

Call to Worship

We gather in community to give honor and praise to God, the one who is both within and beyond time.
Though it is from God that we have come and to God that we will return, we rejoice that in our earthly life we can meet and commune with our Creator, spirit to Spirit.

We give thanks this day for the legacy of faith with which the saints have gifted us.

May we be open and receptive, guided by the Holy Spirit, so that we may be inspired to build upon the faith that our forbearers have handed down to us.

Ephesians 1:11-16 Common English Bible

We have also received an inheritance in Christ. We were destined by the plan of God, who accomplishes everything according to his design. We are called to be an honor to God's glory because we were the first to hope in Christ. You too heard the word of truth in Christ, which is the good news of your salvation. You were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit because you believed in Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the down payment on our inheritance, which is applied toward our redemption as God's own people, resulting in the honor of God's glory. Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, this is the reason that I don't stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers.

Living the Word "The Heavenly Places"

The alarm goes off at 5:30am on Friday mornings. My husband, Bob begins his day and leaves for work. I roll over and go back to sleep. No second alarm is set for me. Eventually, I am re-awakened by a cat, a dog or a tractor in the yard, but even then I laze in prayer for as long as I can. This last Friday morning, as I was snuggled, warm & cozy under a pile of quilts, I thought 'this must be heaven.' I don't really know what heaven will actually be, but this must be a part of it...Even so, I had to get up and the illusion was quickly gone.

In our lives we can experience moments of heavenly quality, but they are mostly fleeting. We are not meant to live every moment on earth as if in heaven, but we get glimpses of how great it may be and we yearn for it.

The apostle Paul is writing to the Ephesians and to us, about how to obtain God's heaven here on earth. Paul has put God in control and authority of his life and writes from that place within himself. We say similar words of faith about God when we say the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven."

God's will is a plan for our lives; each one different as we are different. We are given passions and talents for specific parts of God's plan for creation. God's kingdom – heaven comes when we live into who we are called to be. Paul in essence is saying to the Ephesians "*Through Jesus we can claim an inheritance to heaven. As we get to know Christ better, we find out who we are and what we are living for.*"

The world presses in with its own will and calling for us and that is difficult to deny. Our insecurities and human-ness keeps us failing to reach perfection in God's callings for us, but even then we can be forgiven and live toward our calling. Before we even understood there was a plan for each of us, the Holy Spirit was already working within us.

As we learn and receive Christ's message of truth, we believe in the plan and things began to happen in us via the Holy Spirit. In these times, we get glimpse of heaven on earth; when God's kingdom comes and God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

You may not recognize them as heavenly moments, but within them, you have become a 'saint.' In the New Testament the word 'saints' is the most commonly used title for Christians. It literally means 'holy ones' and was used to refer to the Jesus followers – set apart for God, accepting of Christ's life for them, and open to receiving the Holy Spirit.

If we read on in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 17-23, Paul writes: *I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God's call, what is the richness of God's glorious inheritance among believers, and what is the overwhelming greatness of God's power that is working among us believers.*

This power is conferred by the energy of God's powerful strength. God's power was at work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and sat him at God's right side in the heavens, far above every ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future. ²² God put everything under Christ's feet and made him head of everything in the church, which is his body. His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ, who fills everything in every way.

What Paul is saying here is: *"Because of your trust and love, I pray in thanksgiving and I ask God to make you smart and perceptive in your knowledge of God, so you can see the path God is calling you to."*

The energy to do God's will comes from Christ, who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth throughout time. Christ will speak to the world through God's church. That is our calling here: to combine who each of us is into a church to be Christ to the world.

For many years I denied the better health I could receive if I would just get some exercise. I told people I didn't want to talk about the 'E' word. It wasn't for me. As I aged several different health concerns convinced me I needed to get over my denials and get some organized exercise. I began to walk –but I was obsessive about it and after two years of pushing too hard every single day, I injured my ankle that will never be the same. I now have a gentler regiment of exercise which is giving me a new energy.

It is similar with how we have better spiritual health and become examples for others. We need to keep learning and processing who God is calling us to be; not over doing it and then turning others away with our zeal, but to find the rhythm of energy that Christ is offering to each of us as individuals and combining it with the energy of others to bring some heaven on earth.

We are never alone in this work. Christ is our energy, the Holy Spirit is ready to work within us, and there is a cloud of witnesses – the saints, who have gone before us to help clear the path. All of those saints from whom you learned about God, all of those who were a Christian example for you, all of those who let the Spirit guide their lives, as you observed. Many of them have gone on to the real heaven, but many of them surround you today, within and outside of this church building.

When heaven and earth come together, we are standing on Holy Ground, and we can know that there are angels all around, that is the time to praise Jesus as we stand in God's presence on Holy Ground. Jesus asked us to keep remembering him after he was gone. In the meal we share today, we continue to do that. Today we also share this meal with the saints who have come into our lives and those who have gone on to be with God.

PRAY: Lord, we each are on a quest for your kingdom of heaven. In this life we will only see glimpses of your glory, but remind us this day that we have the hope of Christ before us in life beyond death. May we feel your presence in holy moments with you. May we stand together on your Holy Ground. Amen.

- When we come to the table we invite all to come. In the words we share before Communion we invite the whole company of heaven to join us. At home when we invite company to join us, we take time to introduce those at the table. Today we will share the names of those we bring to the table with us as saints.
- As I read each name those who wish to come forward and light a candle in their name may do so. There will be people to assist you. We will begin with the one member who died this last year: Ron Reissner. Following that first candle, anyone else can come forward, say your saint's name in the microphone, which someone will have for you and then light a candle...Ron Reissner
- Now all others who would like to introduce a saint may come forward.