

**GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES** (FOR FEBRUARY 21, 2021)

For Community Groups or Personal Study

During the month of February, we are exploring what it means to be the “Gathered Church.” Why do we gather together on Sundays? What happens when we meet together? What does God desire for us as His Gathered Church?

This morning, as a demonstration of our commitment to the unity God calls us to, a unity that breaks down barriers between Christians, we welcome our dear friend Monsignor John Ecker, priest at St. Paul’s Cathedral in Yakima.

Some details about Monsignor Ecker:

- Monsignor is a title of honor granted by the Pope.
- Monsignor Ecker served in the US Navy 1967-1975 (stateside and in Vietnam, often attached to the Marines), and continued as a reservist until 1989. He retired as a Navy Captain.
- He first served in Yakima in 1958. After his service as a Navy Chaplain he returned to Yakima. He then spent 8 years in Kennewick, and then back to Yakima, serving at St. Paul’s since 1988.

Monsignor Ecker has been with us before and we are grateful for his return. He is one of the most beloved Christian leaders in Yakima. He is respected and honored throughout our community. He is also a personal friend to many of us. Next Sunday he has invited one of our pastors to represent Grace of Christ at St. Paul’s.

As the Gathered Church we desire to live out God’s call for unity within our walls (Gracia de Cristo and Grace of Christ no longer co-tenets but one church), and also beyond our walls. As we work toward unity we will not agree with other Christians on all points theologically, but we will agree on what is most important: Jesus Christ, Lord, Savior, Immanuel: God with us. We affirm that we are called and saved by God’s Grace through Christ alone. That is our foundation, God’s promise, our hope. We are His Gathered Church.

**2021.CHURCH: THE GATHERED CHURCH**

**SERMON PASSAGE: ROMANS 1:11-12, 16-17**

“<sup>11</sup> For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you — <sup>12</sup> that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine ... <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. <sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”

**WHAT DOES IT SAY?**

This morning’s Bible passage comes from the book of Romans. Paul, the writer, had never been to Rome, yet he desired to visit them for mutual encouragement. When we meet with other Christians, even those we are meeting for the first time, we share a deep connection. We encourage each other as we share: our love for Jesus, our faith in Jesus, the life we have been given because of Jesus.

1. Have you ever been out of town on a Sunday and decided to visit a new church? If no, why not? If yes, how did you feel when you first entered the church? How did you feel when the Sunday service concluded? Did you sense any connection with the people there? Explain.
2. Why do you think Paul wanted to visit the Christians in Rome? Did Paul ever visit Rome? (See Acts 28:11-31. He arrived in Rome under arrest ... likely not the way he had hoped he would.) What was the message of encouragement Paul wanted to share with those in Rome?

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

3. What did Paul mean when he wrote he was not “ashamed of the gospel”? What is “the gospel” he is referring to?
4. What does it mean to place our faith (trust) in Jesus? Is this faith more than just intellectual belief in Jesus? Explain.

**WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

5. Who encourages you? Who do you want to spend time with? When was the last time you visited or called them?
6. Are you ashamed of the gospel (good news of Jesus)? How has (is) your faith in Jesus changed (changing) your life?

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a minute or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don’t know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. In your prayer ask God to help you to not only believe, but also to love Jesus and live for Him. Ask God to help you meet with, and encourage, other Christians. He loves you (us).