**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes 11-29-2020
Created for Fellowship**

A few days ago our nation celebrated a Thanksgiving unlike any of us have celebrated before. Some families did not get together. Some got together outside in order to better spread out. No matter what, it likely felt a little different.

I remember in years past how the day before Thanksgiving was considered the biggest travel day throughout the country. This year, we were strongly discouraged to not leave our state.

But despite all the changes and challenges, Thanksgiving Day did come. And perhaps this year we were especially thankful for our many blessings, one of which is spending time with loved ones.

In this year, where we have experienced so much isolation, any fellowship is appreciated.

I know someone that has been quarantined at least 3 times this year. I am sure that they have experienced cabin fever to some extent.

Being in isolation takes a mental toll. I think of my Grandmother, who is in a care facility in York and the last time my Mom has been able to give her a hug was the day before her birthday, March 19th. No touch from loved ones on her birthday, on Easter, on Mother’s Day, on 4th of July, and now on Thanksgiving as well.

That is not the way that we are meant to live. We were not created for quarantine. We were created for fellowship. We were created to enjoy close relationships with others. We were created to play together and to laugh together and to be together.

These stories remind me of one important fact; we were not made to be alone. We were created by God for fellowship.

In fact, the very first thing that God said is not good is that is it not good for man to be alone. We were created for relationship with others. We are not created for quarantine, but for fellowship.

Today, on this first Sunday of Advent, we are reminded of the importance of fellowship in very significant ways.

First and foremost, on these weeks leading to Christmas we are reminded of our need for fellowship with our Triune God. Jesus came for us to have a beautiful and eternal living relationship with God. He came to deal with what was separating us from that relationship, namely sin.

Sin is far more contagious than covid-19. It infected everyone. The only human that never sinned was the God-man, Jesus Christ. Jesus offered Himself as our vaccine to bring us back to God. He took the covid of sin for us and died in our place.

And if we trust in Him and in His perfect sacrifice for us, we can not only be forgiven, but we can experience amazing fellowship with the Lord.

Truly, in the Lord, friends, we are never alone. We can talk with Him about anything and everything we are going through. We are called to develop our relationships with each Person in the Godhead. Our heavenly Father is wanting to parent us. Jesus is our best friend. Holy Spirit is our Comforter and Teacher.

We are called to cultivate fellowship with each member of the Trinity.

We should talk with Daddy God and to Jesus and to Holy Spirit each day.

We are to spend time worshipping Him and enjoying God’s presence.

The Trinity is speaking to us each day, in all different ways. Through the written Word of God, the Bible, through nature, through the still small voice within us, through other people, and even through dreams or movies or music. God is not limited.

I love how John the Apostle writes in 1 John 1:3 the following:

**We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**

We see fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ.

And then Paul the Apostle’s letter we called 2 Corinthians concludes with this powerful verse, which I and others often quote as a benediction.

**May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.**

So here we see how fellowship with Holy Spirit is also expected with us.

This, friends, is how the Lord wired us. We are to have beautiful fellowship with Him. With the Father, with Jesus Christ, and with Holy Spirit.

In fact, Jesus said that eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ. It is about a living relationship with the One who made us. But we are not only made for fellowship with God, we are also made for fellowship with other people.

God inspired King Solomon to write about this in Ecclesiastes. Now before diving into this critical truth, I would just like to recap what we’ve learned from Ecclesiastes thus far.

First, we learned that life here and now is transient. It is ever-changing and quietly passing. And so we are to make the most of it. While we have eternal life through faith in Jesus, our present life is like a vapor and we are to spend it wisely.

Second, Solomon explored all different ways that people attempt to spend this transient life, but the only right way to spend it is to live in awe of God and humbly submit to the Lord’s rule over us in everything. That is the key to a significant life.

And building on that last week, we highlighted the importance of working with joy. Every Christian is to be actively working to serve Jesus in everything they do.

We need Christian businessmen and businesswomen. We need Christian doctors and lawyers. We need Christian teachers and nursers. We need Christian politicians and actors.

No matter if our work is something we are paid for or not, we are all to live with a sense of calling and purpose and mission from Jesus.

And today, I would like to highlight one more important key to a meaningful life that Solomon gives us and it is all about fellowship.

Let’s turn to this morning’s highlighted Scripture at this time and we can read it together. It is Ecclesiastes 9:9

**Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this fleeting life that God has given you in this world – all your fleeting days. For this is what God wants you to do as you live and work in this life.**

These words of King Solomon are so simple and yet so profound. He tells us to enjoy our close relationships.

We were created for rich, meaningful fellowship not only with God, but also with one another.

I am glad that Kara and I continue to date even after being married for 14 years. We play board games together. We watch movies together. We read the Bible together.

And this truth speaks to our families as well. God wants us to enjoy the company of our family.

And this is not only true for the family that we live with, but it is also true for our church family as well. The Bible calls us a family. The Church is first and foremost the family of God.

We are called to practice fellowship with one another. I know that this goes against the grain not only in our individualistic culture, but also during these times of increased isolation due to covid.

But this does not mean that we are to give in to this, but that we are to be even more intentional in pursuing relationships with others within the church.

I strongly encourage you to call one another often, encourage one another regularly, share stories with one another, pray for one another.

These Covid times will pass. But we cannot wait till then to actively practice strengthening our close relationships with one another as the family of God.

When this time passes, we will be able to more easily practice fellowship with one another in person. There will be meals to eat together, games to play together, etc., but let’s not wait till then to enjoy practicing fellowship today.

Friends, Christmas is coming. Please do not let anything steal your joy in Jesus.

Enjoy your relationship with God.

Enjoy your labor for the Lord.

And enjoy your sisters and brothers in Christ.

As we do this, any year can be a good year. Even 2020.

Let’s pray…