

The Community of Saints

Bible Class for 05-31-20

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Introduction: *There is evidence of negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic on social and mental health, including loneliness and fear. Even the words “social distancing” gives the impression of being separate from others. What does Scripture have to say about the nature and benefit of the community of the church, especially in times like these?*

1. A Community of Priests

Last week, we saw how the Community of Saints is designed to receive God’s gifts from those He authorizes. There is an “office of public ministry” God established for the purpose of proclaiming and teaching the Word and administering the Sacraments, for the sake of His people.

Those who are not in the “Office of Public Ministry” are by no means passive, leaving the work of the church to those who are. All are *priests* in a sense; all have gifts and opportunities to use them.

Read 1 Peter 2:9-10

What are other names for the community of saints?

What were commonly known roles of priests?

Sacrifices, prayers for others

Read Exodus 19:5-6 (116)

Who is speaking, and when, and to whom? *The Lord speaks to Moses at Sinai*

Read Exodus 19:22, 24

Were all of them to serve as priests? *No – there was a designated group of them*

1 Peter 2:4-5

What function of the priesthood is described here?

Is this an “individual” function, or collective? *Primarily individual, although each Christian can forgive and pray for another Christian.*

How are sacrifices acceptable “through Jesus Christ?” *It is through the sacrifice of Jesus, the great high priest, that we are acceptable to God.*

What do you think of when you think of yourself as “priest?”

Does this authorize all to exercise pastoral functions? *No, the Bible speaks of all Christians being “priests,” but only some called to be pastors.*

2. A Sharing of Gifts and Responsibilities

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

Paul is speaking here of himself, Apollos, Cephas, and Sosthenes. How does he distinguish their ministry from the service of all?

What are the “secret things?” *Mysteries or secret things translates the word we use for sacrament – the ways God gives His gifts to us.*

A steward is not an owner, but someone entrusted with something that belongs to another. What is the duty of a steward?

Luther: All Christians are made priests through their baptism into Christ, and some are made ministers by way of the Call.

“I never wanted more than that all Christians should be priests; yet not all should be consecrated by bishops, not all should preach, celebrate mass, and exercise the priestly office unless they have been appointed and called to do so.” (LW AE 39:233)

How does this suggest that there was confusion about roles then?

Is there such confusion, jealousy, or possessiveness today?

What honors are bestowed on the “priest?”

What duties?

What honors are bestowed on the “minister?”

What duties?

Next week: Seeds of community or division?