

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost

Eph. 2: 11-22

July 19, 2015

My Fellow Redeemed In Christ,

There Is Much Ignorance And Confusion About The Church. When We Say That We Have A Meeting **"At Church"** On Tuesday, We Are Referring To A Building. But On Sunday Morning When We Say **"Let's Go To Church"** We Are Not Referring To The Building But What Happens There...The Divine Service, The Liturgy, Worship. That's Why People Want To Know What Time **"Church"** Starts. And Of Course, **"Church"** Can Refer To A Denomination Like The **"Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod"**. All Of These Uses Can Confuse The Real Meaning Of The Word **"Church"** Which Is People, But Not All People...Only People Who Trust In Jesus Christ As Their Savior From Sin And Death. You, Along With Many Others... Are The Church. In The Nicene Creed We Confess That We Believe In **"One, Holy, Christian And Apostolic Church"**. But Do You Know What You Are Saying?Let's Listen To The Apostle Paul And Make Sure.

I. Despite All Of The Different Christian Denominations There Is Only One Church.

A. The Word **"One"** Occurs Four Times In Our Text: **V. 14, "For He Himself Is Our Peace, Who Has Made Us Both One...., V. 15, "That He Might Create In Himself One New Man...., V. 16, "And Might Reconcile Us Both To God In One Body...., V. 18, "For Through Him We Both Have Access In One Spirit To The Father"**. The Church Is One Because There Is Only One Jesus Christ. So When We Believe In Jesus As Our Savior We Become One With All Other People Who Believe In Jesus. And Because We Have The Same Savior We Have The Same God And Father Who Sent Jesus. And None Of This Would Be Possible Without The Same Holy Spirit Who Brings Each Of Us To Faith In Jesus Just As Paul Says, **"For Through Him We Both Have Access In The One Spirit To The Father" (V. 19, Esv)**. In Other Words, To Believe In Jesus Christ As Our Savior Is To Believe In The Triune God Of Father, Son, And Holy Spirit. People And Churches That Don't Believe In The Triune God Are Not Part Of The Church Of Jesus Christ. We Are One Then, Not Because Of What We Do But Because Of What We Believe. Jesus Makes Us One.

B. In Our Text Paul Is Saying That Both Jews And Non-Jews, The Gentiles, Were One In Christ. In The Christian Church There Are People From Many Different Countries With Different Languages And Even Different Skin Colors.....But In Christ... They Are All One. They Are One In Confessing That They Are Sinners Who Have Broken God's Law And Deserve Nothing But His Wrath And Damnation. They Are One In Knowing That They Can Never Be Good Enough To Save Themselves From Sin And Death. And So They Are One In Believing That Jesus Has Done All That Needs To Be Done To Save Them From Sin

And Death. They Are One As They Confess Their Sins To God And Trust In Jesus Christ For God's Forgiveness. Only Jesus Christ Makes The Church One.

ii. We Also Confess In The Creed That The Church Is **"Holy"**. In Verse 21 Paul Says That The Church Is **"A Holy Temple"**. And In Verse 19 He Says That, **"You Are Fellow Citizens With The Saints"**. The Greek Word That Is Translated As **"Saints"** Is Literally, **"Holy Ones"**. The Church Is **"Holy"** In Two Ways.

A. First, The Church Is Perfectly And Absolutely Holy. Really? How Could This Be? Because On The Cross Jesus Died For All Of Your Sins And Canceled Your Debt To God. And In Your Baptism All Of Those Sins Were Washed Away. In God's Sight.... You Don't Have Any Sins..... You Are Holy In His Sight. This Is The Gospel, Good News. When You Feel Overwhelmed By Your Sin...Do You Remember This? Do You Believe This? Because This Perfect Holiness Is Not Based On What You Do...But On What Jesus Has Done For You With His Sinless Life And His Death On The Cross To Pay For Your Sins. And This Is Why Paul Says That Jesus **"Our Peace" (V. 14)**. Peace With God, Peace With Self, Peace With Others.

B. But Secondly, The Church Is Imperfectly Holy In That We Do Not Live A Perfectly Holy Life For God... As Paul Admits In His Letter To The Philippians: **"...Not That I Have Already Obtained This Or Am Already Perfect...." (3: 13, Esv)**. The Reason For This Is That We Still Have Our Sinful Flesh That Is A War With Our New Man In Christ As Paul Writes In Galatians, **"For The Desires Of The Flesh Are Against The Spirit, And The Desires Of The Spirit Are Against The Flesh, For These Are Opposed To Each Other, To Keep You From Doing The Things You Want To Do" (5: 17, Esv)**. We Don't Live A Perfect Life For God. But We Want To Because We Have The Holy Spirit Of God Living Inside Of Us As Paul Reminds Us That We Have Become, **"...A Dwelling Place For God By The Spirit" (V. 22, Esv)**. So We Daily Repent Of Our Sins And Daily Find Comfort And Peace In The Perfect Holiness That Jesus Gives Us. And In This Way The Holy Spirit, Who Dwells Within Us, Helps Us To Grow In Our Living For Jesus Who Loved Us So Much That He Died For Us On The Cross. How Can We Not Live For Him?

iii. The Third Word In The Creed Is **"Christian"**.

