

The Community of Saints

Bible Class for 06-07-20

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Unity or Division? *As if the hardship caused by the pandemic was not enough, now there are riots and clashes over racial issues. The church historically has not been immune from division and conflict. What is God's plan that it be an agency for unity in the middle of conflict?*

1. A Community of Priests

Dr. Martin Luther: *"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 do Luther's words suggest that there was confusion about roles then?

Is there such confusion or conflict between clergy and lay people today?

Does God intend clergy and laity to work together or against each other?

2. Seeds of Community or Division?

Read Luke 9:46

Who was arguing?

"We know who it is that sows this thought in the Christian community. But perhaps we do not bear in mind enough that no Christian community ever comes together without this thought immediately emerging as a seed of discord (Bonhoeffer, Life Together, 90).

"In a Christian community, everything depends upon whether each individual is an indispensable link in a chain. A community which allows unemployed members to exist within it will perish because of them. It will be well, therefore, if every member receives a definite task to perform for the community, that he may know in hours of doubt that he, too, is not useless and unusable. Every Christian community must realize that not only do the weak need the strong, but also that the strong cannot exist without the weak." (Bonhoeffer, Life Together, 94)

What is meant by "unemployed?" *No role or opportunity to serve.*

What does this say about "inactive" members?

Do they need us, or do we need them, or both?

How do we express this?

Read Romans 12:3-4

How does justification by faith replace self-justification?

How does that influence our view of other Christians?

3. Mutual Service

React to this statement: *“Just as love for God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them...listening can be a greater service than speaking.”* (Bonhoeffer)

Read Matthew 10:42

What is described here as service of love for the brother?

Why is this so highly regarded by God?

“We must allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and cancelling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions....It is strange that Christians and even ministers frequently consider their work so important and urgent that they will allow nothing to disturb them.” (Bonhoeffer, 99)

Why is it that God always puts people between us and Him?

Read 1 John 4:7-12

Read Philippians 2:3-7

How did Christ show humility?

How do we in His community show humility?

How do we know what “the interests of others” are?

What risks – and blessings – are involved in learning another’s interests?

4. Next Week: Concentric circles – family, church, world