

Preached by Dr. Carl Rush  
Bush Hill Presbyterian Church  
Alexandria, VA  
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Music Sunday

2 Corinthians 13:11-13

## FINDING OUR PLACE IN ALL OF CREATION

It seems that what we read in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians is lifting up a need for people to get back to what is important both as a community and as brothers and sisters in Christ across community boundaries. It's not our habit to embrace one another with a hug and a kiss. We see it happening in other cultures, but we Americans have our individuality and our personal space. It's not very likely that we're going to forfeit that even at the suggestion of Paul that we greet one another with a holy kiss or with Christian affection. What would be different, though, if when we saw one another, our first response was Trinitarian, our first thought would be that we might have for that other person a blessing of God's love, fellowship, and communion. A three-fold embrace, if you will. We forget, at our own peril, what matters most with our relationship with God. We said, with the children, the essence of the Gospel message was that God sent his son that all who believe might inherit eternal life.

I don't know how many of you receive this publication (*Presbyterian Outlook*). It used to be printed in Richmond. In this issue, there are the three candidates for moderator of the General Assembly that takes place in June. I thought it important to share with you three of the questions they ask all of the candidates. Some of you know Bill Teng— he was part of the installation service for me at this church. Bill is running to be moderator from our own community.

Listen to these questions.

- In your opinion, what is the most significant matter to come before the General Assembly and how do you propose the assembly respond to it?
- What do you believe are the causes of conflict in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and what do you hope the General Assembly will do to bring resolution?
- In your opinion, what is the most urgent need in the PC(USA) over the next five years?

Surprise, surprise! These are not the questions that most people are asking of the church. They're not asking us why we care so much about the Gospel, but they're also not asking us these questions. I won't make matters worse by reading the answers. What is it that has caused us to focus on ourselves so much that we've lost touch with the world around us and with one another? This passage today and the one from Psalm 8, which you sang, describe our place in creation. God indeed does have high confidence and wonderful expectations of us because we have been placed, the Psalm says, a little less than God; but we've been partners and embraced to be with God, recipients of the blessings of the trinity, and also to be a blessing for one another.

I don't know about you, but I have a longing that whenever I see you or anyone in our congregation or anyone in our extended church family, I want to know what's happening in their lives. I want to know what's going on. I want to know what's good and what's bad. I want to hear about the victories and the challenges. When we see that opportunity as God-given, and when we see that God, in fact, is in each of us and all of us together, what wonderful music is made.

Today is Music Dedication Sunday. The last thing I want to say today is that the best thing about music in worship is that it reminds us of God's encouraging and coaching love. I don't think any of us feel judged when we sing music. I don't think that we feel oppressed or down on ourselves. We may have a conviction of needing to be more cheerful or more interested in one another. But music reminds us of the hope that we have as children of God. Yes, maybe there are songs that convict our hearts, but music is the language of worship. It is part of the liturgy and the activities, because nothing else like music can lift our spirits beyond where we have imagined they could live and abide. We can even have, music says, by the grace of God, the peace and the love that God has for us. Let us use this time, as we hear a wonderful anthem, to ask God to fill us again with a renewed balance and harmony that we might understand how much lies ahead and how much we can in fact do together.

Amen.