

**Sunday, January 15, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church**

**Bible Study**

**1 Corinthians 1:1-9 and Psalm 40:1-11**  
**“Not Lacking: Glimpses of the Kin-dom”**

Open with a word of prayer

**Gathering Time** (5-10 minutes)

In groups of two or three, discuss the following: “When you introduce yourself, what identification markers do you most commonly use? (mother of...; father of...; work at...Church; member at...)

**1 Corinthians 1:1-9, Context.** The city of Corinth was a Roman colony and the premier city of Greece in Paul's day, eclipsing Athens. It was a crossroads of competing cultures (Roman, Greek, Egyptian), and had the reputation of being "Sin City." Paul had a long and complex relationship with the congregation he founded in there around 50 CE. The "first" letter to the Corinthians that we possess is already the second: Paul refers to a letter he had already sent them – now lost – in 1 Corinthians 5:9. Paul wrote the present letter from Ephesus in 53 or 54 in response to some confusion that had arisen as a result of his previous letter, as well as in response to the internal controversies and dissensions that characterized the Corinthian congregation. This week’s reading gives us the opening verses of the letter which contain Paul’s blessing of, and thanksgiving for, the faith of the Corinthians. Paul emphasizes God’s grace and love in calling the Corinthians to faith, and the wholeness/healing/peace that comes of living lives set apart for God’s purposes – which is the meaning of being a “saint.”

**Psalm 40:1-11, Context.** Psalm 40 is a psalm of thanksgiving for God’s deliverance from life-threatening circumstances, and a renewed commitment by the psalmist to do God’s will. It echoes and reinforces the second Servant Song in Isaiah 49.

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, Psalm 40:1-11**

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9, Psalm 40:1-11 again** - Read the 1 Corinthians passage a second time. This time, read the word “you” as either “y’all” or “you all.”

**Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.**

- How does Paul identify himself to the hearers of this letter in Corinth? (Most would have been illiterate and would have had this letter read to them.) [In verse one, we read that Paul notes that he is “called,” specifically “to be an apostle of Christ Jesus.”]
- How does Paul identify the recipients of the letter? [“who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...”]
- Paul’s letter will go on to highlight numerous ways the people in this church are falling far short of whom Christ is calling them to be. How is it that Paul can call them saints? What might that mean for how we think about being a saint? [Saint is someone who recognizes their need for a savior and is beholden to God through Jesus Christ.]
- Why do you think Paul begins the formal portion of this letter with gratitude (v. 4, “I give thanks to my God always for you...”)? What is Paul thankful for?
- Paul writes that they (all of them as a body) do not lack in spiritual gifts. (An individual might be lacking; but as a community, they are not lacking.) How did the second reading of the passage (using the phrase “you all” or “y’all”) change or modify your understanding of the passage?
- What does it mean to you to belong to the body of Christ?
- How can this group help each person experience the grace and empowerment of God?

**Closing Reflection Question**

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

**Prayer** (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

**Sending Forth** (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

God of our ancestors, we give thanks for being part of the body of Christ. We give thanks for how we have been encouraged and empowered by those in the past and those present among us now. Empower us, so that others might be strengthened and encouraged by our life and faithfulness to the body of Christ. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven  
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power  
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.