

Call to Worship:

In these moments, in this family of faith, the God of gentleness gathers us together.

Hoping that our self-righteous anger might become passionate justice for others.

In this place, in that Body shaped by his grace, Christ, the Bread of life, calls us to service.

Hoping our comfort level of complacency might be transformed into compassion for the needy all around us.

In our hearts, our mouths, our actions, the Spirit of holiness gifts us with truth,

Hoping our comfort level of complacency might be transformed into compassion for the needy all around us.

In our hearts, our mouths, our actions, the Spirit of holiness gifts us with truth,

Hoping our faltering, fumbling words might be transfigured into good news.

Prayer of Confession:

God of all, you love each one of us and you grieve the way we hurt one another. Forgive us. Forgive us for our narrowness and prejudice, our quick tempers and stingy grace, our attention to the faults of others and blindness to our own. Help us be the people you created us to be. Help us live together in peace, loving and caring for one another as you love and care for us all. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.

Words of Assurance and Forgiveness:

Jesus knows our every weakness and loves us still. Awaken to the promise of Christ's amazing grace. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel.

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Amen

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:3-21

This is a crazy messed up world we live in. Over the years violence of all kinds has increased. We all want to succeed, be better than the best, and we will do what ever it takes. We will sacrifice family time to work long crazy hours. A successful student often sacrifices time with friends or having a good time to get the good grades. We've sacrificed conversations and replaced it with text messaging. We've sacrificed writing a good letter with sending a quick email. We've sacrificed going to church with sporting events. We've sacrificed our children's free time to make them sports stars. We've sacrificed trips to the library card catalogs and research for the internet (and we all know if it's on the internet it must be true). We've given up pictures with friends and family for selfies. We think only of ourselves.

If you've ever seen a train moving, you know that the engine can run without the rest of the train; however, the other cars each need the one in front of it to tow it. This goes on and on till the engine is pulling all cars connected to it and eventually the caboose. If the caboose weren't attached to the car in front of it, it wouldn't work. If trains could think out loud, maybe they would be saying "I trust and depend on the engine and the cars in front of me to do their part."

Paul writes in Romans 12:3-8; 3: For by the grace given me I say to everyone of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. 4 For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in

Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Paul calls us to humble servants in the Body of Christ. Each of us has unique gifts that make us different from one another, but these gifts do not make us better than someone else. We should be using these gifts to help one another. Paul is saying that a Christian's status in the community isn't defined by any good deed they have done to earn their position. Their position is defined solely by the measure of grace which God has provided each of them in their faith. To bring the point home, Paul is even saying at the beginning of the sentence that his own apostolic authority to make such a statement isn't found in his inherent righteousness or good works; rather, it is in the grace given by God.

What's great about this statement is that it completely flips our ideas about self-worth on their head. Where we tend to measure our own worth against others by our achievements, or our popularity, or something that is intrinsic to our own character; Paul states that our self-worth comes completely from the grace of God alone. There is nothing we could do to earn a more favorable place in God's eyes, and there is nothing we could do that could make him love us less. We can really learn something from these words; nothing makes God love us less. How can we put that love into action?

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

What I have seen over the last several weeks, People helping their neighbors not expecting anything in return, families spending time together; although worship looks different and we may not be in the same room, more people are hearing God's Word. There's less selfies being taken and more family photos; people are reconnecting in various different ways - not just text messages. People are going for walks, working fewer hours, the air is cleaner, commute time is less. People are friendlier; we've gone from a society that tends to think only of themselves to a society that thinks of others. A society that has a changed view on what is essential - especially jobs. This abnormally new normal, it's strange, it's different, it's scary, and there are so many words to describe the good and bad that have emerged during this time. I choose to see the good. I choose to see the love.

My hope is that someday when things return to "normal" that we can remember that we are many parts of one body, like a train that cannot run without all the cars; that we can continue to use our gifts to work together, support one another, praise one another, and live in harmony.

Amen