This Sunday we are continuing our sermon series on the third article of the creed. We started off talking about the importance of Christian unity, last Sunday we talked about the forgiveness of sins, remembering that we are forgiven, that God can use us to remind others that they are forgiven, and that God invites us to extend the grace mercy and love all wrapped into one in forgiveness to others. This morning we are going to be talking about the communion of saints.

The word communion means “an act or instance of sharing.” When the Apostles’ Creed speaks of the “communion of the saints,” what are we possibly sharing? We are sharing our one faith, one baptism, and one Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

To get a glimpse of how this unity comes together in the spiritual side of things we must turn to Revelation chapter 5. John is in the heavenly throne room and they are looking to open the scroll and the elders inform him “See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.” 6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He took the scroll from the right hand of the one seated on high and when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God’s people. 9 And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll

and to open its seals,

because you were slain,

and with your blood you purchased for God

persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,

A kingdom is a country, state, territory, or I will add, a society ruled over by a king or queen. And I think that kingdom is the perfect word to describe what has happened in the world at the death and resurrection of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

Herman Witsius, the famous Dutch theologian says, “What is the Church but a society? What is a society but a union of persons possessing some privilege in common? Who are they besides that compose the Church except the saints?

When Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the grave, he traded in the throne as we know it in the world, for the cross and a crown of thorns and because of his death and resurrection all authority had been given to him from the Father that is why he is able to take the scroll from the one seated on the throne in heaven and open the scroll. And it is because he died for us that he is now seated at the right hand of the Father and his kingdom that is full of his followers will have no end.

The writer of Hebrews gives us a depiction of this mystical communion of the church and its new society. In Chapter 12 verse 22. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.” Hebrews is telling us here that believers, here in the gathered congregation of the people of God, have communion with the saints in glory. We’re part of the same body. We’re united to Christ and they are united to Christ; and though we are separated by a vast distance, and though we do not know the specifics of what they are doing now, yet, we are united in the same activity. When we gather to worship God, we know we are doing what the saints above are doing because they’re praising God. And furthermore, we know what they long for. We know what their heart's desire is, and it is our heart's desire, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We desire to be with our risen lord for all eternity. And just as we all desire Christ and praise God, we are all united in one more aspect that I did not mention earlier, we are united in our one Lord, one baptism, one faith, and one commission.

In our Tuesday Bible study we are studying the book of Ephesians and during that time we came across a passage that I believe is helpful for us today. In the third chapter we hear the writer state that “In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: 6 that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

7 Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace that was given me by the working of his power. 8 Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; 10 so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known”

For me what this is summing up is that the communion of saints, the church universal share a common mission, to make known the wisdom of God in its rich variety and what this points me to is the great commission, I believe this is part of the wisdom of God being talked about. Jesus commands us to baptize all people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and to teach them all that Jesus commanded. In essence we are called to share the news of a God who loved the world so much he sent his only son to die so that we may have eternal life, and then share with them all Jesus taught so that they could be good citizens of their new society in Christ and as a result let the world know how great God is by the impact this society makes on the world by the way they love one another and overcome the division of the world.

The book of Acts is the best place to get a glimpse of what the new society Jesus created looks like and maybe what attracted so many people to it. So I am going to share a passage from Acts chapter 2 and 4.

In Acts chapter 2 we are told “All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds[j] to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home[k] and ate their food with glad and generous[l] hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

And to show you that its not an anomaly in chapter 4 it states “Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. 33 With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. 35 They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need..”

I truly believe that the most effective witness of the love of god to the world is how we treat each other. If we treat each other with the love of God manifested in our relationships with each other, the world is able to begin to ask the questions, “what is it about these Christians that make them stick out and act like this? It gives people something to want to belong to, because I believe in this age and the biggest yearning from individuals is the yearn to belong.

So when we say that we believe in the communion of saints, what we are saying is that we believe that we the church are in this together to serve God and to make God known to all the world and the way we do that is by living like a family and being there for each other. What kind of family do people say we are?