

Sermon: 9th Sunday After Pentecost/Pr. 12 - "Nothing Can Separate Us" – Summer Preaching Series: Being Church Together

Date/Time: Sunday, July 26th 2026 – 7:45a, 10:00a **Service:** Holy Eucharist Rite I & II

So, y'all may notice that Fr. Lonnie has taken a well-deserved Sunday off – we hope that he and Jay are having a blast!

We're still in our Summer Sermon Series, Being Church Together -

I'll say - one of the things I love about us Being Church Together, and now I love to do, is the dismissal.

Although no one - no one - will ever compare to a Dcn Joe Bakker dismissal, no matter how much they practice.

But, have you ever noticed that church - for us - doesn't actually end with the dismissal?

That sometimes, after Communion, someone comes forward to receive the Holy Gifts? If you had to describe it to someone who's never been to our church before, you'd might say, "*Well...they're taking Jesus out the side door.*"! Comical as it is, it's what happens.

And - in some of our services - if you look toward the back of the nave during Eucharist, you'll notice folks quietly waiting with a little Pastoral Care ribbon on their nametag.

Notice in your bulletin it says:

"Intercessory prayer is available during Communion at the rear of the nave..."

It's because they're on duty as an Intercessor.

They're ready to confidentially pray or anoint anyone who comes for any reason - or to reassure them that they're not alone.

And if you come back on Wednesday at 12:10, you'll find folks gathered again.

We gather in Scripture, prayer, anointing, and Eucharist - a few days later, we're back here on Sunday, and the whole beautiful rhythm begins again.

I've been thinking about those rhythms this week.

I think it is one of the ways our parish proclaims the very heart of what Paul is saying.

Let's listen again:

"The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words."

I love how this begins.

Not with our strength. Not with our faithfulness.

He starts with weakness.

He says there are times when we don't even know what to pray.

We've probably all felt that
When a loss catches us absolutely off guard.
Or, as we watch someone we love suffer.
When we pray, but the words just...run out.
Paul says that even then - the Spirit is already praying.
And then Paul says something pretty incredible.
Christ Himself is interceding for us.
The One who died, who was raised, and sits at the right hand of the Father is still praying
for His people.

And these thoughts of prayer - of intercession it got me thinking about us and what
happens here - every single week.
Not because we've organized ourselves particularly well - I mean, we try to...
Not because we have a strategic plan - that's not it.
It happens because, over generations, the Church has learned to move the way Christ
moves.

On any given Sunday. We gather from all over. Some of us come full of gratitude.
Others come carrying exhaustion, or questions we don't know how to answer, or even hurt
and anger - it's OK.
And here we gather around one Table.
We hear God's Word.
We pray.
We confess.
We receive the Body and Blood of Christ.
But that's not where it ends.

Near the end of the Eucharist, someone from this congregation comes forward.
They take the Holy Gifts into their hands, and together we hear the Celebrant say the
words that are so familiar - honestly, we may not even really hear them:
*"In the name of this congregation, I send you forth - bearing these Holy Gifts - that those to
whom you go - may share with us - in the communion of Christ's Body and Blood."*

It's not "after us" - not "instead of us" - **with us**.
Then all of us respond,
"We who are many are one Body, because we all share one Bread, one Cup."
Those aren't just beautiful words, they're a promise.
They're the Church refusing to let the Body become - smaller.

Most likely reason for a Eucharistic visit?:

Someone couldn't in church because they had surgery... or they're under treatment, like chemo...or they're no longer able to drive...or they're living with the slow losses of aging. So what does the Church do? The Church stretches.

We don't just wish them well.

We don't tell them we'll see them when they're feeling better.

We **carry** the Eucharist to them because they still belong.

They still belong to us.

And while that's happening, those folks are quietly standing in the back of the church.

Not because they have all the answers.

They're back there because someone may need a member of the Body to stand with them and pray.

But sometimes there aren't any words. Paul knew that.

Sometimes all we have is presence. A gentle hand on a shoulder.

A forehead – marked* with the sign of the cross.

A simple prayer. The assurance that no one has to carry their burdens alone.

And if no one joins them in the back, they are praying - interceding - for each member of this church - all of us here, and those who aren't.

Then Wednesday comes. The Church gathers again.

In the Word. In prayer.

We confess. We receive the Body and Blood.

The same healing Grace.

By the following Sunday, here we are again - gathered at the Table, ready to receive again...and then to be sent.

Around and around it goes.

Not because we like to be busy.

Because the Church is **alive**.

Paul doesn't choose his words carelessly.

He calls us the Body of Christ.

We're not an organization, not a club.

Not even a family, as beautiful as that image is. A Body.

Living bodies have rhythms.

Hearts beat, and lungs breathe - life circulates.

Everything that gives life is in constant motion.

When one part of the body's injured, the rest of the body doesn't ignore it.

The whole body immediately begins moving toward the place that's hurting.

Healing isn't something the body has to remember to do.
It's just what a healthy body intuitively does.
Having watched bodies heal as long as I have, I can tell you – they are one of the marvels of God's creation.
A healthy body is always responding somewhere.
Always communicating.
Always carrying what's needed to the places that need it most.

The same way the Love of Christ doesn't pool up in one place.
It doesn't remain at the altar rail - it flows.
From this Table to a hospital room.
From this assembly to a homebound parishioner.
From the prayers offered at the back of the church into someone's hardest week.
From Wednesday's Healing Service into Sunday's Celebration.
And then - from Sunday's Celebration, back into the world again.
Communion leads to sending - sending leads us back to prayer.
The rhythm never really ends because the life of Christ never stops flowing through His Body.
Our worship isn't simply something we attend.
It's something we enter.
We gather around Word and Sacrament - and then we're sent to become extensions of what we've just received.
We return the next week not to start over, but to continue the same life together.
That's why - every Sunday - we don't simply come to church.
We become the Church...
...and then the Church goes wherever Christ is already waiting.

In just a few moments, we'll come to the Table again.
We'll receive the Bread of Heaven and the Cup of Salvation.
We'll hear the dismissal.
Those words aren't the end of our worship.
They're the beginning of our witness.

We'll meet people who wonder if anyone notices them
- if anyone remembers them?
- if anyone cares?

We'll meet people longing to know they're not alone - and searching for hope.
And we'll carry with us the answer Paul gives today:

Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Not because we've figured life out.
Not because our faith never wavers.
But because God's love never stops reaching toward His people.

Being Church Together is to be a Church that moves the same way.
Toward the lonely
Toward the sick.
Toward the homebound
Toward the stranger.
Toward one another.

Because every time we do, we become a living witness to the truth Paul proclaims:
that nothing - absolutely nothing - in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And if nothing can separate us from Christ's love...
...then nothing should keep us from sharing that love with one another.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.