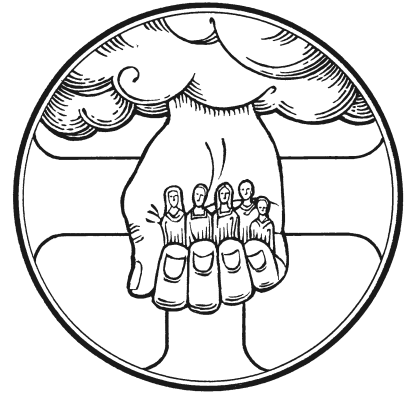


## JULY/AUGUST 2021

It is God's desire to keep you in the one true faith of His Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. He desires not the death of sinners (Ezekiel 18:23) but rather desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Yet at the same time, He will not force Himself upon you as Jesus indicates when He tells the apostles, "If anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town" (Matt. 10:14).

God calls you by His Word to receive the great gifts of life and salvation. In fact, this is the work of the Holy Spirit; to call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify the whole Christian church through the word of the Gospel and to keep it in the one true faith through this same Gospel (see the Small Catechism, Third Article of the Creed). In other words, God keeps you with Jesus Christ in the one true faith by gathering you with other Christians where Christ has promised to be for you - in the proclamation of His Word and His Supper.



The Holy Spirit bringing you to church is the Holy Spirit keeping you in the faith. It is Him keeping you connected to Jesus. What a gift! When you come to church, you are not coming to show God anything but rather are in the place where He shows and delivers something to you: the gift of Jesus crucified for your sins as you receive Him there and are strengthened and kept in the faith. You respond accordingly by speaking back to Him His own words of promise through psalms, hymns, prayers, and thanksgiving. What a delight!

But again, God will not force Himself upon you. He has declared where His gifts can be found and the Holy Spirit shows the way. Should we desire to stay away from where the Holy Spirit gathers us, we are in fact tempting God to keep us in the faith apart from the means He has given to do just that. This is dangerous. To think we can go it alone is like a branch trying to keep itself alive apart from the vine. Faith needs sustenance. God guides us to this reality by giving the Third Commandment - Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

And so it is that faith in Christ seeks His gifts, even if we have to be reminded of that sometimes: "[Do not neglect] to meet together, as is the habit of some, but [encourage] one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:25). To "meet together" is to go to church. When we realize the purpose for this is for us to be acted upon by our Lord and kept in the faith, then we are delighted to be gathered as the sheepfold of Christ and hear the voice of our Shepherd. We couldn't imagine willfully staying away just as a child wouldn't hide from her mother who calls to her to say, "I love you - come and eat!"

The Holy Spirit gathers us and enlightens us with the gifts of Christ to live joined together as His redeemed. Jesus is present for you where this happens. Therefore the gathering of the church is heaven on earth for you - where you are kept safe in our Lord and strengthened in the faith week in and week out.

*I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!" Psalm 122:1*

In Christ,  
Pastor Suggitt

## LIFE QUOTES

“It’s a terrible thing to see any life that is used and abused instead of being protected and cared for. The value of life should not be based on the benefits it can offer. So we pray to the Lord to move all people to value and appreciate all life as God’s gift.”

*A Life Quote from Lutherans For Life • [lutheransforlife.org](http://lutheransforlife.org)*

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