

Homily - September 13, 2026

Okay, it's confession time. I have three sermons that I wrote. So do you want to hear one, two, or three? Two! Oh no, that's not the best one.

Oh, good line.

Let me tell you just the highlights of the first one. The first one, you know, I wrestle why in the middle of Matthew And Matthew is talking about growing the kingdom, talking about inviting us all to be disciples. And all of a sudden, he gives us very specific rules how to be in relationship with each other. So it's like, that doesn't make sense. Why here? Why now? But then I began to think about the fact that in Matthew, most of the people that have started to gather in this community come from the Jewish tradition.

And so they have these practices and traditions and ways of thinking about the holy. And all of a sudden now, this church is growing. And you have Hellenistic Jews that have different traditions and different ways of expressing the holy and then top it off with Gentiles. Yeah, I know. Top it off with them. And they don't have the same context at all. And so can you imagine putting all of those people together and one wants to sing the Kyrie and the Way, setting two of the ELW?

And one wants to sing setting four of the new book, Kyrie, Lord have mercy, I won't torture you anymore. And the other one doesn't want to sing at all. So you've got all this community trying to come together to be the body of Christ. bringing all of their wants, their desires, their knowledge, their traditions, what feeds their soul. And Matthew says, come together and work it out. Listen to one another. Be about reconciliation. Be about compassion and kindness.

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So that was the first sermon. So the second sermon, I thought about if you did reconciliation and all of that, there's got to be forgiveness somewhere in there, right? And so my favorite story, one of my favorite stories, is the story of the Amish in Pennsylvania, of how they forgave the one that murdered their children in that school. And I started out sharing that story. And how important it was for them to not be about blaming, to not be about hate, to not be about anger, but instead to offer forgiveness.

To offer forgiveness to this man who killed himself as well, but then to offer forgiveness to the family and welcome to the family.

So forgiveness is part of reconciliation and understanding and growing together as the body of Christ. And then I finally did settle on my third sermon. Because the text, the very last words of the text, kept noodling me in the middle of the night. Where two or three are gathered, there I am also. Think about that. Where two or three of us come together, Jesus Christ is there. We are the body of Christ. So I began to wonder, what does it mean for KLC to say that we are the body of Christ?

What does that look like in a very tangible way? And of course, here is a very tangible way of what it means to be the body of Christ, to share our resources. But it also means showing and calling one another to love one another. It means to show God's grace to everyone. That there isn't any strangers, that we are all God's children. It means showing people the love of Christ that allows them to live into the freedom of Christ, the freedom of God's grace and mercy and hope and peace, and that allows them to walk out of here just a little bit taller because they know in a world where people are always saying, well, you're not enough, Or, you know, you didn't wear the right clothes today.

Or you didn't say the right thing. To walk out knowing that there is one who loves them. And in this space, they too will receive God's love.

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It means that every decision we make, every action we take, And every word, every word that we utter to one another is filtered with the lens of God's love. Think about that. If everything we said was first put through a filter of God's love, how would it be differently? And not be yelling at the people that are really slow on the highway. I might be blessing them, but they got to their space quicker and safely. But I wouldn't be grumbling.

You know, it also means to be the body of Christ. Just as Jesus chose to stoop low and to wash the feet of the disciples, we too choose to serve not only one another, but our neighbors that aren't here yet, the communities that need to hear of God's love and mercy and grace.

It means that as servant leaders, we break down barriers, those barriers that seem to be up in Matthew's community where, no, we're going to do it this way. No, we're going to do it this way. No, I don't understand. No, break down those barriers and notice the things that are big and easy to spot, but also those small things that keep people from experiencing God's grace and its fullness.

Is it the way we welcome people? Does that keep them from experiencing God's grace? or is it the way that we welcome people does help them to experience God's grace?

Is our bulletin easy to follow?

That's also a way of welcoming the stranger. You sitting next to them and say, here, this is the hymn. Here, look at the screen. It's there. Those break down those barriers.

You know, some of those barriers are obvious. Some we hold strict to those rigid traditions.

But sometimes those barriers are subtle.

Somehow, sometimes a dismissive tone, whether we need it or not, a culture of, you're not like us. You don't really belong here.

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You know, when we talk about being the body of Christ, it's not how many people can we get to follow our lead. It's more how many people are freer because our example of Christ's love. Being the body of Christ means that when we have conflicts with one another, we don't just ignore it. A lot of times you say, oh, just ignore it. It festers, let's be honest. It grows. Don't give it any power. Speak truth in love.

When people tell me Jesus was nice, I always ask them to show me an example where Jesus was nice. He wasn't nice. He was kind. He was compassionate. But he spoke truth in love. And that's what we need to do as the body of Christ, to trust the Holy Spirit, to guide our words so that we might understand one another and grow together.

To learn to listen, not just to listen, to respond, to offer compassion and grace and mercy.

Being the body of Christ also means that when we pass the peace, it's not just a casual handshake. It's not just a, hi, it's good to see you. But it's actually a biblical expression of love, of unity, and the Spirit's work among us. This passing of the peace is rooted in scriptures, and it reflects that true peace that Jesus offers, that spiritual wholeness with God.

I don't know if we realize this, but passing the peace is central to our worship. It's central to our witness, and it's central to our faithful discipleship. Passing the peace shows that the church is built on God's love, on God's grace, on God's mercy. And it is actually one of the fruits of the Spirit, Galatians 5.22. Peace is one of those fruits. And so we are calling on the Holy Spirit to allow that fruit of peace to emanate from each of us.

Think about it.

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If being the body of Christ has love as its filter, then authority becomes service, influence becomes passion, and leadership becomes the holy work of clearing the path so others can walk freely into God's grace and God's embrace.

My question for you this week is individually, where do we each fall short of being the body of Christ? We're not perfect. We are broken humanity. The good news is that God forgives us and welcomes us to try it again. But where, where do we fall short of being the body of Christ? And as a faith community, where do we fall short?

And how would it be different if everything we said was filtered through the lens of love? So I'm going to ask you to practice something. I know we passed the piece earlier today. But now that you've heard what that passing of the piece really is about, that it is a calling of the Holy Spirit to let the fruits of the Spirit be manifested in us, I'm going to ask you to offer your neighbor the peace of Christ, the peace of Christ founded through the power of the Holy Spirit.