

Communion of Saints

David Feddes

Communion of saints

To all the **saints** in Christ Jesus... I thank my God ... because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all **partakers** with me of grace... For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
(Phil 1:1-7)

Who are we? Saints!

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints... I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world... I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. (Romans 1:7-12)

- God loves you! Your faith is famous! You and I can build each other's faith and gifts!

Who are we? Saints!

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints... I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge... so that you are not lacking in any gift... Christ will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 1:2-8)

- You are grace-filled and rich in gifts! You're going to look great on judgment day!

Who are we? Saints!

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus... Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places... I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you. (Ephesians 1:1 ,3, 15-16)

- You have every spiritual blessing in Christ!
Your faith and love fill me with thanks!

Who are we? Saints!

To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. (Colossians 1:2-5)

- You are faithful! You are family in Christ!
I'm thankful for your faith, hope, and love!

Who are we? Saints!

We give thanks to God always for all of you... remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you... And you became imitators of us and of the Lord... you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia... your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. (1 Thess 1:2-8)

Who are we? Saints!

Your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4)

- You people are amazing! I brag about your faith, love, and bravery all the time!

Who are we? Saints!

To Timothy, my true child in the faith (1 Tim 1:1)

To Timothy, my beloved child... I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy... I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (2 Tim 1:2-7)

- I love you, son. Seeing you makes me happy. Remember, you've got what it takes!

Who are we? Saints!

To Titus, my true child in a common faith (Titus 1:4).

To Philemon our beloved fellow worker... I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints... For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you. (Philemon 1:1-7)

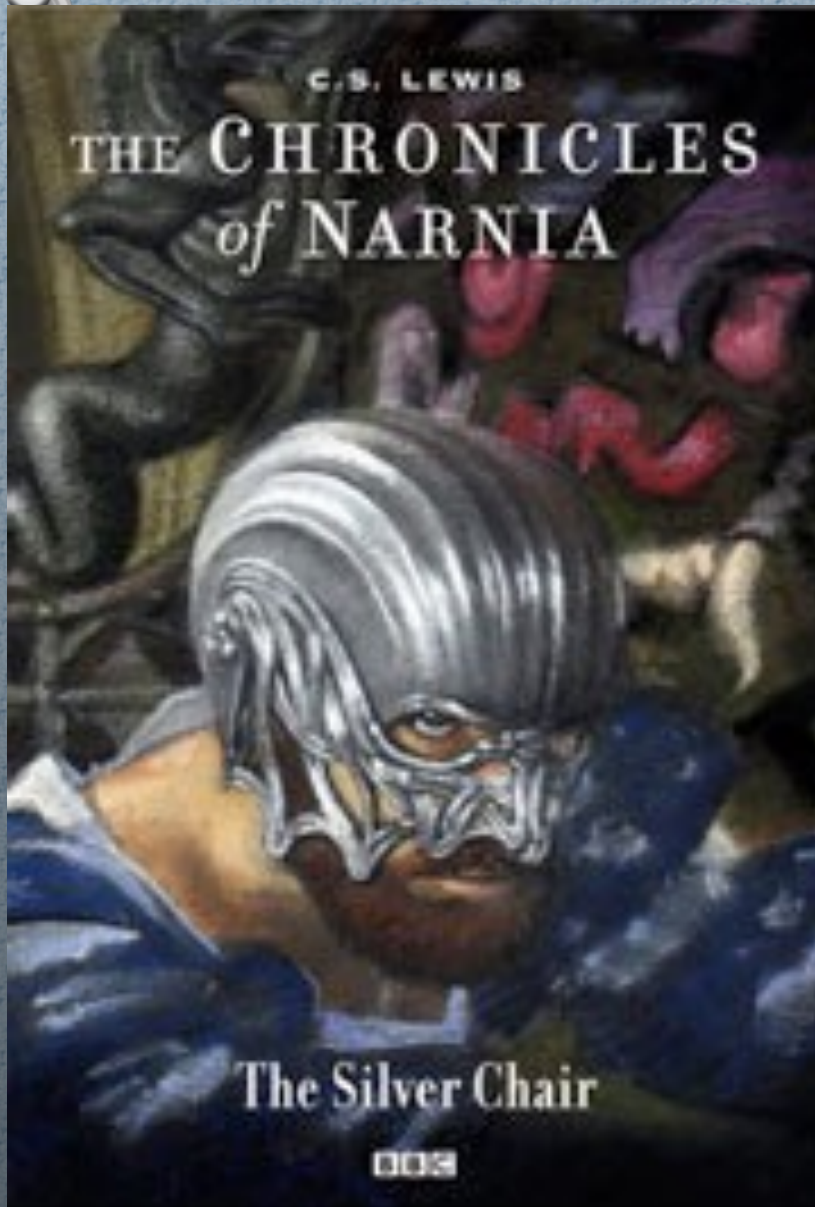
Who are we?

Not slaves, but sons and saints!

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel... In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith... And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (1:2, 3:26, 4:6-7)

Who are we?

- You are the light of the world (Matt 5:14)
- The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good. (Luke 6:45)
- Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession. (1 Peter 2:9)



Remind each saint of their true self

“You may well believe that I remember Narnia, for I am Rilian, Prince of Narnia. While I was enchanted I could not remember my true self.”

Communion of saints

- Who are we? Saints
- How do we relate? Communion

1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved--and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

You stand firm in one spirit, contending as
one man for the faith of the gospel. (1:27)



¹ If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵ Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Christ's mind in you

- **Aware of wealth:** As Jesus knew his riches as God, so we know encouragement in Christ, comfort in his love, fellowship with the Spirit, tenderness and compassion.
- **Eager to share and sacrifice:** As Jesus joined humanity, slaved and suffered for us, so we join other believers and put them first.
- **Confident of glory:** As God exalted Jesus, he promises to exalt those who serve humbly.