A. The Word **"Christian"** Occurs Three Times In The New Testament Including Acts 11: 36 Which Tells Us That The Followers Of Jesus Were First Called **"Christians"** In The City Of Antioch, The Home Church Of The Apostle Paul. But The Word **"Christ"** Appears Over Five Hundred Times In The New Testament And Four Times In Our Text. **"Christ"** Is Not Jesus' Last Name...It Is A Title....Jesus Is The **"Christ"** Which Means **"The Anointed One"** Or **"The Chosen One"**. Chosen By Whom? God...To Do What?.....Be The World's Savior From Sin And Death. In This Sense Then.....Jesus Is.... **"The Christ"** As Peter Explains In The Book Of Acts, **"And There Is Salvation In No One Else, For There Is No Other**

Name Under Heaven Given Among Men By Which We Must Be Saved" (4:12, Esv). So Then The Church Is **"Christian"** Because Its Members Trust In Jesus The Christ...And Follow Him.

B. But At The Time Of Martin Luther The Word In The Creed Was Not **"Christian"** But **"Catholic"** Which Means **"Universal"**. The Church Of Jesus Christ Is Found All Over The World. But In The Old Testament The Church Was Restricted To One People And One Place In The World...The People Of Israel.... That's Why Paul Says To The Non-Jews, The Gentiles, **"You Were At That Time... Alienated From The Commonwealth Of Israel...Having No Hope And Without God In The World" (V. 12, Esv).** If Anyone Wanted To Be A Part Of God's People, His Church, They Had To Become A Jew. But No More....Jesus Christ Is For All People As Paul Says, **"He Came And Preached Peace To Those Who Were Far Off And Peace To Those Who Were Near" (V. 17, Esv).** But, As We Are Learning From Our Sunday Morning Study Of Paul's Letter To The Galatians, This Was A Hard Lesson For The Early Jewish Christians To Learn. There Was Much Hostility Between The Jews And The Other People Of The World....Which Can Still Be Seen Today.. But In Jesus Christ Those Hostilities Were Overcome In Jesus As Paul Says, For **He Himself Is Our Peace Who Has Made Us Both One And Broken Down In His Flesh The Dividing Wall Of Hostility...." (2: 14, Esv).** In Jesus Christ, Not Just Jews, But People From Many Nations Are Part Of God's Church. So Why Did Martin Luther Change The Word From **"Catholic"** To **"Christian"**?Because When People Heard The Word **"Catholic"** They Thought, Not Of The Universal Church...But Only Of One Denomination... The **"Roman Catholic Church"**. But The Roman Catholic Church Is Just One Of Many Churches That Make Up The Catholic, Universal Church Today....Over Two Billion People.

Iv. Finally, The Church Is Not Only One, Holy, Christian And Catholic....But, As The Creed Says, It Is Also **"Apostolic"**. This Too Comes From The Bible.....Ninety Times.....With Four References In Ephesians.

A. All Of The Apostles, Including Paul, Were Hand Picked By Jesus To Be The Teachers Of His Church. And To Carry Out Their Responsibilities Jesus Gave Them A Special Measure Of The Holy Spirit As Jesus Says In John's Gospel: **"But The Helper, The Holy Spirit, Whom The Father Will Send In My Name, He Will Teach You All Things And Bring To Your Remembrance All That I Have Said To You" (14: 26, Esv).** This Promise Was Also Given To Paul As He Says In His First Letter To The Corinthians: **"And We Impart This In Words Not Taught By Human Wisdom But Taught By The Spirit" (2: 13, Esv).** The Apostles Taught With A Unique Authority That Was Given Only To Them. So That They Would Lay The Foundation Of The Christian Church As Paul Says In Our Lesson: **"You Are...Members Of The Household Of God, Built On The Foundation Of The Apostles And Prophets...." (Vv. 19, 20, Esv).** And That Foundation

Can Never Be Changed As Jude Says In His Letter, "**...Contend For The Faith That Was Once For All Delivered To The Saints**" (V. 3, Esv).

B. The Church, Then, Is **Apostolic** Only In So Far As It Is Faithful To The Teachings Of The Apostles. Any Deviation From Their Teachings Is False Doctrine And Is Not Apostolic As The Apostle John Says In His First Letter, "**We Are From God. Whoever Knows God... Listens To Us; Whoever Is Not From God... Does Not Listen To Us.**" (4: 5, Esv). So Then The Church Of Jesus Christ Is Not To Be Characterized By Novelty Or Innovation Or Influenced By What The Culture Thinks..... But The Church Is To Be Characterized By **Faithfulness** To The Apostolic Word As We Read In The Book Of Acts Of Those First Christians, "**And They Devoted Themselves To The Apostles' Teaching.....**" (2: 42, Esv). Our Lutheran Confessions Claim To Be Faithful To That Apostolic Word As We Read In The Preface To The **Book Of Concord, "...We Have Not Wished To Create Something New Or To Depart From The Truth Of Heavenly Doctrine....Having Been Taken From The Prophetic And Apostolic Scriptures...."** (Concordia, Cph, 2005, Page 37).

Conclusion: What Then Is The Church? Or Better Yet.....Who Then Is The Church? People...All People In All Times And In All Places Who Believe The Apostolic Teaching About God's Love And Salvation In His Son, Jesus Christ....The Church Is One, Holy, Christian, Catholic, And Apostolic.This Is The Church That You Belong To Now... By Faith.....And Finally, When Jesus Returns On The Day Of The Resurrection.....You Will See It With Your Own Eyes..... How Wonderful It Will Be. Amen.