

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON**

### **Tenth Sunday After Pentecost**

**August 1, 2021**

#### **Psalm 145:10–21 (ESV):**

10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,  
and all your saints shall bless you!

11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom  
and tell of your power,

12 to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,  
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,  
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The LORD is faithful in all his words  
and kind in all his works.

14 The LORD upholds all who are falling  
and raises up all who are bowed down.

15 The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food in due season.

16 You open your hand;  
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways  
and kind in all his works.

18 The LORD is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.

19 He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;  
he also hears their cry and saves them.

20 The LORD preserves all who love him,  
but all the wicked he will destroy.

21 My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,  
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

**First Reading: Exodus 16:2–15 (ESV):**

2 And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, 3 and the people of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. 5 On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.” 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, 7 and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” 8 And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.”

9 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, ‘Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’ ” 10 And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD said to Moses, 12 “I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, ‘At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.’ ”

13 In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. 14 And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. 15 When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.

**EPISTLE: Ephesians 4:1–16 (ESV):****Unity in the Body of Christ**

4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing

with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. 8 Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,  
and he gave gifts to men.”

9 (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

### **THE GOSPEL - John 6:22–35 (ESV):**

#### **I Am the Bread of Life**

**22** On the next day the crowd that remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone. **23** Other boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks. **24** So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

**25** When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” **26** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me,

not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. **27** Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” **28** Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” **29** Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” **30** So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? **31** Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ ” **32** Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” **34** They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” **35** Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

## **Sermon 31 – Tenth Sunday After Pentecost**

### **“Patience Church”**

#### **Ephesians 4:1-16**

Dear friends,

Which is more important, the group, or the individual? Its the kind of question you can spend a lifetime debating and not really get anywhere, because it depends on the problem, it depends on the times, it depends on a lot of things how you answer that question. The Bible has a lot of different ways to answer it too, depending on what and where you read. Paul is talking to the Ephesian Christians about this dynamic in the church. He's not talking about what's more important, but he's highlighting what the church is, what its purpose is, and how it functions. The church is a group of people who believe the same things about Jesus and receive the same things from Jesus. Without each one of you, there is no church. Without the church, your faith would be lost. We need

each other. I depend on you for the means to support my family and to do the job that I studied to do, you depend on me because God in His wisdom decided that I would be the one to speak His Word to you. This is all quite obvious, and a long-winded answer to the question. We both have our place here, both are important. That's what Paul is trying to say and illustrate in these words. Furthermore, God has built His church and built His faith to be exactly this way, mutual interdependence.

Last week, we had the verses before this. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was that they be strengthened, their faith be strengthened, by hearing God's words. Strength of faith comes only from hearing about Jesus and what He has done. Now, Paul is about to talk about how this is done. Hearing, yes, but hearing presupposes a place to hear, the ability to hear, and that is what all this is about.

**“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** Paul urges the Ephesians to be at peace with one another, and to maintain this peace with the right attitude. Your calling is to be Christians. To be Christians means that you categorically should not think yourselves better than any of your neighbors. That is not what Christ did. Christ served those around Him, He didn't lord it over them, He didn't turn His nose up at them. Paul tells the Ephesians to do the same. Humility. Gentleness. Patience. Bearing with one another.

Patience is not much of a virtue these days. Patience looks like idleness, patience looks like inaction, we don't value it much. But patience, particularly with our fellow man and his sins, is held up as a virtue that we Christians should have more than any others. What do we end up being patient with? Sin. Specifically, each other's sin. Patience with sin is not something the world has at all. When the world sees sin, it wants it crushed, smashed, punished. It howls for apologies, humiliation, even blood sometimes. Think of

any time a scandal is aired. The immediate call is for action, get 'em. Not patience. The church should be different. The church should have patience with sin. Why?

