**Text**: **Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56**

 **The Bethel Pulpit**

 **Pastor Margo R. Martens**

 June 22, 2018 – 9th Sunday of Pentecost On the web at [www.bethel-madison.org](http://www.bethel-madison.org/)
 312 Wisconsin Ave, Madison WI 53703

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So begins the letter of Ephesians, as we just heard read, a few minutes ago.

Ephesians raises two important questions for each of us:

**Question #1:**What do you know…or what do you believe…about God?

Take a moment and tell your pew neighbor at least one thing YOU believe about God.

**Question #2:** What do YOU …DO … for God? In other words, what behavior of yours is carried out BECAUSE you believe that God cares about what you do?

Harder question? Maybe? Take another moment and share your thought with another person.

Often, for me, ‘what I believe about God’ and ‘what I do for God’ are totally detached from one another: much like 2 bones that need to work together, but often are totally broken apart.

The writer of Ephesians gives us soul-searching words that help us understand that God wants these 2 bones of faith absolutely to be knit together, so that our faith life is healthy and whole and full of integrity. Behavior and belief: may God knit these bones together for the health of the body of Christ.

In the next 5 weeks, our worship texts take us through the entire book of Ephesians. Here’s my Bible-reading invitation for you…you won’t be surprised to hear it from me, as I’ve given you similar invitations in the past…take time to read all six chapters of Ephesians. On some August Sundays, the sermon will focus on these texts. I will welcome any and all interaction from you as you ponder with me how to integrate the bone of our belief with the bone of our behavior.

You are also built together into a dwelling place for God.

That’s what we heard read in the Ephesians’ text today. In our opening hymn, we sang ‘we are God’s house of living stones, built for his own habitation’. You and me: God’s LIVING STONES…and God is in the process of mending our broken bones and using us to build God’s kingdom, here at Bethel, here in Madison, Wi, for the sake of God’s eternal and universal kingdom.

WOW ! How awesome! How totally amazing !

That God takes us as we are, broken and stumbling, sets our 2 broken bones, like a skillful surgeon, knits us together again and heals us one moment at a time, brings us back to the starting point of knitting our belief and our behavior together for the sake of God’s kingdom. May I say that again?

My belief and my behavior, like yours and like every human being ever created, does not stay knit together. So God never gives up on God’s process of setting the bones, knitting and healing, over and over again.

A few weeks ago, I said that a faithful preacher will hold the newspaper in one hand and the Bible in another, in sermons. Today, I’m holding the newspaper of Bethel, known as The Bethelite, in one hand and this text from Ephesians in my other hand, asking how we, as a congregation, embrace this reality that the bones of our belief need to be knit together with the bones of our behavior.

As we go through the pages of The Bethelite, we see that soon, Bethel will host a community dementia conversation, helping people to understand more about this health crisis among us, as we face the possibility of dementia for ourselves, and as we care for loved ones who are stricken with the disease.

Circle of Love Golf Outing invites us to support Bhutanese families here in Madison with the funds raised to build a Habitat House for a family. Vacation Bible Camp for our youngest ladies and gentlemen

begins on July 30. Men’s Current Christian Concerns meets weekly. XYZ offers worship and fellowship to all of us in the Xtra Years of Zest categor6y. The Bethelite reminds us of community and parish needs: toothpaste/toothbrushes for the Drop in the Barrel, volunteers for our Food Pantry, help at our Recep- tion Desk. Maybe you could link resources with a few others and get a 4x4 SUV for Bethel Horizons.

Living Stones ! That is you and that is me ! We are being built, by God, into God’s dwelling place in this city, Madison, WI. We have plenty of invitations to join our efforts with the efforts of our neighbor, so that, stone by stone, God’s dwelling place is firmly established.

It is true that we continue to be in a challenging time of transition here at Bethel. It is equally true that God is the One who is holding us and molding us, knitting together the 2 bones of our belief and our behavior into a healthy and whole dwelling place.

We sing together “Have No Fear, Little Flock”. The words of this hymn give us necessary reminders of who is at work among us, as we sing: “Have no fear, little flock, for the Father has chosen to give you the kingdom; have good cheer, little flock, for the Father will keep you in God’s love forever; praise the Lord, high above for he stoops down to heal you, uplift and restore you; thankful hearts raise to God, for he stays close beside you, in all things works with you!”

These words are true. These words are for us, as we thank God for God’s ceaseless work of integrating our belief and our behavior, for the work of God’s kingdom. Let us stand as we sing !