

**Pentecost 6, July 23
St. John's
Fr. Alan Sutherland**

Have you ever stopped and asked yourself why you come to church? Why do you come?

My guess is that there would be as many reasons as there are people. For some it will be worship, for some it will be the music. For some it would be fellowship and for some it may just be habit. For all of us there is a reason that we get out of bed on Sunday morning and come to church.

When we come to church with all our individual reasons we gather as a community of faith. We gather with those people whom God has given us to share common life together. In our worship all our reasons for coming are joined and we share as community a time of worship.

Last Sunday I talked about the collect focusing our attention on a theme for the day and the readings illuminating that theme.

Two weeks ago our collect prayed for the church being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, and that we be joined together in unity of spirit by their teaching, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you.

**What wonderful words to a powerful prayer.
That we may be joined together in unity of spirit.**

You know each one of us comes with our own reason but what we often fail to realize is that each of us is here because God has a reason.

We come here because God has a vision for each of us as an individual and has a vision for all of us as a community of faith.

We come because God wants us to be nourished and nurtured, to be fashioned into what God's vision is for us.

It is a vision that was given to the apostles, and it is vision that all of us share. It is vision that we make a way of life for ourselves and we make a way of life for our community of faith that allows the love of God to flow through it.

We do not come to church for an hour of entertainment. We do not come to be seen. We do not come to church for some kind of insurance policy so that when we die we will go to heaven. We come because God has a plan for us in building his kingdom here on earth.

Yet that is not an easy task. It was not easy for the apostles and it is not easy for us.

It is not easy because we are asked to live in community with other people that have differing points of view. We are asked to live in community with other people whom we may not like very much. We are asked to live in community with people who challenge our thinking and ideas. We

are asked to live in community where we are called to love everybody.

And we are asked to live in community that asks us to always put the good of the community above the wishes and whims of ourselves. We are asked to live in community where selflessness is asked above selfishness.

Yes living in community is not easy. Living in community requires commitment and effort. It requires love and patience. It requires forgiveness and acceptance. It requires honesty and trust. You see we may come to church with all our reasons but we come because whether we realize it or not God has God's reasons.

God has a mission for the world and his mission was given through Jesus Christ. The mission was that the whole world be reconciled to God. That all people know of forgiveness and love and the church is the body to tell of those things.

God had a mission for those apostles and that mission has not changed. As disciples we are asked to begin to live our lives as individuals and as community that speak of the things of God. So God calls us each week to come and be fed with spiritual food, nurtured in community and allow God to speak to us so that God can speak through us. And when this time is ended, that begins our time of mission.

The word Apostle is from the word 'apostello'

which means to be sent. The apostles were those who were sent. Every Sunday at the end of service we are sent to go into the world to love and serve the Lord. We are sent-we are dismissed. The word dismissed has the same root word as mission. All of us are called by God to be disciples, to be sent, to be dismissed, to go into the mission field.

**One of the neatest signs I ever saw was leaving a Lutheran church and on the way out of the parking lot the sign said, 'The mission field begins here.'
And it was right.**

All of us come to church with our own reason but we must leave because God has a reason. It is for us to make the kingdom of heaven visible here on earth. To make that vision a reality in our lives and in our community of faith.

Jesus said it only takes two or three to be committed to make it happen. It only took 12 disciples to begin the greatest movement the world has ever seen.

God's mission is still being accomplished by those who are willing to open themselves to God's will.

And it will happen and it is happening.

The choice is ours to be part of it or not.

I want to finish with a story.

When Rachel and James were little we went to a state park in Tennessee. At the park was a wonderful waterfall that you could sit under and let the water run over you.

There were also 2 huge very smooth rocks that you could use as a water slide. Rachel and James and their friends, Becky and Chris, played for hours and then James and Chris went exploring down stream. I found them gathering rocks. I asked them what they were doing and they said they were building a dam and it would not be finished until the water was stopped.

Well they continued to put rock upon rock but no matter how many rocks they put on their dam the water either went around it, through the cracks, or over it. Nothing they could do was going to stop that water.

And that is the same with the love of God. When you get people to be committed to the idea of building a community on the love of God it does not matter how many obstacles might be put in its way, the love of God is always going to get through.

We all have our reasons for coming to church, but I hope we always put ourselves in the presence of God to listen for the reasons that God has us come to church.

That we may always be joined together in unity of spirit and that we live and work to become the Holy temple acceptable to you.

**That is a wonderful vision that is yours and mine
and ours.**

Together we can make it reality.

Amen.