

EASTER PEOPLE, FILLED BY THE SPIRIT, ARE COMMITTED

Pentecost Sunday May 31, 2009



What does this cartoon say to you?

Today's message is about our commitment to God and to Bethany. We are Easter People who are filled by the Holy Spirit. Today we make our commitment, actually a recommitment to God and to Bethany.

As the cartoon indicates, there is a difference between involvement and commitment. Involvement, as the cartoon suggests, is participating when necessary, whereas commitment is giving one's whole self to the project. The project in this case is your relationship with God and your relationship with Bethany.

God requires everything from us – the whole denying one's self to take up the cross. Another phrase used calls our attention to service: "you cannot serve two masters –either you hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."

Sometimes people come to worship when it is convenient for them. Some people serve only if they have time to do so. This is an example of involvement.

Commitment is manifested differently: with commitment, you are willing to give yourself to God in worship and service out of a willing heart. Worship and service are not when it is convenient, it is priority. Let me use this example. A person enjoys playing a sport. There some people who are involved in a sport while others are committed to a sport. A person on a team who is involved only shows up to practice when he/she wants to and plays a game when it is convenient. Some teams are like that for those who don't want to be committed to the team. It may be fun for the person, but the team doesn't know if or when that person is going to show up. It is difficult to make a team roster or even to play a game.

If a person says I'm committed to this team and I will make the practices and play in the games as scheduled, the team then can count on that person and the team becomes a better team because of the commitment of its players.

We are a team, a family team that counts on every member of the family, every member of the team to be committed, not just involved. The same is true with God's team, God's family. Easter People are filled by the Spirit and committed.

God blesses Easter People with His grace, love, peace. This transforms our lives from the ways of the world to be committed to the way of God. This commitment is really devotion. Devotion is from a heart that has been transformed by God's grace.

When the disciples received the Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost, they became committed to going into all the world to tell everyone about Jesus.

It began that first Pentecost when they went out into the street and began speaking in the languages of the people. God blessed the proclamation of the Easter message and 3000 people were baptized that day.

Today, we received 15 new members to Bethany who make a commitment along with all of you to love and serve God and to go forth in His name to love one another and serve Him in His church we call Bethany.

A new chapter has started for Bethany. God has continued through the years to grow His people to be all they can be for the Army of God. Integrity First; Service before Self; and Excellence in All We Do are our core values like the Air Force. "Semper Fi", like the Marines, we are always faithful and Always Ready as are the Coast Guard. And as the Navy serves, so we at Bethany serve with Honor, Courage, and Commitment.

There is no hill we will not climb, there is no wall that stands in our way, there is no foe we cannot face. We are Easter People, God's people, who are victors because of Jesus Christ, our Commander and Chief.

God has called each and every one that is here today to join forces in this new endeavor to go forth with the cross of Christ on our forehead and heart, filled with the Holy Spirit who sets our hearts on fire, and to boldly go in the name of Jesus. Our target is Vacaville, Fairfield, Dixon, Elmira, and all points between. Our message: The Lord is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

With hearts and minds transformed, and our souls filled with the power of God's Spirit, we are committed people of God and members of Bethany Lutheran Church.

I am the church – You are the church – We are the church together!

Easter People, let's make this commitment today with confidence that God has great plans for us to accomplish according to His good and gracious will. We're in this together and this we'll defend! God bless us! Amen.