

*Merciful God, who sent your messengers
the prophets to preach repentance and
prepare the way for our salvation: Give
us grace to heed their warnings and
forsake our sins, that we may greet with
joy the coming of Jesus Christ our
Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and
for ever.*

Amen.

What was your response to the Rite of Admission last Sunday?

Inquiry Period Questions:



- ❖ *If God is the God of all Creation, why does our Christian faith teach that Jesus is the only way?*
- ❖ *Why is the only way to God through Christ?*

*C.S. Lewis, in the
Advent meditation
yesterday, wrote:*



“Here is another thing that used to puzzle me. Is it not frightfully unfair that this new life should be confined to people who have heard of Christ and been able to believe in Him? But the truth is God has not told us what his arrangements about the other people are.

“We do know that no man can be saved except through Christ; we do not know that only those who know Him can be saved through Him.

“But in the meantime, if you are worried about the people outside, the most unreasonable thing you can do is remain outside yourself. Christians are Christ's body, the organism through which he works. Every addition to that body enables Him to do more. If you want to help those outside you must add your own little cell to the body of Christ who alone can help them.”

Recap

Last week we spoke about three meanings of the term “Word of God”:

- 1. The Living Word, which was made flesh in Jesus,*
- 2. The Written Word, the Bible, which derives its authority from its capacity to reveal the Living Word, and*
- 3. The Spoken Word, the preaching and teaching of the Gospel by the Church.*

We said that the Word of God is effective and has the power to heal, to transform, to save, and to call out (“ekklesia”) people from the world to constitute the Church, the assembly of the faithful, who – in turn – are called to hear and respond to the Word.

*In the **Inquiry Period**, we said that the Church was that community of people living in response to the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.*

*In the **Formation Period**, we add some more
descriptives to the definition of the Church:*

*The Church is an **ekklesia**, an assembly which has
been gathered from the world to hear and respond
to the proclamation of the Good News of the
Gospel.*

The Word of God is strange, in that it comes from beyond human history. It calls forth repentance and faith.

The Church, as those called and assembled by God, is spoken of in Scripture using many different images.

The LORD spoke to Abraham, “Through your descendants all the nations on the earth will be blessed, because you obeyed [listened to] me.”

-Genesis 22:18

The New Israel

Just as Abraham and his descendants were called out to witness to the true God and be God's vehicle to bless the whole world and restore its original unity with God, so too, the Church is called to witness to God as revealed in Christ Jesus, and to be a community of people through whom Christ can bless all people and restore their original unity with their Creator.

The New Humanity

The familiar distinctions by which human beings have divided themselves and opposed each other are overcome in the Church. In responding to God's call to assemble to hear and respond to the Gospel, we are no longer isolated individuals, but members of a new humanity: the Body of Christ.

The New Creation

Because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is an act of new creation, so the Church, which lives in Christ, is a New Creation. The reconciliation accomplished in Christ reaches beyond the limits of humanity to all of creation.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...”

-II Corinthians 5:17

A Hospital for Sinners

While all that we have said about the Church is true, in practice we don't always live out our true identity as the Body of Christ. That identity is all too often contradicted by human frailties. St. Paul wrote: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." (II Cor. 4:7) It has been said that the Church is not a museum for saints, but a hospital for sinners.

*Jesus said, "I have not come to call the
righteous, but sinners to repentance."*

--Luke 5:32

*The Liturgy of the Word, the first part of our Eucharist, culminates in **The Peace of the Lord**, for the Word of God creates the Peace it heralds in the Gospel message of reconciliation.*

Small Groups

Faith-Seeking Journey, 2013

	#1 Dan Blackwell	#2 Bryan Fredrickson	#3 Debi Blackwell
1	Sally Plaster	Nancy Kovalcik	Carol Ann Gentry
2	Donna Cooper	Ron Walsh	Cy Armstrong
3	Merle Harrison	Shirley Squier	Connie Liptrap
4	Bob Barnhill	Bill Price	DeeAnn Jayson
5	Earline Barnhill	Lynn Price	Jim Maxon
6	Terry Squier	Shirley Finger	John Abbott
7	Barb Smith	Lovina Mack	Kendall Abbott
8	Bud Gentry	pb Walsh	Gaylord Plaster