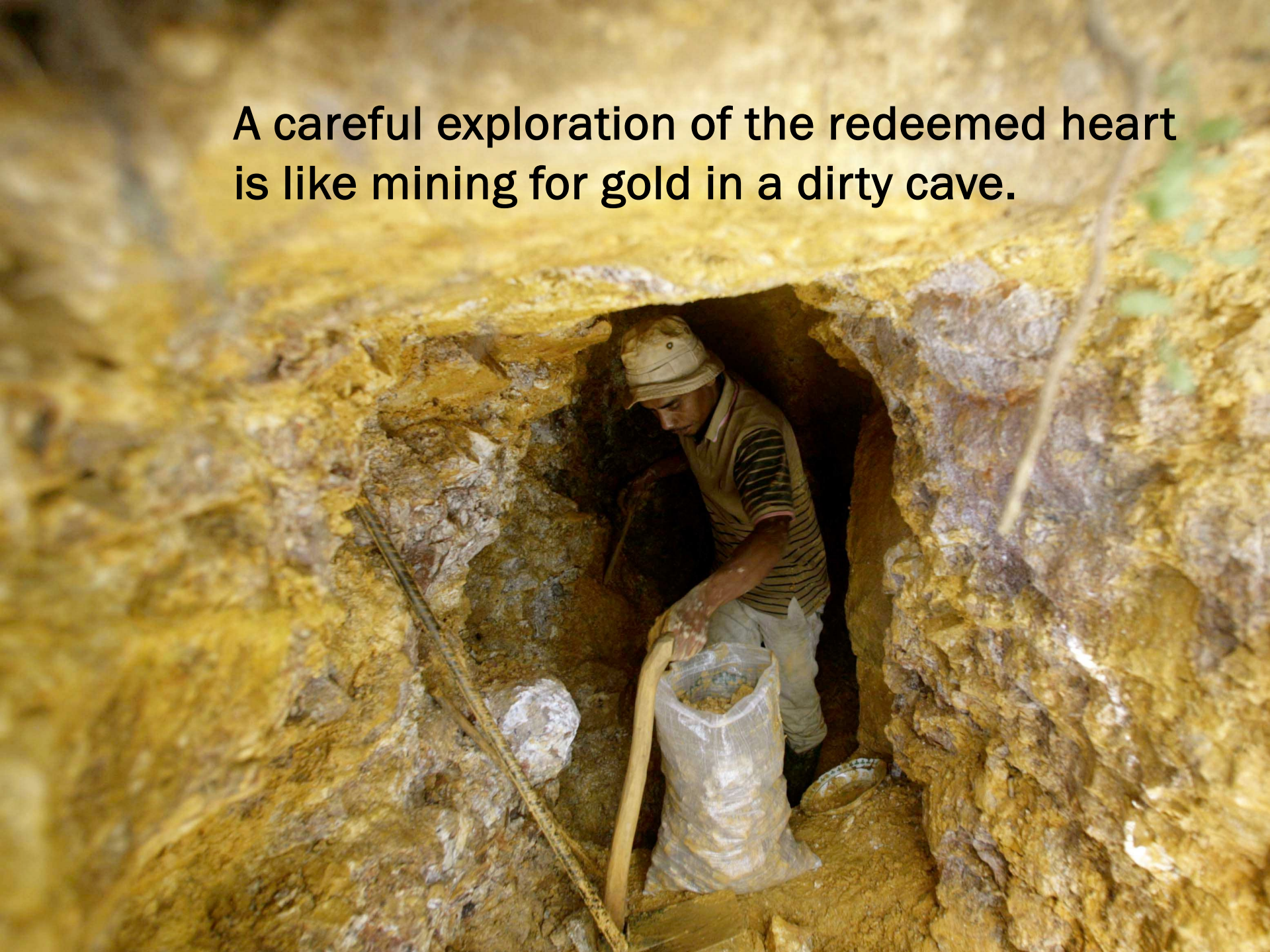
Trinitarian communion

They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth... I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:16-23)

How do we relate? Communion

- *Koinonia* = communion, fellowship, partaking, participating
- Some other biblical pictures of relating: body, household, temple, assembly, army
- Rooted in communion of Trinity
- Experienced in personal connection
- Noticing and nurturing the Spirit's presence, actions, and gifts in each other

A careful exploration of the redeemed heart is like mining for gold in a dirty cave.



An encourager's vision

They sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. (Acts 11:22-24)

An encourager believes in you and comes alongside you to mobilize your Christ-life.

Connecting with Christ in each other

- In heart-to-heart connections, you display the unique glory of Christ in you, and you delight in the unique glories of Christ in others.
- Christians connect in order to share what Christ is doing within us, to battle together against hindrances to Christ within, and to strengthen each other.
- As Christ in you connects with Christ in me, I grow in Christ's power, insight, and love.

Prickly personalities get close and warm each other:
encouragement, comfort, tenderness, compassion



Test of belonging to Jesus

“Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.

Whoever does not love abides in death. (1 John 3:14)

Lord's Day 21 Q & A 54

Q. What do you believe concerning “the holy catholic church”?

A. I believe that the Son of God through his Spirit and Word, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of the world to its end, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself a community chosen for eternal life and united in true faith.

And of this community I am and always will be a living member.

Q & A 55 What do you understand by “the communion of saints”?

A. First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.