



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany (A) – 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Focus: *God's field*

word of life

“For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.”

(1 Corinthians 3:9 NRSV)

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

The Apostle Paul traveled to many places, teaching and preaching about Jesus Christ. He encouraged those new in faith, even scolding those who were misguided. In reading his letters to churches, we can discover much about the issues facing the early church. Some issues are not limited to the first century.

It doesn't take long in reading Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to hear his concern for them and their bickering. He spares no words in reminding them they are acting like children. “And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food.” (1 Corinthians 3:1 NRSV) What an insulting image for the adults in Corinth to comprehend. Although their adult bodies have been consuming solid food for years, Paul does not think they have matured spiritually enough to handle anything but milk.

1. *What does it mean for a church to be described as infants in Christ?*
2. *How do you think the Corinthians might have responded to the news they were not ready for solid food?*
3. *Why do you think Paul used such an approach with them?*

When people first learn of Christ, they might be described as young in faith—even infants in Christ. But there is an expectation and hope they would mature in faith. When it comes to the Corinthians, it is Paul who first instructed them about Christ. In reality, things have not changed since they first heard about Christ. If anything, they are heading the wrong direction. Jealousy and quarreling are consuming them. They are clinging to the person who baptized or taught them—forgetting Christ in the process.

Since Paul felt the Corinthians were acting like children, he spoke to them with a parental tone, attempting to give them guidance. Apollos and the others, including himself, are merely human. God is the true and only source of growth.

Paul uses a common metaphor of a plant to emphasize his point. “So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each.” (1 Corinthians 3:7-8 NRSV) Apollos, Paul, Peter, and other Christian leaders share a common purpose and are not in competition with one another. Nor can they do anything without God.

4. *How are all preachers called to work for a common purpose?*
5. *What is that common purpose described by Paul?*

“For we are God’s servants, working together, you are God’s field, God’s building.” (1 Corinthians 3:9 NRSV) Whether we are God’s servants working together to plant seeds of faith in others or are recipients of faith being nurtured inside us, it is always about God made known in Jesus Christ.

6. *Imagine yourself as God’s field. What is God growing? Who is helping you grow?*

Word among us

An elderly man named Joshua showed up on a Sunday morning, ready to worship with the congregation. Each week, a different car and person would drop him off at the front door and escort him inside. He was a quiet man, eager to listen to everyone else tell their stories.

Eventually, the congregation learned Joshua's family had moved him across the country so he might be closer to them in his final years. He was not thrilled about the move, but did appreciate the chance to be cared for by the family. The one thing they promised him in the move was to bring him to the neighborhood Lutheran church—every Sunday.

Joshua hoped his family would join him in worship, but he knew that might take some time. So that is how Joshua came to this congregation, embracing his new church family and loving them as his own.

But Joshua had some concerns about his new church family. He could not help but notice how some of the members bragged about being baptized by the founding pastor of the church. Others beamed when they recalled being baptized by a pastor who was elected bishop. The tension in the congregation was mounting.

It especially bothered Joshua because he was baptized long ago by a pastor who was convicted of a crime and ended up in prison. It was a sad story of a brilliant man who lost his way with drugs and alcohol. But despite the torrid tale, Joshua loved this pastor—saint and sinner that he was. Joshua was indebted to the pastor's commitment to teach him the faith. Every day, something reminded Joshua of this brilliant preacher and his insight to faith. Every day, Joshua prayed for the pastor who had baptized him and served as his mentor in faith.

Joshua knew he had been blessed by God in countless ways, using preachers and the church to nurture his faith. It was not about the human instrument as much about God's actions in Christ. Joshua loved Paul's words to the Corinthians, "For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building." (1 Corinthians 3:9 NRSV)

1. *How important is it to be baptized by someone famous? Explain your answer.*
2. *What would you like to ask or tell Joshua?*

faith practice in daily life

Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper

Take a moment to ponder what it means to be God's field. Imagine the soil soaking in the rain from a spring shower. Imagine the sun shining on the soil and drying up any puddles from the rain. Be still. Be patient and wait, knowing God's Spirit is at work.

3. *What changes in us when we fully focus on God, the giver of all gifts?*
4. *How are you called to work with others in God's field?*

Prayer

Holy One, create in us good soil where you can grow deep roots and bear much fruit. Amen

last word

When distracted by quarrels,
focus on Christ.

Daily Faith Practices

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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