Well, for starters, we all share it. I'm hardly saying that sins should have no consequences, but we should all measure and meditate on our own sins before we go off screaming for consequences on those who have sinned against us or anyone else. We should temper and restrain our immediate need for resolution and action with the knowledge that we all share this. When the scandal of the week gets your blood up, remember that could have just as easily been you had your sins been the right kind. That helps us achieve the humility and gentleness and bearing up that Paul encourages us to have.

Additionally, our goal with sin is the same as God's goal with sin. If God wanted sin to just be smashed, destroyed, punished, He could have accomplished that right away when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. He could have sent His judgment right then, burning the whole world and starting over. He didn't. He had patience with it. God has patience with sin so that He can free people from sin by the blood of Christ, to give people time to repent, time to turn away, time to do the right thing. God wants people to be saved from their sins, not punished for their sins. That is the foreign, the weird, the amazingly different patience of God, only He has this. I have said to you many times that no one in this world or the next plays the long game like God plays the long game, and our God plays to win. He plays to win us back, to rescue us from our sins. I speak of this often to remind you to marvel, to rejoice, in that patience. That is the patience He shows us, patience enough to wait until we can be convinced to repent, convinced to believe in Jesus. We should have that patience as well, you and I.

Why? Because that patience with each other aids in our functioning as a good church. That forgiveness of each other echoes the forgiveness God gives us. Think of how well we would function if everyone flew off the handle at every little thing. Nothing would get done, we'd just spend all our time arguing, right? That's what Paul is telling the

Ephesians. How can we show Christ's forgiveness if we do not forgive each other? How can we show God's outlandish patience if we have no patience with each other? Paul says we are one body and one spirit, we believe in one God, one Christ, and that's great, but we keep that oneness going by our patience and our forgiveness. We keep it effective by how we put up with each other.

**“11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”** The whole church is for this. I'm here to build up your faith by sharing what I learn from it. You're here to build each other's faith by sharing what you learn from it, sharing your fellowship and your love. Watching you do this as I have these past five years, you have helped me build my faith. We're all a step closer to that maturity that Paul wants us to aspire to, the fullness of Christ. What's that? It's a certainty, a peace, with our faith. Not tossed about by the waves and not confused by the Christian fad of the week. If Paul was harping on about our need to believe in Jesus, now Paul is harping on how we keep believing in Jesus. And that is together.

We all missed being together during that part of last year. If that lockdown showed us anything, it showed us just how important it is for us to be with one another in our faith. It showed us that our faith is not done alone, and how our faith suffers when it is done alone. We all believe in Jesus, we all trust Him, but the attacks of our enemies and the frustrations of the world do not stop. They're new for us every day. Whether it's a new health problem, a new hysteria in society, losing our jobs, losing our minds, or just losing the will to care about anything, the devil is always active. This is why the church is always there, always preaching, always present, every week. We need it. We need each other.

That stability, that peace, is found in the community, not in the self, not in the heart. Luther wrote that one of the main ways the devil likes to hit us is by separating us from each other, by cutting off Christian from Christian. Christ builds the church to be a united defense against the devil, and passages like these are a good reminder that this doesn't have to be anything dramatic or big. It just means continuing to meet together, continuing to believe together, and continuing to show that patience, that forgiveness, to each other.

So who's more important, the group, or the individual? Paul reminds us that this is a bad question. The church is a group of Christians, we are Jesus' body, what happens to one happens to us all. Sometimes we have to sacrifice for the good of the church. Sometimes the church has to sacrifice for the good of us. Both are wonderful blessings we can offer each other. We are a family, put together by Christ, bound together by His blood. Like every family, we get tired, we lie, we bicker, we get fed up. None of that changes the bond that we're given, or the purpose of it. We feed each other's faith, you and I, spur each other on, trying to get to that heavenly glory that Jesus has promised all of us. What is the church? It is the gas station of your faith, keeping you on the straight road to salvation. It is the shelter where you don't have to worry or wonder what your neighbor believes. It is the place where Jesus reigns supreme, it is the place where He makes you His family.

Amen