

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

So I figured I would start out with a little Confession. I was a little nervous, well maybe more than a little, trying to figure out what I should say for my first sermon at my first call on my first week of the job.

And sure I had those normal fears of public speaking that twist up my stomach and my own introvertedness that I had to deal with but there was one thing that kept nagging at me. What am I going to say to a room full of strangers?

I'm sure you've been there. You have to present something important, you prepare, and then the day comes, you go up and then boom, it's night and day between looking out on the faces on family and friends, those people that you know and you trust, then looking out into a sea of unknown eyes and ears.

That was were I was on Monday, less than a week ago!

But then something happened for me. Something happened that I should have known was going to happen. God happened. God did what God does and gave me this reading from Ephesians.

Maybe somewhere in there I must have had I had my doubts about how God works. I think we are all guilty of that.

Maybe I had doubts in myself, I know we all do that.

Maybe; I should have just listened to God in the first place instead of letting my fears get in the way and distract me from what was really important.

That God is our peace.

You all, with the Holy Spirit residing and acting within you, have called me to this place in this time. How could I forget for even a second that God has done something incredible and is doing something incredible RIGHT NOW. God has made it so that we are in fact not strangers. I may not know your names (and I apologize in advance if it takes me awhile) but I can see you

hearts and your faith. I can see what God has done to us, what God is doing to us, what God will continue to keep doing to us.

God has made us all citizens of that same kingdom with all the saints living and dead, everywhere across this globe, and even made us all members of the very household of God.

That, my Brothers, My Sisters, is incredible, almost unbelievable. Like parting the red sea or water into wine, God does what we do not understand and makes us, you and me, family. Upon hearing this I was uplifted. I left that fear behind me. I am not speaking to a group of strangers today, I am speaking to assembled group of my family.

We are all one. This is the message that is sent to us today in the gospel. We are not meant to be divided; not meant to be separated or isolated. We are meant to be one! With everything that entails. We are here not to treat the people around us today like strangers but as family. And you know what? We are here to treat total strangers like brothers and sisters as well, like our

fathers and mothers, like our daughters and sons. That is an outstanding challenge but I know we are up to it.

Over this last month I have heard so many ways as to how this community is doing that very thing. In our short times together I have seen the love and care that you show one another. God is here. God is at work. God is at work in this community feeding the hungry and strengthening the weak. God is moving as you care for one another and the community from the parish nurses to the many different organizations that fill this church almost every day of the week. You know I've seen the calendar now and some days it borders on ridiculous.

And I have also seen how much you care for and nurture the faith of ALL, God is there. I've heard so much about Wednesday nights, deep faith centered conversations and late nights full of laughs and love. God is Here, God is stirring something up, God is moving here!

We are all responding to that movement every day and in every minute. God has brought us together here and now. And look at what is happening because of that!

I am so thrilled to a part of such a passionate community. I am even more excited for our future together. Tomorrow is going to offer us new surprises, new joys, new pains, and new places for all of us to act with God in God's ministry this community and to the world. We are going to face them all together, united as one because God has made us one. This church is not a collection of separate distinct groups. Rather we are one body with each piece being blessed with gifts for different tasks. We are all working in this one ministry with God.

Now I would love to say that as we are one body there aren't going to be anymore conflicts or pain but that isn't true. We know that too well. But the strength that we hold as a community is not that we know bad things are going to happen; it's that we know we are going to be there for one another as Christ is there for us. We stand with and for one another in all things. When we are in

conflict, when again we face change, when once more we feel that bitter pain we remember that we are together as members of the same holy household. There is already far too much hate in this world.

We know that this is a place of Love. Of Peace. Because He Is Our Peace! We stand together for each other and for our neighbors. Nothing in this world can break that because it was something other than this world that has forged us together.

So here we are today, with tomorrow coming quickly around the bend. Now is the time to take up a new challenge. And I cannot wait to stand up against that challenge with all of you with God by our side. Amen