

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Pastor Matthew Ude

July 29th, 2018

Eph. 3:14-21 NKJ ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height-- ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, ²¹ to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

“I bow the knee”

Paul willing chooses to bow the knee to God the Father. In His plan of salvation God forces no one to bow or even obey him. God is not a tyrant.

Even those who are of the faith, who love Jesus and pray to the Father, are not required to bow the knee. For nowhere in all of scripture are we ever told you must pray in this way or in that way. In fact different places give different descriptions. For Paul talks about standing and raising your hands in prayer, here he talk about bowing the knee, another place about praying at all times the implication being as you walk on your way to work, speaking to God. Indeed the example of Abraham is one of talking to God as he walked and as he ate. So there is no right way or wrong way to pray, as far as position but only that we open our hearts to the Lord.

But here Paul bows the knee. This is the normal human tradition of the inferior to the superior, especially when the inferior is particularly grateful or humble. Paul is both. Having spent three chapters describing the wealth of riches which are ours in Christ, Paul falls on his knees in humility to the Father who has done such wonderful things for someone so far beneath him as Paul is.

And so this is the normal form of prayer for us because it expresses deep gratitude, humility and repentance. And so it is good to make use of this form of prayer, although not to allow this usage to stop us from praying at other times.

“from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named”

Some translations say “every family,” some even say “the creator of all things in heaven and on earth.” But the New King James is correct when it says “the whole family.”

Paul is not here expressing the idea that God is the creator of all things, although that is true. But that we who believe bear the name of the Father on ourselves. In other words the “whole family” whom he is referring to is the Church, that gathering of all believers.

The church exists here on earth and there in heaven, but whether here or there we are all one family. And we all bear the name of our Father, so that we are sons of God.

that He would grant you

Here the NKJ is less clear. Paul is not bowing his knees in petition that God would do these things. He is bowing his knees in praise that the Lord has done these things. It should read, “because He granted you.”

“to be strengthened with might through the Spirit in the inner man”

God has given us a way in which we may grow in our inner man. The Lutheran term is “MEANS OF GRACE,” but Paul’s phrase here is probably better, “the power by which you may be strengthened in the inner man.”

Paul doesn’t bother to spell out for us here exactly where that power is, but in many other places he makes it clear that the Holy Spirit works to strengthen our faith through the Word and the Sacraments.

Whenever God works he works through some means. So it was that Naaman was healed but only through the waters of the Jordan. Noah was saved but only through the Ark. Here also the Lord has hidden power that is able to strengthen our inner man, that is our faith, where is this power? In the Bible and in Baptism and in the Lord’s Supper.

Because He has hidden it in these things that power is readily and easily available to us. We do not have to pray and then wait. But whenever we wish to be strengthened we turn to the word and the sacraments and there the power is at work.

that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith

That power is at work SO THAT Christ dwells in your heart. This word dwell means to make yourself at home, to be comfortable.

Whenever you are at someone else’s house, especially if you do not know that person well, you are never as comfortable as at your own home. You are always a little on edge.

One time when I was in India I thought I would get to know the India’s better by going and spending the night in the village. So I told them I was coming to their village and they directed me to stay with this one family. Well this family spoke very little English and I didn’t understand

their customs and they didn't understand mine. So it was very awkward. And it was only 8pm when I told them I would go to bed because I didn't know what else to say or do.

Consider the difference between Abraham and Lot. The Lord came and sat with Abraham and ate with him and talked to him as to an equal. But Lot God would not even enter his house but sent two angels instead.

We want Jesus to make his home within us. We want him to be comfortable there. But of course that is not something we can do ourselves. But the Holy Spirit does this thorough this same means of Grace.

that you, being rooted and grounded in love

We don't want to just have a passing acquaintance of this love of Christ, but we want roots that sink deep into that word, we want a deep foundation.

A pastor once told the story of when his congregation was building a church. And day after day, week after week the builders were digging and laying the foundation. So the pastor asked them when they were finally going to be down with the foundation and start on the building. The man in charge told the pastor "you have to dig deeper if you want to build tall."

That is what we are about here, digging deeply into that word of God so that we can

Comprehend with all the saints . . . the love of Christ that surpasses all understanding

That word comprehend could also be apprehend, that is to grasp. Here we are grasping with the mind thus comprehend. But the point is this is something we want to grasp and hold on firmly to, the Love of Christ.

There is a bit of irony there that Paul says we may "know" that which is "beyond all understanding." The Love of Christ is indeed so deep that we can never fully comprehend it. According to the Children's song, "deep and wide." It is so deep and so wide it is impossible to understand it, like trying to comprehend the entirety of the universe. Nevertheless we know it in that we have jumped into it and it has embraced us. We have experienced his love for us.

So that we are finally **filled with the fullness of God**

And therefore we bow the knee with Paul for the abundance of riches that our ours in Christ, therefore He receives the Glory in the church

Certainly Christ doesn't receive the glory outside the church. But He certainly should within it. When we have grasped those riches He has given to us.

And yet, often even inside the church He does not.

I was looking ahead to the VBS for next year. Try this when you get home go no youtube and search for CPH VBS 2019, watch that video, then you probably see COKESBURY VBS 2019, now watch that video. In many ways they are very similar. But in another way they are night and day different. The CPH one is immediately all about Jesus, the Cokesbury one is all about nothing. Nto once in the 6 minute long video did they ever mention Jesus or any Bible story. Instead you constantly see shots of this dancing robot.

The riches that Christ has showered upon us are well worth grasping and holding on to, this is not done by our strength but by the power that He gives to us through the Word and the Sacraments.

to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.