

LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
January 31, 2021 Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany
“At Home Worship”

Call to Worship

With what shall we come before God this day?

With love and justice, with compassion and kindness.

With what shall we worship the Lord this day?

**With humility and mercy, with faithfulness and
righteousness.**

*We come into God’s presence, not as perfect beings, but as
people of hope and blessing. Let us worship!*

Opening Prayer Almighty God, you who have created us and who sustains us, we come before you with thanksgiving for these moments when we can ease the pace of busy lives and listen for your voice. Clear our minds, open our hearts, and touch us with your presence. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, our friend and our Savior. Amen.

Scripture Reading “*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet.*” Read Deuteronomy 18.15-20

Prayer of Confession O Lord, we come before you with humble hearts and honest words today. When we do not always walk with you, forgive us when we stray. When we do not always perceive what is just, forgive us when we turn away. When we are not always the face of compassion or the voice of kindness, forgive us when we neglect a neighbor in need. Bless us with the gift of mercy, that even as you forgive us, we can forgive ourselves and others. In grace and gratitude, we pray. Amen.

Time of Silent Confession *Our loving God invites us to share the confessions of our hearts.*

Words of Assurance All you who seek God, and who have set your hope on Jesus Christ, hear the good news: we have received forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God’s grace. We set our hope on Christ, and live for the praise of his glory.

Scripture Reading “*...anyone who loves God is known by him.*”
Read 1 Corinthians 8.1-13

Remembering our Joys and Concerns in Prayer *We come to worship with many concerns upon our hearts but also joys in our lives. You are invited to share them with God in this time of silence.*

Prayers of the People (insert) **and The Lord’s Prayer**

Scripture Reading “*...for he taught them as one having authority.*” Read Mark 1. 21-28

Meditation *Of all the topics that might be considered in the words of Scripture, perhaps that of what is on one’s dinner table seems more curious than others. What, you might ask yourself after reading today’s Epistle lesson, is Paul talking about?*

Commentator Wendy Joyner has provided a good explanation which I would like to share with you as our meditation for this week.

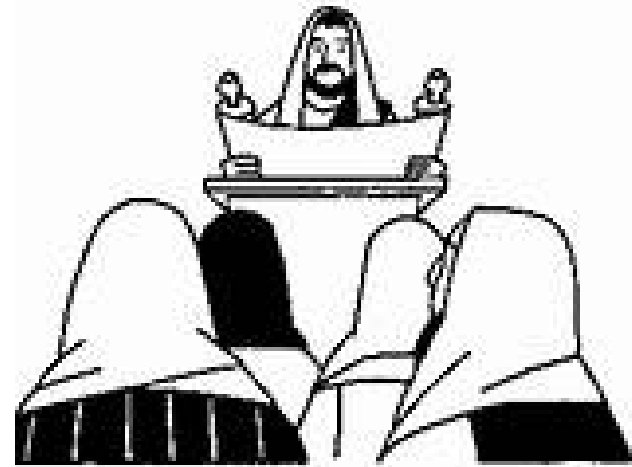
She writes, “The Apostle Paul spent much of his time addressing issues of life in community. The church at Corinth had many problems that needed to be resolved, and they had many questions about what faith in Christ looked like for each of them. They were struggling with the balance between old and new, law and grace, freedom and restraint. The issues weren’t esoteric either, but rather things that they would encounter in their day-to-day living.

One of the questions the community had for Paul dealt with eating meat that had been offered to idols. Apparently, some of the community had no problem at all with eating the meat, while

others still struggled with whether or not that was the right thing for them to do in their spiritual life. Paul seems to come down on the side of those who would eat the meat, but with one important caveat. He knows that eating the food in and of itself is not a sin, but he says to those who agree with him that there is more involved in making this decision. He writes, “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak” (vs. 9) **Paul makes the argument that just because you don’t have a problem with something doesn’t mean that you should do it.** He reminds the Corinthians that there are others to consider in weighing moral choices. They are always to be concerned for the family of faith. He reminds them that what an individual does has consequences for others. None of us lives in a vacuum, and we have to be careful that our words and actions to not cause others to sin against God. Paul is saying, in essence, it’s not about something – a belief, an action, or a possession – being solely mine or yours; it is ours. We are in this together.

Paul argues for an ethic of love that is grounded in community relationships. The ethic of love of neighbor was difficult for the Corinthians to embody, and it remains difficult for us as well. We, like the Corinthians, are quick to think about what is best for us. We draw distinctions among ourselves, and worry most about our own viewpoints or needs rather than those of our brothers and sisters. We tend to privatize our faith and our moral choices. We are quick to offer the rationale that “this is between me and God; it’s no one’s business but my own.” The truth of the matter, however, is that what we do has an impact on others. The choices I make can influence others in a variety of ways.” *May God’s Spirit lead us as we reflect upon these thoughts in the days ahead.*

Words of Benediction May the Lord of our lives – Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit – bless you and keep you in the week ahead. Go forth as the faithful people of God, as strong disciples for Christ for our God goes with us!



Lisbon United Methodist Church
welcomes, nurtures, and serves
all people
with the love of Christ.