**2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1 New International Version**

**13**It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” Since we have that same spirit offaith, we also believe and therefore speak, **14**because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you to himself. **15**All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

**16**Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. **17**For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. **18**So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

**5**For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

**Mark 3:20-35 New International Version**

**20**Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. **21**When his family[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%203%3A20-35&version=NIV#fen-NIV-24310a)] heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

**22**And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

**23**So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? **24**If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. **25**If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. **26**And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. **27**In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. **28**Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, **29**but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

**30**He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

**31**Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. **32**A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

**33**“Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

**34**Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! **35**Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

“Divisions Healed by Grace”

The Rev. Lisa J. Durkee

June 9, 2024

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen

I’m first going to preempt what I already have written with three simple things I have been thinking about all this week. From the scripture that Caroline shared with us, I want to remind us of something additional. “whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.” Yet, we also have eternal grace, thanks be to God. We also hear, and we will hear again later, “**18**So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” There is the glue that holds us together—things unseen. So, the two brief things that I thought about this week and did not weave in to today’s message, the first from today’s lesson: “**17**For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” That’s the line that I had in mind when I was talking with my friend Mark, whom I had not seen since 1983 when he made his way to the service for my brother-in-law Lance. Mark has, in the intervening years, served in the Army as a helicopter pilot, with several tours in Iraq. He is remarkably open about the fact that he suffers from considerable post-traumatic stress. I was grateful for our conversations, and particularly when he said as we parted, “Well, if we don’t see each other again in this lifetime, *we know* that we will be together again.” I thought about how the troubles of this life are temporary, but what we have eternally is our joy, our love, and God’s grace, and our unity in heaven.

I also wanted to share about my having gone to worship with my sister last weekend, at her church in South Carolina, where I heard an excellent message from her pastor. I thought to myself that he is a brave pastor as he began to speak about the election cycle we are in the thick of. I froze in my seat with some fear about what he might say. But I will happily share with you the message he offered, because it was about unity—and it was about social media, and I was a bit worried about what he might say, but I needn’t have. “You may vote your faith, you may speak of it to your friends and family,” he said, “but leave politics out of it. Don’t post anything on social media that will cause division among your friends and family. Use it to uplift!” I was so grateful, and I relaxed about what he might continue to say, because he was grounded in the love of God and the love of one another.

Then I came home to the New Surry Theater play in which I have ninety seconds in a two-and-a-half-hour play. Its title is “House Arrest: the search for character in and around the White House, past and present.” I learned a lot about history and about politics and about these central figures. One thing that it called to mind for me, though it was not a part of the play itself was the context for Lincoln’s speech, “A House Divided.” It was an 1858 gathering as part of his run for the senate—a political campaign against the incumbent, Stephen Douglas, which Lincoln lost. My sharing this morning is really not about politics, though, other than to say that our faith does inform our choices, whether in how we engage one another in conversation, or in what we choose to invest—both our time and our money, and does, in fact, inform our votes.

I have sat with the several points that arise in our two scripture passages from the New Testament that we heard from Caroline. In brief, we are invited to think about unity and disunity, about faith and about grace. We are invited to look closely at who we are asked to be as Christians. Believe it or not, I also would like us—only very briefly and probably unclearly and certainly incompletely—to look at the issue in quantum mechanics known as the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. In all of these topics, I will assert that one thing is certainly true. God, who made us, loves us and wants us to love one another.

I have spoken before about Randall Simons because of his role as Jesus in our Lenten presentation. I can’t remember the name of his character in this week’s play or about whom he was speaking, but in his lines he said that splitting an atom does not make two atoms, but two completely different things. In humorous fashion, his character shares that he actually bought the book, the only Physics book he had ever purchased. I encourage you to read it and I encourage myself to read it for greater understanding. What I am struck by in this idea, though, is that splitting something that is unified doesn’t make two of the same thing, but creates two different things. Yet, the goal of our Christian faith is, in fact, unity. Jesus broke his body, but we are brought together through the power of the Holy Spirit. One Spirit, truly indivisible, unites us. It’s a Spirit that calls us together.

Our denomination, the United Church of Christ has as its motto – “united and uniting.” Our prayer, our hope with Jesus us that “we may all be one.” We pray that we would find the glue that brings together all of God’s people, in fact all of God’s creation together rather than focusing on divisions of any kind. The UCC moved beyond historical divisions that are based on the things we DO see, whereas our faith is, as Paul wrote, “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” The divisions we foster are about things that we see and about things that we do, whether about our worship practices, our skin color, about the names of our denominations, about whom we love and whom we support. So, we live, though we have this temporary stuff, we live for today and we hope for what is to come, what is as yet unseen.

Our celebration of Communion today is just that. We talk about a foretaste of the eternal or heavenly banquet. It is a foretaste wherein we remember what was, in Christ’s loving us so much that he would die so that we would live eternally. It is also looking forward to unity. We break one loaf, and we partake together. You’ll hear me when I invite you to the table today that I invite everyone who has faith in Jesus Christ. It doesn’t matter what you believe about the moment itself except that you believe Christ is with us and calls us to love.

What is eternal is God’s love for us and desire that we love one another, as Jesus taught us when he invited into his family those who had been set apart by others. Isn’t that the most remarkable thing about church, about living as Jesus asked us to? That we are invited, no matter who we are. So, we give thanks this morning for God’s grace, God’s unearned love and forgiveness, a love that that causes us to praise, and that can heal even our deepest divisions, and death itself. So, as we look at others, as we go forward in the week ahead, my prayer is that we may all be one. Amen.