

I BELIEVE IN THE COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS

Hebrews 12:1

April 20, 2008 Sunday pm

INTRODUCTION

- A. An older woman made frequent trips to the branch post office. One day she confronted a long line of people who were waiting for service from the postal clerks. She only needed stamps, so a helpful observer asked, "Why don't you use the stamp machine? You can get all the stamps you need and you won't have to stand in line." She said, "I know, but the machine can't ask me about my arthritis." Asking people about their arthritis is one very important purpose of the Church.
- B. The Apostle's Creed says, "I believe..... in the communion of saints."
1. This phrase is thought to be a late addition to the Apostle's Creed.
 2. The word "communion" translates the Greek word, "koinonia". It means fellowship or partnership.
 3. **Acts 2:42** uses this word to describe the intimate closeness of the early Christians who lived together, ate their meals together, and shared all things in common.
⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.
 4. The word, "saint" means "holy one". It's a synonym for "Christian" or "believer".
- C. To say we believe in the communion of the saints means that we believe there exists an intimate connection between all Christians.
1. This connection should cross all boundaries (i.e. racial, social, gender, educational, etc.)
Romans 1:16 ¹⁶ I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
 2. Jesus calls us to build bridges over all these chasms.
- D. Who do we have communion with because of Jesus?

I. FIRST, WE HAVE COMMUNION WITH CHRIST.

- A. We see this clearly in **I John 1:1-4**.
- ¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.**
 - ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.**
 - ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**
 - ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.**
- B. The church is a fellowship of people who have a personal relationship with Jesus.
1. This is symbolized in the Lords Supper, sometimes called "Communion".
 2. In the Lord's Supper we have communion or fellowship with Jesus.

II. SECOND, WE HAVE COMMUNION WITH THE SAINTS ON EARTH.

- A. This is made clear in **I John 1:3 & 7**.
- 1 John 1:3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.**
 - 1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

- B. In ***Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness***, Kathryn Greene-McCreight describes her tortured journey through ten years of extreme depression and bipolar disorder. Concerning the importance of Christian fellowship while in recovery, she writes:

This is why it is so important to worship in community—to ask your brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for you ... Sometimes you literally cannot make it on your own, and you need to borrow from the faith of those around you. Sometimes I cannot even recite the Creed unless I am doing it in the context of worship, along with all the body of Christ ...When reciting the Creed, I borrow from the recitation of others. Companionship in the Lord Jesus is powerful.

Kathryn Greene-McCreight, *Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness* (Brazos Press, 2006), p. 88.

III. THIRD, WE EVEN HAVE COMMUNION WITH THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

- A. This is what Hebrews 12:1 says.

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

- B. The last verse of **The Church's One Foundation** (verse not in our hymnal), speaks of this....

**Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee.**

- C. I do not mean that we can communicate with them (i.e. "Praying to the Saints"). Just that we know someday we will be with them in heaven.

CONCLUSION

- A. Thank God for the communion we have with the saints--here on earth and someday in heaven.
B. More importantly, thank God for the communion we have with Jesus.