alex asked.

"Well, son, it's a memorial to all the men and women who have died in one of the services."

Soberly, they stood together, staring at the large plaque.
Finally with a puzzled look on his face, little Alex asked,
"Which one? the 8:00 or the 10:30 service?"

I wonder if little Alex is saying something about what happened in the services of his church.

[*Stewards of Time*] King David tells us something different:

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name;

make known his deeds among the peoples!

Sing to him, sing praises to him;

tell of all his wondrous works! (1 Chronicles 16:8-9)

King David is excited about coming to worship.

He encourages everyone to sing with all their heart.

He wants us to be thrilled at the prospect of coming to worship to meet God
who is so keen to minister to us in our needs.

He wants us to worship the Lord with joy.

As God's stewards,

as God's managers we are responsible for time, talent and treasure.

When we think of time, we often think about the time we serve others.

We need to use our time to serve others,

But as the 3rd commandment reminds us,

we also need to be good stewards of our time with God.

And yet, there are times when we would have to confess that we have gone to
worship more out of a sense of duty than because we wanted to.

Have you noticed that when your attendance at worship has dropped off or the
thought of going to worship is not filled with anticipation and joy, it's because
somehow you have lost sight of the purpose of why you go to worship?

Somehow you have lost sight of the goodness of God in your everyday life.

For some reason, you don't see that God has a powerful effect on your life
and you take all that he gives for granted.

Worship is a time when God ministers to you,

— a time when God brings you into an intimate relationship with him through
Word and Sacrament,

— a time when God strengthens you to face the hurts, problems and crises of
your everyday life,

— a time when you can praise and thank God for all his goodness,

— a time when you can serve others specially through your prayers,

— a time when you can respond with thanks and joy.

Be good stewards of your time.
Not only your time serving one another, but your time with God.

[*Conclusion*]

Yes, we do have a wonderful God.

So let us heed the call of King David when he calls out,
*Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the peoples!
Sing to him, sing praises to him;
tell of all his wondrous works!* (1 Chronicles 16:8-9)

And we come here to meet God. Amen!

Now, let us make a joyful noise to the Lord. Amen!