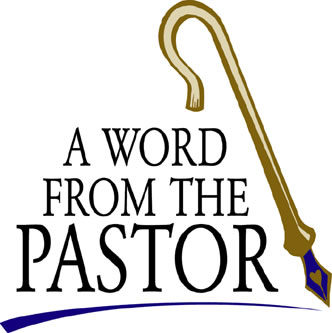
And the Lord said, *“My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”*

Exodus 33.14



There is no better place in which to find encouragement than a community of believers. And where better to find a community of believers than in church on Sunday? And though Sunday morning worship *is* more about God than about us, when we give our complete attention to God, everything else just falls in to place. Peace replaces anxiety. We can rest in the blessings and promises found in this sacred place. A place where God establishes a connection, first through the Word of God, then through music and prayers, and ultimately through our conversations. The Holy Spirit works tirelessly inching its way into our hearts recreating us, shaping us and molding us to be God’s special vessel of love even as we build up one another. What we say, then, to one another can make or break someone’s day with the potential of setting the tone for their entire week. When we come to church it is not to be seen or to fulfill an obligation. We come to be filled with love and joy and blessings. When we focus solely on God, worshiping and glorifying God with all of our being then we can genuinely share that love with others. When we share the peace during worship, we are offering each other the blessing of being filled with the presence of Jesus Christ. What an awesome gift is that?

So how much more then, do we miss out on the joy and thanksgiving of all that God has to offer us when we miss worship? God offers us this gift and has commanded us to “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” We have two obligations; one to get ourselves to worship on Sundays and two, tell those who have been gone too long, just how much they are loved and missed. We should be asking them why the absence, and how we can be of help. If they don’t want to share, offer to pray for them. And then do it. God already knows the need. There are many members, friends and family who need our prayers. Take a few moments to remember them. And because we are, in Martin Luther’s words, both Saints and Sinners simultaneously we need to continually build each other up and forgive when necessary. Jesus “is always by our side, the briefest glance can connect us with Him. When we look to Jesus for help, it flows freely from His Presence. When we need comfort, He loves to enfold us in His arms. Jesus enables us not only to feel comforted but also to be a channel through whom He can comfort others. Thus we are doubly blessed, because a living channel absorbs some of whatever flows through it.” (Jesus Calling, Sarah Young, Oct 20). As we approach the time of Thanksgiving try to remember Paul’s words,

*“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.*

*And be thankful”* Colossians 3:15

***Pastor Cheri***