

Acknowledgments

Where Is the Church? Signs of Belonging

In a treatise from 1539, Martin Luther names seven public practices of the church as marks or signs to help "a poor confused person" see where in the world Christians are.

The Word: The Story Where We Belong

An unnamed woman anoints Jesus with expensive perfume, risking ridicule and the judgment that she doesn't belong. Jesus says she does, and joins her story to his forever (Mark 14:3-9).

Baptism: The Bath Where We Belong

It looks like Philemon, a slave master, will "take a bath" as Paul asks that he receive his newly baptized slave, Onesimus, back home, not as a slave, but as a beloved brother in Christ (Philemon).

Holy Communion: The Table Where We Belong

Jesus invites himself home for dinner with the tax collector. At table with the Lord, surprising things happen for Zacchaeus and his neighbors (Luke 10:1-10)

Forgiveness and Reproof of Sin: The Truth Where We Belong

Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples and gives them the power to tell the truth about sin and forgiveness (John 20:19-23).

The Office of Ministry: The Care Where We Belong

"You give them something to eat," Jesus tells his disciples when they want him to send a crowd away hungry. The disciples gather astonishingly limited resources which Jesus blesses. There is enough, with leftovers (Mark 6:30-44).

Worship: The Song Where We Belong

Multitudes from every nation, tribe, people, and language gather around the heavenly throne and sing praise to God (Rev. 7:9-17).

The Cross: The Shadow Where We Belong

James and John want places at the right and left of Jesus when he comes into his kingdom. Do they know what they are asking? (Mark 10:35-45)

Belonging Together: Community, Risk, and the Presence of Christ

In the contested arenas of our daily lives and our congregational life together, the signs of the church give the world a glimpse of God's reign.

Resources for Further Study

Notes