

McCabe United Methodist Church
September 13, 2009
"Synergy"
Matthew 18:19-20
by Pastor Gary Walters

This morning our scripture lesson comes from Matthew, Chapter 18, and I'm going to read verses 19 and 20.

"Again I tell you, that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my father in heaven, for where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them also."

The word of God for the people of God, thanks be to God!"

I have to admit when I read this passage, glorious scenes of the church are not the first things that pop into my mind. Actually what I think of is a limerick that one of my seminary professors taught, I think I've shared it with you before; "To dwell above with saints in love, that will be glory. To dwell below with saints I know, now that's a different story." You know what I mean. There are just those moments when we rub each other wrong, even if this is the body of Christ and we are all Christians and we are supposed to get along wonderfully and we are filled with the spirit of God and the fellowship is flowing. It still doesn't keep you from irritating me sometimes, that's just the way it is, and I'm sure it goes both ways. There is definitely that humanness, well the church is made up of people so what else would you expect. But this picture or this image that these words that Jesus give us here are extraordinary. We understand what he means, there are really several layers here. We understand that part, that the writer of Proverbs catches it well when he says iron sharpens iron so we sharpen one another. There is that part where we excel in number, but singly we might struggle a little bit.

We know this--sports are a great illustration. There are very few elite athletes who do not have a coach or a trainer. Somebody who pushed them, somebody who helps them give that little extra, to do a little more, to perfect their technique, to take that next step. Whether it's Tiger Woods' father nurturing and mentoring him as a young man or Tony Dungy taking a football team to do spectacular things. We understand. But, there is really this idea of safety in numbers or a collective wisdom. And I think this is actually more of the direction that Jesus is going in this passage. Pastor Art said this at a meeting we had this week, he said, "None of us is as smart as all of us." There is a lot of wisdom there. There definitely is that sense where together we are far smarter than we are individually. Because, your ideas might keep in check mine, or there is that possibility that my own desires, ambitions, put blinders on how I see a situation or the

possibilities that lie before me or you. So, when we include others in that we are saved from ourselves in a sense, but then we also have the benefit of kind of one another's insight and viewpoint.

Then there is this part of it, that for the lack of a better word I'll call synergy. I don't like to use that word, especially because it got used in corporate circles and overused and it just kind of has gotten thrown around as sort of a catch phrase; maybe teamwork would be a better word, I like that better. We understand this part of it, that the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts. As grand as all of our choir members can sing, when you put them together its extraordinary. The choir is a great example of the whole is greater than the individual parts.

But, there are all sorts of places where that is true within the church, with life in general. Where teamwork produces far better results than what we could accomplish alone. Although together we can accomplish amazing things, if we stop there we have really missed the full weight of this passage, because, Jesus gives us these extraordinary words, "where two or three gather together, I am there." When we gather as the body of Christ, he is present with us in ways that are simply not possible when it's just us alone. And, of course, we experience something of the presence of God individually, but together God has promised his presence and his power and his authority. That's incredible. This community where Christ dwells, where two or three gather, or more as the case may be, this amazing plan that God has this intrinsically corporate nature of the church. If we fail to grasp that God has bound us together for a reason, that the church is not a building, it's not a social club, that it's the people of God coming together, being filled with the power and the presence of Christ, to accomplish his mission in the world, if we fail to grasp that, then we don't understand what church is and we fail to appreciate the power and the magnitude of what we do when we gather together as brothers and sisters of Christ.

Certainly this is God's plan to change the world and it's our invitation to be a part of it. To experience his power and his wisdom and his guidance and to be nurtured and to grow in our faith in ways that we will not experience otherwise. This community where Christ dwells among us and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. More than one government has come and gone in human history that said the church will be no more within our borders, we outlaw it, we ban it, and you will not worship Christ here. They burn the Bibles, they put the priests in prison and they ban the churches, lock the doors, and yet, those governments have come and gone, but the church is still there because the gates of hell will not prevail against it. There is a power when we gather together, that is more than mere human effort. It is the power of the divine working through us.

There is a reason that we pray "our" father in heaven, instead of "my" father in heaven. Jesus was very deliberate about that, that when we gather together we are the people of God, filled by the presence of God, given the power of God. It is no tame thing to gather together brothers and sisters in Christ, because God is here.

What are we going to do with it. What are we going to do with this power and presence that Christ gives us when we come together. Certainly let iron sharpen iron, that we might be challenged in our faith, and certainly to that safety in numbers where we are wiser in numbers than we are alone. But also that teamwork where we can do amazing things, whether it's beautiful music or outreach and missions and ministry and teaching and touching the world for Christ. Actually there has been some great examples this morning already. Whether it's the finance campaign and the words that Dave shared. This place doesn't happen because of one individual, but because of all of us together. The ministry fair and all the possibilities and opportunities that we have as members of McCabe, to be a part of this power of God, working itself out in our lives and in the world, and we get to be a part of that. Well, there are a lot of opportunities out there. The invitation is to be a part of it. Coming to worship is great, but my challenge is that you will do more, that you will take that next step, to do something with that power and presence that God gives, that you will have that place beyond worship where you will be involved, because this is no mere human endeavor, this is touched with the print of God and his power and his presence.

Let's pray. Lord we thank you for your church. Help us to find our place in it. In Christ's name, Amen.