

## 1 John 1:3, 6-7

“That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.... If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:3, 6–7).

What does it mean when we have fellowship in Christ? *Koinonia* the Greek word for “fellowship” have no equivalent word in English that captures the whole spectrum of its meaning. So, translators focused on a specific aspect of *koinonia* in each context. Act 2 focuses on the relationship among believers while 2 Cor 9 uses *koinonia* to express generosity in community. Paul also uses *koinonia* to describe the way he identifies with Christ’s sufferings. John, in his first letter, uses *koinonia* to describe what connects us to God and to each other through Christ. John writes in 1:8-10 that we find confirmation of the gospel message through the faith changes that God works in our minds and hearts, through Word, and sacrament. Therefore, these God given gifts which we receive through means of grace empower us to exhibit fellowship regardless of cultural or denominational differences. The focus is always on what believers have in common.

**For example, in John 5:5**, Jesus said, “I am the vine, and you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing”. So, the moment you were spiritually born into God’s family you were given some astounding birthday gift, the family name, the family likeness, family privileges, family intimate access, and the family inheritance.

1. Today, many churches place great importance to being true to the word of God, observing the Lord’s supper, and being fervent in prayer.
2. These things are certainly important, but what of “**fellowship**”?
  - a. Do we properly understand this facet of the Lord’s church?
  - b. Are we practicing it in a way consistent with the example of the early church?
3. Beginning with this experience....

- a. We want to examine the subject of “**fellowship**” in the light of scriptures.
- b. With the objective in the mind of ensuring a proper understanding and application of this Biblical subject

While societal trends may be nourishing the spirit of self-centeredness, I believe God has designed the church to point us in a different direction about the true meaning of fellowship. Fellowship matters! It is important to me and to everyone who is here today because our mission as followers of Christ is to proclaim His gospel throughout the world. Which means our relationship with God as His children, born into His family by the Holy Spirit is through faith in Christ.

**This truth is emphasized in the apostles’ doctrine .....**

1. We are to be hospitable to one another - 1 Peter 4:9
2. We are to have care for one another – 1 Cor. 12:26
3. We are to pray for one another – James 5:16
4. We are to restore one another – James 5: 19-20
5. We are to teach and admonish one another – Col. 3:16
6. We are to serve one another in love – Gal. 5: 13

**A. This truth was exemplified in the early church.....**

1. By the church in Jerusalem – Acts 2: 42-46
2. By the church in Antioch – Acts 11:27- 30
3. By the church in Macedonia 2 Cor. 8:1-5
4. By the church in Achaia – Rom. 15:26

The Greek word “koinonia” or fellowship captures the entirety of those relationships. It involves active participation in Christian community: sharing in spiritual blessings and giving material blessings. For example, Gentile believers in Macedonia had nothing in common with the Jewish believers in Jerusalem except Christ (Rom 15:26–27). When we fellowship together, we have the privilege of communicating and sharing God’s message of love and kindness to one another regardless of our spiritual condition (cf. 1 Corn. 1:2; 3:1-3). And we must keep in mind that our experience with God and with one another grows out of our relationship with LORD Jesus (cf. Eph. 2:5,6). And only those who are in relationship with one another can have true fellowship (subjective experience), but we must first have a real living relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ before we can have experiential relationship with God. This is true

with God, so it is also becoming true in our relationship with one another (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). This is the key to understanding *koinonia* in the New Testament. So, the next time you come across “fellowship” used in a churchy way, remembering that fellowship should focus on what we all have in common: that new life in Jesus Christ define the following...

- a. The fellowship that is to be enjoyed by those in the church
- b. The spiritual activities designed to nurture fellowship in the body of Christ.
- c. Elements necessary to encourage our outreach fellowship.
- d. The life in which Christian demonstrate holiness and obedience through words and actions.

Our holiness is never complete. In fact, it is work in progress. As James so strongly demonstrated in his epistle. John makes two equally forceful points:

- Faith without work is no faith at all. It is a dead faith. “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by truth (verse 6). “Walking in darkness” is metaphor for living like unbelievers, unrepentantly breaking God’s commandments as a way of life.
- Every act of kindness and service and worship that Christians do give comfort to their hearts, for those deeds show that their faith is alive, the spirit is alive in them, and thus their forgiveness is alive and secure. “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, Christ, his son purifies us from all sins” (verse 7). Here John points out that our lives are evidence of a living faith that brings us our living savior.

