

**Live In Harmony**  
**Romans 15:4-13**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Paul writes that we, as believers, are to be in harmony with one another. What is the purpose for this harmony? It is two-fold; to confirm the promises given long ago, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.

We are one body in Christ Jesus. We are one body with Christ as the head. We are united to Christ through baptism into His death and resurrection. We live in harmony, for we have the mind of Christ.

There are, however, many who do not have the mind of Christ. There are many who are not part of the body of Christ. In Paul's day, they were referred to as Gentiles - they were the nations and peoples outside of Judaism, outside the faith. But as it says in our text, Christ came to bring both Jews and Gentiles into the one true faith, into Christ, as one body - that they too might have hope.

In the Old Testament reading, we were reminded of the day that is coming when the Lord will execute judgement upon unbelievers - the arrogant, the evildoers, the wicked. In the Gospel lesson, Christ warns of the coming of the day of judgement. These warnings are given for a purpose - that those who hear and heed them might be led to repentance, that the promises of long ago might be believed, and that believers might be like-minded in their compassion toward those who are not yet a part of the body of Christ.

Dear friends, if you saw a small child sitting in the middle of Highway 22, playing peacefully, oblivious to the fact that a semi was coming down the road, what would you do? Would you sit back and watch, curious as to how it would play out? Would you turn away, thinking, it isn't my child, it is none of my business, the child's parents can take care of it?

Of course, you'd do neither. At the very least, you'd holler a warning at the child. And it is even more likely that as you were hollering to the child, you'd be running toward him to pull him out of harm's way.

Dear friends, there is something coming more dangerous than a semi. It is bearing down upon all people with a destructive force of eternal consequences. Most are oblivious to the danger, so engaged they are in their daily lives. They are in danger not only of physical death, but eternal damnation. They cannot help themselves; they need to be saved from the destruction that will overwhelm them.

You, my friends, have the means to bring salvation to them. What will you do? There are those around you who are struggling with life on a daily basis, and you have a word of hope to bring them. What will you do? Many believe that there is neither a heaven or a hell, that this life is all there is, and they have a very fatalistic view of their existence - they live only for today - and they are in danger of losing their life for eternity. What will you do?

Will you stand there and watch, wondering if the semi is going to hit them? Will you do nothing, out of fear that if you talk about religion, you might offend them? Will you do nothing, for fear you might not have the answer if they dare to ask a question?

You are those who have been called by God to be united to His Son Jesus Christ. You are to live in harmony, for you have the mind of Christ. And, Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.

In the Gospel lesson, we are warned not to let our hearts be weighed down with the desires of the flesh and the cares of this life. We are warned for ourselves, but it is this warning we should take heart to remember as we have daily encounters with our neighbors. We are to welcome them as Christ has welcomed us. As Christ has come to

us, we are to go unto our neighbors.

I must tell you something, you and I are like-minded. There are days I'd just as soon not even bother proclaiming God's Word. There comes a point of frustration, "Does it really make any difference? Why do I bother taking 20 hours to write a sermon, I mean, has anybody ever heard a word? Has anybody come to believe the Word of Christ? Or am I simply flapping my gums and warming the air?"

Satan loves it when I that feel that way. He has me look around and see the parishioners that God has called me to serve. Satan whispers in my ear, "See what they've accomplished, there's a fire truck from Seagrave and another one from Pierce, see what they have accomplished? What have you done? There is a home that's been built, see the new bridge over the Embarrass, look at what others accomplish. What have you done?"

I do not see faith grow in your hearts. I do not observe how the Gospel has made a difference in your home when the doors are shut. It is easy for me to think, "what's the point, why bother continuing as a minister, you wouldd accomplish more if you got yourself a real job."

But that is the vocation that God has called me to, even as he has called you to yours. And there are a number of vocations we may share. I am a husband (spouse), a father (parent), a citizen, a neighbor, and numerous other vocations. My vocation as a pastor is unique. But it is in all those vocations where you and I have been called to reach out to others - meeting them in the world and addressing them in their need with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and hope in Him.

You and I live in harmony. You can look at me and see the same things I see in you - Pastor isn't perfect, he's a sinner just like me. What makes him any better than me? What makes him different?

You are right, I am not any different than you. I am not perfect. I am not better. I am indeed a sinner.

Like I said, you and I live in harmony. You and I are in great need. In fact, in regard to our sinful flesh, we are also in harmony with our unbelieving neighbors. We have the same need as the neighbor has - the need for forgiveness and a new life.

Today is the second Sunday in Advent, the second Sunday in which we focus upon the coming of Christ. We are looking toward the celebration of the coming of Christ. His first advent in human flesh to purchase our forgiveness. We celebrate His coming to us today, in Word and Sacrament to deliver that forgiveness He purchase with His life, death, and resurrection, to us, and strengthen our faith, that we might not trust in ourselves, but in Him. And we look forward to His coming in judgement, for on that day we will receive the eternal kingdom which He has prepared for all those who live in harmony, all those who live their lives in Christ Jesus.

Dearly beloved of God, I invite you to live in harmony with me. Know that the need of our neighbor to hear of the marvelous deeds of God, is the same need that we have. Remember, that as Christ was sent to purchase your forgiveness, God sent His Son to die for them as well, to grant unto them that same forgiveness of sins and hope for life eternal.

Live in harmony with one another, know of the great need for the Advent of Christ, who was born of Mary to bring to us peace from God, goodwill toward men, in the forgiveness of sins. Know that He came to us, to forgive us for our failures to live in harmony with all others, our failure to boldly beckon them to the same Christ to whom you are united.

Let us live in harmony, trust that in the blessed meal Christ places before us today. We do receive His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and that in this blessed meal we brought together in harmony, are strengthened in faith to live together unto life everlasting.

Indeed, live in harmony, for we have the mind of Christ, having been baptized into Christ. All that is Christ's is ours, as a precious gift of God by grace through faith, granting us a peace which passes all understanding. In Christ, we trust not in ourselves but in Him who is our head, and in believing, the power of His Spirit makes us to abound in hope to life everlasting. Amen.