

We Need One Another

Message for Sunday, June 2, 2013
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Psalm 133:1-3

(When people arrived, everyone received a bag. Before the service, I laid out a tent flat on the platform where it would not be noticed. During the song just before the message, I quickly stood it up.)

We've been able to do quite a bit as a church in the last year.

Fletcher: We put a new roof on the building last summer; children and adults alike have learned about Jesus, and grown to love him more; we welcomed new people into our church family; we've held beef suppers and muffin parties; the choir went to sing at Tilbury Manor most months; we had a marvelous Christmas celebration; we worshipped God each Sunday; we gave away thousands of dollars to others, through the Mission & Service Fund, the Food Bank, the Christmas offering, and the UCW.

Merlin: Children and adults alike have learned about Jesus, and grown to love him more; we welcomed new people into our church family; we've held chicken suppers and muffin parties; we made more than a thousand apple pies; we worshipped God each Sunday; we provided lunches for people at funerals; we gave away thousands of dollars to others, through the Mission & Service Fund, the Food Bank, the Christmas offering, and the UCW.

It was a job well done. It was a lot of work, though. And anytime you have people working together, there are always misunderstandings. Someone says something as a joke, but the other person takes it as an offence. You make a promise to someone, and then forget to do it. I know all about that; I've hurt people's feelings. Families have struggles: parents and children have conflicts.

[Unzip the tent door.] There's a lot of hurt out there, and I'm not sure it's worth the risk. Maybe I'd be better off if I were alone. [Climb into the tent, and zip it closed.]

Ahhh [big sigh]. That's better. I'm safe in here. No one can hurt me in here. And I can't hurt anyone else by saying something stupid. I won't have to secretly look at my watch to see if I've spent enough time with this person, because I won't be with anyone. I won't get embarrassed because I can't remember someone's name. I won't have to talk about my feelings with anyone, won't have to reveal the real me. I feel nice and safe in here.

[Poke my head out the door.] You should give this a try. Take the bag you received when you came in, and put it on over your head. You can be in your own private little world.

That's better. What a safe, comfortable church we have here. Now this is my idea of a great church. We may not touch very many people this way, but we're safe.

I suppose we won't be able to put on suppers and muffin parties; they take a lot of organizing; but it's worth it. And of course, we can't accept any new people into the church, since we won't be inviting anyone to come. That's not good. Come to think of it, we won't be able to even worship: we'll all be off doing our own thing, instead of gathering together as the church.

No, I can't do it! I can't stay in here. I can't run away from what God wants to do in my life. God created us to work together, to worship together, to *be* together. Take off your bags. Throw them on the floor and stomp on them. We need each other. The world out there needs us.

Psalm 133:1-3, Today's English Version:

How wonderful it is, how pleasant,
for God's people to live together in harmony!
It is like the precious anointing oil
running down from Aaron's head and beard, down to
the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew on Mount Hermon,
falling on the hills of Zion.
That is where the Lord has promised his blessing—
life that never ends.

Yes indeed: how wonderful it is to be part of God's family.

It is not good to be alone. This is true in the sense of physical isolation. Look at the shy boy, desperately wanting to be accepted by his peers, feeling the pain and humiliation of being rejected and ridiculed because his clothing is so plain.

Think of the woman who is alone after fifty years of being with a man who was not simply her husband, but who was also her friend, her colleague, her companion, her lover.

Think of the teenage girl, who so much wants to talk with her parents about things that trouble her, but the family have long ago ceased listening to each other.

God created people with the plan that they be together. Thank God for that! Sometimes people blame their bodies for leading them
we had no bodies! Thin

drizzling down the windows, the sky glum with gray, the chill seeping through your bones. How wonderful it feels to cuddle up next to someone!

At times of sorrow, a hug brings more than simply warmth. It expresses love, caring, understanding.

It is not good to be alone. That is why the church is so important. This is a community where we can share the joys and sorrows of life.

Look at a campfire. Feel the orange coals radiating heat; hear the logs on top roaring with flame; see the sky itself lit up with a golden glow. It does the heart good just to sit and take it all in.

Now separate the logs. Spread the coals around so that they don't touch each other. What happens to the beautiful fire? It quickly dies, of course. So it is with our spiritual life.

Yes, we need God in our lives. But we need one another. God is our fire. But a log by itself can hardly keep the flames going.

Christianity is not a solitary religion. The Bible knows nothing of people being Christians without being involved with other Christians in some sort of fellowship.

In a penitentiary, a prisoner is sometimes sent to solitary for punishment. It can also break the prisoner's spirit.

Jesus did two main things during his life. One, he gave his life as a sacrifice, bringing us back to God. Two, he gathered a group of disciples and, over three years, taught them as much as they could absorb of what it means to follow him. Then they were sent out to teach others the same. He did not do individual tutoring, though. This training was all done in a group. From the very beginning, Christians were meant to be part of a fellowship.

One day I met a man who worked in the woods, cutting trees for lumber. He had magnificent muscles, conditioned by years of hefting huge logs. He loved the outdoors, and he loved his work. He knew I was a minister, and he commented that he didn't see the need for church. "I can worship God in the woods or on the golf course just as well as I can in a building." I agreed, "Yes, you can. Do you?" He grinned and said sheepishly, "No, I'm sorry I don't."

That is not surprising, though. He didn't have the other logs to keep the flame alive.

Has anyone here tried to begin an exercise program, to lose weight and get in shape? When you exercise alone, there is more effort in just getting ready to do it, than in doing the exercise itself. But if you are doing something with a group of people (say a game of basketball, or going for a walk), you fingers fumble all over themselves as you hurry to tie your shoe laces.

In fact, have you noticed about things that we enjoy, how much more enjoyable they are when we experience them with another person? Think of a summer sunset, with the clouds first gold, then changing to pink, orange, crimson, and violet. Normally we don't stop for longer than a second to glance at it. But put your arm around someone you love, and you want to linger there for hours.

Christianity is fun, as you've heard me say before. But when we try to do it by ourselves, it often seems like work. It's no different than the other beautiful, enjoyable things in life. God meant for us to be together. The church is God's plan for how we should grow as Christians.

Again:

**How wonderful it is, how pleasant,
for God's people to live together in harmony!**

It is a good feeling to be part of this church. Communion is an excellent way to celebrate this!

The need to be together may be one reason Jesus gave us the custom of remembering his Last Supper. It is not enough merely to be together with one another, even with good friends. There is more to life than the deepest friendship can provide.

The deepest friendship, when it is practiced in the presence of God, grows even deeper. The deepest faith, when it is shared with someone else, grows even deeper. We need to be with God. And we need one another. That's why we come to celebrate communion.

Theme for today: When we share our sorrows, the burden is lighter. When we share our joys, the cheer is multiplied. As followers of Jesus, we are brothers and sisters in Christ; we belong to a family: the church. Yes, it's good to take our sorrows to God in prayer, and give thanks to God for our blessings. But it's also good to share them with the family.