1 John 3:14, “our love for each other proves that we have gone from death to life.” In Romans 15:7, “accept each other just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified.” Again, in John 13: 34- 35, Jesus said, “As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.” And then, as believers in Christ, we are related to Christ and to each other in that we have been joined into union with Him, we are members of His body through baptizing work of the Holy Spirit because our mission whether we are mega-church or small church is be Christ centered- to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, through Word and Sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and to

provide the compassion and care needed by the people in the congregation, in the community, and around the world. This exemplifies by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS):

- Bible translation into Nuer dialect and other South Sudanese dialects as well (through Lutheran Heritage foundation)
- Lay ministers' training in Addis Ababa, Ethiopian for local laypersons, who want to become pastors and preach the Good news in their native tongues along the South Sudan-Ethiopia border.
- Church planting and building infrastructures in South Sudan
- Humanitarian relief for folks who live in refugee's camp.
- EIIT program (sending people like me Rick McCafferty and me to the seminary).

This congregation is very generous. I can recall one of the exemplary fellowships. Last in 2019, Anchorage Lutheran Church (ALC) did something so extraordinary to me in the act of love through this fellowship/relationship we have here. When my youngest sister lost her husband in refugees camp in Western Ethiopia, one of the congregants here came forward. She used her entire airline millage to purchase me a round trip ticket to Africa so that I can pay a visit to my sister and her children in Ethiopia during that time of need. I remember many people offered prayer for me and my family during that time of sorrow. They also contributed money for food and hotel accommodation in Ethiopia. Some had given me medical supplies, over the counter medications, clothing, shoes, eyeglasses, and much more. That means our ministry here is not only focusing in 907-area code or Anchorage, Alaska alone but also reaching out to the rural Alaskans, to lower forty-eight, and even to Africa, and to the ends of the earth.....as Jesus has commanded His disciples. We are God's ambassadors and we are willing to share His message of love to those who do not know about Jesus. We must be stewards of God, who loves us and the God who forgives us even if we do not deserve. I pray that God will use you now. Sharing that opportunity how good gift God had given you

This year when I traveled again to Ethiopia so many of you have also offered financial and prayer supports. This church has offered a scholarship to a gentleman who is now studying in the seminary school in Ethiopia so that he can become a LCMS pastor, when he completed his studies, but there are still so many challenges ahead of us. As I traveled to so many places in Ethiopia during my recent visit there, I have noticed that there are numerous challenges facing our Christian brothers and sisters in Africa and those need our attention here as. For examples.

- Lack of Trained missionaries and church workers
- Lack of Education- elementary through university
- Lack of Schools and teachers
- Lack of Infrastructure- water, sewer, transportation, electricity, internet

Specific Requests (prioritized by local persons)

- Seminary student scholarships
- Teachers
- Bibles
- Church Building
- Library Buildings
- Schools

### **Conclusion:**

John was worried that his readers were losing the original messengers, and so he wrote this vigorous letter so that they (and we) may have fellowship with apostles, with the father, and with the son. In this sermon we have sought to stress the following points....

- a. The importance of outreach fellowship in the local churches here in North America and back home.
- b. The danger of allowing self-centeredness to disrupt our fellowship.
- c. Pray for those with special needs, mentioning them by names in your private prayers.

And most importantly it is all about our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ who laid down his life for us and suffered and died on the cross for all our sins. We are all broken in many ways: either despair, or failure in life or spiritually dead we all incline to Him for good news because He came to this world to save us from the bandage of sins. He took all our pain and suffering and brokenness to the cross so that we can live in eternity. It is because we are related to Christ that we are partners and related to each other. It is because we are related as a household of God, and we are of God. The one who lived a perfect life. He has laid down his life for us humbly and obediently, knowing full well what he was about to suffer, but for us and for our salvation he went anyway. Not only learning obedience but imparting it to us as well, knowing that His resurrection, power, and the victory over death must be proclaimed. In His holy name!