

SERMON: “I AM A MEMBER: A Dwelling Place for God.”

Rev. Geoff Ross Sun., Oct 7, 2018 St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brampton

[What a week! Computer problems/others golf! Tech service:small world! Apple/MS=global companies – amazed, but feel small/insignificant]

As we gather together – not only as a community of faith, but also as a Church united around the world by faith/love/service – it seems fitting that we should end our series on what it means to “be” not only the Church but to also “be” a member of the Church – of the Body of Christ – with a passage that not only speaks to God’s plan for us as individuals/here but of God’s larger plan to unite us with others/neighbours/strangers/aliens – Jews/Gentiles, English/Urdu – together *“as one person/in one body,”* as *“citizens... who belong to the family of God,”* a *“part of that building Christ has built”* as *“a dwelling place for God.”* (CEV/NRSV) What a perfect text for World Communion Sunday!

It’s also a text that fully reveals God’s universal plan for His Church/Body of Christ. Last week we heard how God – a God of diversity/ *“diverse yet truly one”* – created us to be diverse/different/unique yet to live in community/united to others/together, intentionally turning/making/designing our diversity into a strength. What this means is that God meant for us to use our different gifts/abilities in harmony/together to “DO” *“good works”* together to accomplish God’s plan/purpose for us/community/world by taking on the mind/likeness/purpose of Christ by humbly moving beyond ourselves/thinking of others, loving/serving not just our neighbours next to us but our sisters/brothers around the world.

[30 years ago/travelled around world: Mother’s PCC connections – Fiji/Australia/India/Nepal/Egypt – Christians living/loving/serving in their part of the world/body. Grew up/Nigeria: MK/mission field – over there/Today mission field has come to us! Babar/Samina/Pastor David/our Pakistani/Urdu speaking members – PCP!/Christians – all part of the body/Church!]

Over the course of this series we’ve heard how God’s plan/purpose/design for us was for us to not only be saved by His grace but for us to also become/be built up/into the Body of the Christ/Church. Paul, in our reading that at one time we *“did not know about Christ”* – that we were *“foreigners, living without hope/God, far from God”* – but that *“Christ offered His life’s blood as a sacrifice [to bring us] near God.”* This is God’s grace at work! This is what unites us! Christians around the world have this in common – it’s our common-union: we share the same blood/DNA! This is what brings us together so we/together – here/Brampton – World Wide! In/through Jesus we are each saved – then we’re united together to become/be the Body/Church – a *“holy temple for the Lord – a place for God’s own Spirit to live.”*

[Bhil Field/India:Church/worship/Lord’s Prayer – in Hindi/Bhil but heard it in English!]
The Church is the Body/home for God – it is “Jesus” to the world; animated/fueled/gifted by the Holy Spirit – but it is a Spiritual Body made material.

In/through Jesus we – together – like parts/members make up the body, like bricks/beams/nails/mortar/shingles/paint make up a house. By the Holy Spirit we – and the body/house we form – use our love to make it a ‘home’ – a place set apart/made Holy. This is because – as we heard at the start of this series – the Church is to be more than just a ‘building,’ we’re also the “family of God” – sisters/brothers in Christ. And what makes us a family? Love. A love that is unconditional/forgiving/accepting/sacrificial – that gives/serves – a love like Jesus’ for us – a love for one another.

[Thanksgiving Wkd/Holiday/traditions/Family meal – cottage/25! What families do]
Today we celebrate the fact that the Body of Christ is not just a local body, it’s a global, world-wide organism. It’s a body made up of many parts – made up of Christians from Hungary/Scotland/Trinidad/Guyana/Switzerland – Pakistan/Canada; it’s made up of men/women, rich/poor, young/old – all praising/worshipping God together in French/Spanish/German/Gaelic - English/Urdu; all serving God with different gifts/skills/able to do different things in harmony/concord/unity to accomplish God’s will for us/others/world; all loving God in/through/by loving one another. The Church has always been made many parts – the New Testament speaks of Samaria/Judea/Corinth/Philippi/Ephesus, Ethiopia/beyond. And today – Thanksgiving Sunday – as we approach the Table to share in our ‘family meal’ – this true “thanksgiving” meal! – there are Christians/Churches in every country – all giving/serving/loving/worshipping the same /one true God that we do! Friends, there is no “us” and “them” in the Body of Christ: I AM/you are a member – we are all “us”/sisters and brothers united in/through Jesus Christ – and His blood – saved to be heirs in the family of God. Amen.