In the first passage that was appointed through our lectionary text this morning, we continue to read from Paul’s letter to the early church in Corinth. Paul used a metaphor to describe the Corinthian church as “***infants in Christ***”. Obviously he didn’t mean it literally but spiritually, that these were 1st generation Christians who were raised from various cultures or traditions. They were exposed to the faith for the very 1st time. This is a new breed of believers who founded their faith upon the witness account of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The letters were written around 53 A.D, so some may have witnessed Christ personally themselves. They had heard about what happened and were inspired by the movement of the Holy Spirit. They were seekers, looking to share and to proclaim their newfound faith. This is why Paul described them as “Infants in Christ”.

 Like infants who are still being nursed by their mothers, they establish an intimate bond with one another during the early years of development. These spiritual infants of the early church, as Paul described also deserved some extra TLC - Tender, Loving Care as well, just like we do today with lots of room for growth and development. Like infants, they might stumble and fall, but they would get themselves right back up and stay on their feet and take their next steps.

A couple of weeks ago, a friend of mine posted a video on her *Facebook* page of her 4-year old son who has just learned how to ride a bicycle. I was quite impressed with my friend’s son because of his young age and that he was able to ride a two-wheel bicycle (without any training wheels). Well, he was a little dare devil himself and not afraid to fall off. From time to time, he would still fall off, but as soon as he did, he would simply pick himself right back up on his feet and do it all over again. The more he rode the more confident he would get…This kind of remind me of how I rode the bicycle on my own for the first time as well. I still remember that moment.

 In the same way, when it comes to our spiritual journey, we also need to develop our sense of confidence by laying down a solid foundation of our faith. When it comes to our faith foundation, there is no “magic” pill or a crash course that one would take. It does take years of equipping, training and preparation, even after one says YES to Christ. God continues to nurture, develop, and shape our spiritual formation throughout our lives. As Hebrew 6:1 reminds us, ***“let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.”***

 Furthermore, Paul also addressed the Corinthian church as infants because many of them were acting and behaving like “children”. Children in a sense that they would argue over petty things and trivial matters, causing division rather than unity for the body of Christ. They formed various factions among themselves and claimed their allegiance to their respective leaders. These early Christians turned their allegiance of faith upon individual leaders instead of being led by the Holy Spirit and Christ as the ONLY head of the body. Paul gave them a stern warning concerning this slippery slope, compromising the integrity of their faith and even their loyalty and friendship that they had fostered over the years. The church is not about the individuals but about the common mission that they share together in spite of their differences.

 Furthermore, Paul also made this agricultural analogy of comparing these “infants in Christ” as seeds. The term “infants” in Greek can also be translated as “seeds” that we plant in the garden. No seeds can grow on its own without someone who would plant, water and nurture. Likewise no seeds can grow if they are competing against each other for sunlight, nutrients and space, especially if the resources are scare. As our passage reminded us earlier, only God enables the growth to take place according to God’s timing. The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us *for everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to break down, and a time to build up.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

 Many of these spiritual leaders, as Paul described, were just planters, waterers, and servants of the seeds, while ultimately it is God who provides the water, the sunshine in order for the growth to take place!

 Paul reminded these “infants” of the church that ***they are [all] God’s servants, [that] they must work together, as God’s field and God’s building[[2]](#footnote-2)*** bearing good fruits for the kingdom of God and not tearing it apart.  ***For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; and that foundation is Jesus Christ.[[3]](#footnote-3)***

Unfortunately we have seen too much divisions among our churches today. Many of the members are not grounded in their personal faith and their relationship with God. They’re still drinking milk for infants but not solid food. They focus upon what’s important for their individual needs, while applying our human benchmarks of success rather than God’s will and purpose. Unfortunately these seeds of faith were planted in shallow soil, instead of deeply rooted in the Word of God. **Ministry would only thrive when all of its members are on the same page and share a common vision, working and striving together as a team rather than as individuals.**

 In the same way, we must never forget God’s covenant that was established with us, as we bear witness to Christ’s presence in our everyday life and through the choices and decisions that we make. As Jesus said, *“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*[[4]](#footnote-4)**Choose God and remain steadfast in God’s faithfulness**.

 **Another sign of maturity and growth in faith is our obedience that involves not only our minds but also our hearts.** As we read in our Gospel reading earlier, as part of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that **we cannot claim that we are righteous and obedient to God if we continue to hold grudges and quarrel over one another**, especially to another brother or sister in Christ…and that our lives shall be centered around the Law and the Commandments that God has established for us to live. It’s not enough that we know what these laws and commandments are, or what they’re about, but more importantly to put them into practice in our everyday lives! That’s the hardest part…in living up to what is required of us.

 At the end, we must speak honestly and truthfully with one another, and that includes our willingness to become vulnerable, subject to one another’s edifying or sometimes even harsh critiques, and be willing to admit our own faults. We cannot further God’s ministry together if members are NOT on the same page and share a common vision together. The body of Christ cannot remain healthy and thrive that way or as Jesus implied, *it is better for you to disengage one of your own parts (whether it’s your eye or your hand) than for the entire body to suffer and to go into hell.*[[5]](#footnote-5)  Interestingly Jesus repeated this thought 2x (in verses 29 and 30) with his illustrations with the eye or the hand that causes you to sin. Tear it out, cut it off…the part of the body that drags the rest of the body into hell. It’s better off that way.

 As one theologian summed up our passage this morning as follows: “***God desires for the community to be blessed. God desires life, not death. God hopes that we will make the right choice, for faithfulness. The right choice means blessings for the entire community, not just for some.****”[[6]](#footnote-6)*

 **As God’s servants, God’s field and God’s building[[7]](#footnote-7), there can only be one sure foundation in Christ,** called to engage in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation, forgiveness, and love. Christ is our common denominator of what unites us, in spite of our varying differences, perspectives and opinions that often divide and alienate us from the love of God.

 Our responding hymn later on is one of the classic hymns #321 *“The Church’s One Foundation”*. Written back in 1866 by Samuel John Stone, who was a priest in the Church of England, this hymn was written to strengthen the unity and the bond of the church through Christ in the midst of schism and divisions, as we strive to make space for healing, listening, and reconciling amongst us.

 It is my prayer that the church, whether it be the local, regional, or the denomination as a whole, would come to seek and acknowledge that Christ is still the sovereign head of the body and the foundation of our faith**. Let us toss aside the milk of our infancy and our childish ways and leave the elementary teachings behind, but move on, move on to the solid food of our faith and maturity that is rooted in the teaching of Christ.** In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Ecclesiates 3:1-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *I Corinthians 3:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *I Corinthians 3:11* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *John 15:7* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Matthew 5:30* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Andrew Foster Connors, *Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 1,* p.342 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *1 Corinthians 3:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)