

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



Weekly Sermon Series

Faith and Faithfulness

Have you ever participated in a group thing and felt like you didn't belong? Maybe your interests or personalities were different, and no matter how hard you tried, or how much you wanted to belong, it just wasn't a good fit. Have you ever felt that way visiting a church?

On the other hand, imagine you joined a group of some sort and, to your delight, the others made you feel very welcome, and you began to grow and contribute. Some congregations are like that, and actually make you feel like you've had a warm snuggle.

Today's scripture talks about grafting into Christ – accepting Christ and taking on the role of a Christian. You put off the world's ways and follow the teachings of Christ. You are adopted, or grafted, into the world of believers. Your fellow believers come from every race and tribe in the world, yet all belong to the same root that strengthens and guides them.

God warns us, though. Should we fail to render kindness, we will eventually be cut off. (It sounds harsh, but that's what the text says!) Our actions will show whether we belong to God or not.

When we plant a garden or a tree, we expect something to grow. It's the same thing when we're grafted into the fellowship of Christ. Faith without works is

empty, just like a barren garden or a dying tree offers only what might have been.

God grafted the wild branches (Gentiles) into the established roots (Jews) in order to replace the original branches that became unfruitful.

What does it take to be fruitful? We can serve others. We can smile, we can greet people as they enter church, we can give of our time and money, and we can pray for those in need. We can be Christ's hands and feet at work in the world. We can draw strength and life from the true root.

-- Week of February 21, 2010