

**Sunday Sermon**  
**August 5, 2018**  
**Ephesians 4:1-16**  
**“Joined at the Heart”**

### Introduction

You have just been baptized, Lily Paige, “adopted” as the writer of Ephesians says, into this wonderful, grace-filled body, Christ’s church.

“I therefore beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

“One, one, one, one, one, one, one,” seven ways the writer states that we are one. We are called as one to community. We belong to each other. We need each other.

In these closing weeks of summer, we are going to celebrate some more baptisms in the church, adult and child. And as we just experienced, when we baptize an individual we make vows for which we as a church are accountable. We promise that we will help that individual grow into the knowledge that he or she is a child of God, made in the image of the Creator, redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and sustained by Holy Spirit.

We will tell them, “You belong to God. You have been baptized, sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever. And that mark does not wash off or dry out. So wherever you go, as a child or an adult, God will provide for you a community, a part of the body, perhaps Presbyterian, perhaps some other branch of Christendom, but it will be a part of Christ’s body. And that body will pick up and honor those baptismal promises to help you continue to grow as a disciple of your Lord Jesus Christ.”

### Stories

This week I watched many of you help care for Lily Paige as her mother and father worked in Bible Camp. They were honoring vows made for other children by teaching them stories of God’s love and how Jesus rescues them when they feel shipwrecked.

It reminded me of a story from another minister, a pastor who had baptized a baby in a service. After the service was over, the pastor said, a young boy, about 10 years of age, came up to him and asked, “Well, where is that baby?” “That baby?” the pastor said. “I guess the parents took him home. Why do you ask?”

“Well,” the young man said, “In worship you said we were one family. And I

promised at that baby's baptism that I would help take care of him. So I figure I had better get started."

"Never before," the pastor marveled, "Have I had someone take so literally, so seriously what we do in baptism."

We are called to community. We belong to each other. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one church, one God, who is Father of us all.

When Rev. Rodger Nishioka was on our church's national staff in Louisville, he volunteered as a youth advisor in a church there. One Sunday night, the last Sunday night before their summer break, they finished their program early and had some free time. So Rodger asked, "What shall we do now?"

And Cory, one of the youth who was very driven, raised her hand and said, "Rodge, let's discuss what we are going to be." Rodger said, "Oh, do you mean 'be' as a profession?" "Yes," she said, "our jobs."

And Rodger said, "Well, let's change the wording a bit. Because I hope you will be some special things, like humble, gentle, patient, and bearers of one another in love. So, let's ask the question what you are going to do."

"Okay," Cory said, "can I go first?"

"Sure. It is your question. You go first."

"Well," Cory said, "I would like to do either the job of a CEO of a Fortune 500 corporation or a Peace Corps volunteer."

"Cory, I think you could do either one of those, or eventually both."

They moved around the group of mid highs, each sharing what they wanted to do. And then they got to Elizabeth. Elizabeth had joined the group mid-year, when her father took a call to a position at the Presbyterian Center in Louisville.

Elizabeth, Rodger said, had not had a good hair day in her life. Her hair was stringy and all over the place. She was short and pear shaped, heavysset, with thick glasses and a pimply face. She was an off-the-scale introvert who read a lot, and she was very intelligent. At their spring lock-in, Elizabeth brought seven books. She read six of them during the lock-in, by herself in the sports closet.

Rodger would go and knock on the door, "Elizabeth, time for program."

She would turn off the light, come out, participate, and then ask, "Are we done now?" Then she would go back into the closet and read another book.

So they came to Elizabeth in the sharing about they wanted to do. Elizabeth said, "What I want to do is teach school, because I hate school."

"Elizabeth, usually people choose things they want to do, because there is some joy in what they do."

Elizabeth said, "I know that." "Then why do you want to be a school teacher?"

Looking down, she said, "Because every day in school I get teased and tormented. I am not very pretty. I have these thick glasses and bad hair. I am too smart for my own good. I am an easy target. And every day I go to my teachers, sometimes with tears, and I say to them, "People are being mean to me, please help.

And all of my teachers say things like, ‘Oh, Elizabeth, just ignore them. Get a thicker skin. Or quit doing whatever it is that is encouraging them. None of them help me. When I teach school and someone teases someone else in my classroom, I am going to go to them and say, ‘Stop that. We treat people with respect in this classroom. You may not behave that way here. I hate school,’ she said, “and the school hates me.””

Rodger said, “I was sitting there thinking, ‘Well, Lord, I should say something profound. I am her youth leader. I am national staff for youth ministry. Lord, what should I say? Profound things, healing things. Help me say something here.’”

But before Rodger could say something, which is often the case when nothing comes to your mind, because the Lord is saying just be quiet, Amanda, who often blurted things out before she engaged her brain, yelled across the circle, “Oh, Elizabeth, that is a terrible story. I would hate school too. But you know, I think you are wonderful. And I think you look fine. And I love you.”

Elizabeth looked up, parted her hair, made eye contact with Amanda and said, “I know, Amanda, that is why I come to church. It has to be different here.”

Amanda said, “Well, I think it is. Do you think it is? I hope it is. Rodge, do you think it is? I hope it is different here.”

Elizabeth said, “It is different here.”

## Conclusion

We are called to community. We belong to each other. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one church, one God, who is Father of us all. The challenge for us in these days of rampant individualism is to be body builders, to build up the body of community. None of us is saved alone. We are summoned, redeemed, baptized, and commissioned as part of a people, members of a body, participants in a community. We belong to each other. We are joined at the font, and we are joined at the heart. May it be so for Lily Paige, and for each of us. Amen.